



# MAKING WAVES

## Fortnightly E-News Brief of National Maritime Foundation

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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.



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### **Indian Ocean: Modi on a Maritime Pilgrimage**

- Vijay Sakhuja

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Maldives, Mauritius Seychelles and Sri Lanka during this month to reinforce India's foreign policy objectives. A number of political, economic, social and security issues would constitute the agenda and several agreements and memorandums of understanding are expected to be signed with the Indian Ocean States. At least three maritime issues merit attention.

#### *Capacity-Building for Maritime Security*

First, capacity-building for maritime security is a recurring theme in bilateral discussions between India and the Indian Ocean island States. The 2014 trilateral meeting (India, Maldives and Sri Lanka) held in New Delhi supported the idea of expanding the trilateral engagements to include Seychelles and Mauritius as observers. It was decided to build the capacity of the partners to enhance Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), provide Search and Rescue (SAR) support, oil pollution response exercises, and cooperation in legal matters. The Indian Navy has supported hydrographic surveys in Seychelles, provided training to the Mauritius Coast Guard, undertaken surveillance for Maldives and worked closely with Sri Lanka in counter-terrorism against the LTTE. It has provided warships and aircraft to these countries to augment maritime security capabilities. These engagements have catapulted India to emerge as a 'net security provider' and be seen as a compassionate power in the Indian Ocean.

Before identifying what the Indian Prime Minister can offer during his visits to the four island States, it is useful to understand that these countries have similar security requirements which can be clubbed under MDA, a critical element of maritime security. For instance, Sri Lanka requires platforms, systems and technologies for fisheries patrol and to prevent transgressions that have been the bane of bilateral relations; Maldives requires surveillance assistance; Mauritius requires aircraft and ships for EEZ patrols; and Seychelles requires hydrographic support.

India can offer an institutionalized information and intelligence-sharing mechanism, and it will also be useful to explore if officials from these countries are co-located in the Indian Navy's National Command Control Communication Intelligence network or the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC). This is a practice in the Singapore-based Information Fusion Centre (IFC) established at Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C), where an Indian Navy officer has been positioned. Significantly, the IFC has received much acclaim for its multilateral approach to maritime security.

### *'India or China' Dilemma*

Second, China's overt military support to Maldives, Sri Lanka, Seychelles and Mauritius is an issue, which has caused enormous anxiety in India. Notwithstanding that, it will be prudent for Modi to avoid raising the issue, which could result in an 'India or China' dilemma. These island countries are recipients of generous financial and material support (preferential loans for military/commercial infrastructure projects, sale of military hardware at friendly prices and military training and education) from China and may not be willing to address India's concerns. The docking of the Chinese submarine in Colombo port invited sharp reactions in New Delhi and apparently, under pressure, Sri Lanka decided to review the project but quickly backtracked to state that any decision on the future of the project would be taken in consultation with the Chinese. Further, these countries are keen to participate and partake in China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative, and build infrastructure to support economic growth. These drivers shape their India policy and these States would like to avoid any pressure from New Delhi.

### *Blue Economy*

Third, Blue Economy is the current 'mantra' of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the respective leaderships have championed it at national and international forums. In the Indian Ocean, Seychelles and Mauritius have been spearheading the discourse on Blue Economy and the concept has found favour across the globe including the United Nations. A number of countries and regional groupings have agreed to support the SIDS in their vision of sustainable development of oceanic resources for economic growth.

India's ability to harness the seas is noteworthy and it has developed sophisticated mechanisms for the sustainable development of living and non-living oceanic resources. A number of scientific institutions for oceanic research, environment studies, offshore exploration and development of fisheries have been set up to harness the seas in a sustainable manner. India is working closely with its maritime neighbors and has endorsed Bangladesh's call for the Bay of Bengal Partnership for Blue Economy. Maldives, Sri Lanka, Seychelles and Mauritius are natural partners for India towards developing the Blue Economy.

Source: [Eurasia Review](#), 3 Mar 2015

### **Sri Lanka May Bar Port Visits by Chinese Submarines**

- Ankit Panda

Last year, Sri Lanka managed to cause a good deal of trepidation in New Delhi when a Chinese submarine, Changzheng-2, was spotted docking in Colombo, flanked by a Chinese warship. Observers took the visit as a sign that China "has its sights set on dominating the Indian Ocean." Still, the submarine visit put Sri Lanka in a bit of an awkward position diplomatically with New Delhi. One important detail of the entire incident that did not make it into mainstream reporting was that the sub did not dock in a Sri Lanka-controlled port facility designed to accommodate military vessels. Instead, the submarine ended up at the Colombo South Container Terminal a facility controlled by a Chinese developer. While that facility was able to accommodate the submarine, the entire incident may have taken place without the express approval of the Mahinda Rajapaksa government.

Still, these details aside, Sri Lanka has now taken a firm stand against any perceptions that it is offering preferential port access to Chinese military assets. On Saturday, speaking in Beijing, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera noted that Sri Lanka would not allow visits by Chinese submarines to its ports. "I really don't know under which sort of circumstances that led to some submarines... to [visit] the port of Colombo on the very day the Japanese Prime Minister was

visiting Sri Lanka. But we will ensure that such incidents, from whatever quarter, do not happen during our tenure,” Samaraweera noted. Samaraweera’s comments suggests that China may not be the only country affected as part of the new government’s plans to ban submarine visits.

The Rajapaksa government’s complicity in inviting the submarine and warship remains somewhat ambiguous. The Sri Lankan government, at the time, embraced the visit, likely to avoid perceptions that the Chinese vessels had docked a Chinese-company controlled facility without the full knowledge of the Sri Lankan government. “A submarine and a warship have docked at Colombo harbor. They called on Oct. 31 and will be here for five days for refueling and crew refreshment,” noted a spokesman for the Sri Lankan navy, adding that “This is nothing unusual. Since 2010, 230 warships have called at Colombo port from various countries on goodwill visits and for refueling and crew refreshment.”

Following Samaraweera’s statements in Beijing, the Chinese foreign ministry came out in defense of its actions last year. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told the press that China “had the consent of the Sri Lanka side in advance.” Noting that the Chinese submarine and warship were on their way to an anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden, off the southwestern tip of Arabian peninsula, Hua added that “these are normal and transparent activities. It also followed the international practices,” she said. “It is to my knowledge that policy of Sri Lanka side is to support the global anti-piracy campaign. It welcomes the docking of submarines from the friendly countries,” she added.

Samaraweera, who is foreign minister in the government of Maithripala Sirisena, Rajapaksa’s successor, made the statement in a hope to ease tensions in New Delhi and Tokyo alike about growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean. Sirisena, in his election campaign manifesto, had made statements critical of the former Sri Lankan government’s treatment of China. Instead, his manifesto noted that Sri Lanka would not offer preferential economic or security access to any one country, but equally develop its strategic relations with all major Indian states. Notably, the manifesto did not identify any special role for India in Sri Lanka foreign policy, despite the close proximity and historical relationship between the two countries.

Samaraweera's comments in Beijing come shortly after Sirisena completed his first official visit to New Delhi, celebrating a "new beginning."

The Sri Lankan foreign minister's trip to Beijing will also lead to a broader China-Sri Lankan bilateral dialogue on the state of Chinese loans in Sri Lanka. Sirisena's government is concerned with high interest rates tied to an outstanding \$5 billion in Chinese loans and will send its finance minister to discuss the issue with China later this year. His government revisited the issue of China's \$1.4 billion investment in the Colombo Port City development project shortly after coming to power, citing environmental concerns. Despite its hesitations, Colombo decided to move ahead with the project.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 3 Mar 2015

### **Japan and India's Warming Defence Ties**

- Mina Pollmann

The assertiveness of China's People's Liberation Army Navy in the Indian Ocean is forcing the government of Narendra Modi to look to modernize India's naval forces as quickly as possible. This venture, as would be expected, includes overtures to the U.S. (for example, to share technology for India's next aircraft carrier), but India is increasingly seeking cooperation with Japan as well. India has asked Japan to consider submarines and recently announced its plans to purchase Japanese amphibious search and rescue (SAR) aircraft.

Russian-made SAR flying boats had also been considered, but India chose the Japanese option because the Indian defense ministry valued the US-2's ability to take off and land on waters with high waves. If the export of Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force's US-2 air-sea SAR aircraft to India is realized, it will be the first export under Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's new three principles on defense equipment transfers, declared in April 2014.

Aside from defense equipment deals, Japan and India have been working to improve their bilateral cooperation in the fields of maritime security, counter-terrorism, and anti-piracy operations since January 2014, when then-Indian Defense Minister A.K. Antony met with then-Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera.

At the time, the two defense ministers put off the issue of Japanese US-2 sales to India, but it was given added momentum during Modi's trip to Japan last September. Modi declared during a joint press briefing with Abe, "We intend to give a new thrust and direction to our defense cooperation, including collaboration in defense technology and equipment, given our shared interest in peace and stability and maritime security."

At the same meeting, Abe and Modi agreed to upgrade "two-plus-two" security talks, increase working level talks on defense equipment and technology cooperation, hold regular maritime exercises, and continue Japanese participation in U.S.-India drills.

Abe and Modi have capitalized on their close personal ties with each other – and the increasingly uncertain external environment created by China's bellicose foreign policy – to increase security cooperation despite several remaining obstacles, such as the lack of a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement.

Last July, Japan participated in the Malabar exercises, traditionally a bilateral India-U.S. exercise, at India's invitation. Prior to 2014, the last time Japan had participated was in 2007 and 2009. There is no word yet on Japan's participation in this year's exercises — whether India and Japan will stand firm in the face of Chinese criticism of Japan's participation is a critical test of how strong and resilient India-Japan relations can be in the near future.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 4 Mar 2015

## **China Challenges ASEAN with Land Fills in South China Sea**

- Luke Hunt

A stunning series of photos released by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington D.C. offer a grim outlook for the region as Beijing ratchets-up its territorial assertions over the hotly disputed Spratly and Paracel islands.

Much to the irritation of the Chinese, Vietnam has also opened its highly strategic deep-water port at Cam Ranh Bay to the world's navies, in particular the United States, which built the facility and handed it over to what was then South Vietnam in 1972.

The Philippines has mounted legal action against China in the United Nations International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea and its navy is also adding two more warships to its fleet to counter the Chinese government's increasingly assertive maritime ambitions.

### *Chinese Firepower*

However, their military capabilities still fall far short of a match for Chinese firepower.

"Vietnam and The Philippines have limited options beyond public criticism. They cannot resort to military force, and they do not want to enter a construction race in the Spratlys that will only destabilize the situation and which they could not win," Poling said.

"Plus, for the Philippines especially, they must be seen to be maintaining the legal high ground as their arbitration case moves forward." "At this point, Beijing is building on almost every rock and low-tide elevation it occupies; to do any more would require pushing another claimant off a feature or occupying an unoccupied feature," Poling said.

"That would be an explicit violation of the DOC, and I don't think China is ready to go that far yet." It almost sounds like it could be a Battle Royale being played out

between political equals. But promoting a united ASEAN front – probably the best chance ASEAN member countries have of success – to Chinese encroachments has met with little success.

Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar and Laos have not backed a united approach to China over the dispute while Cambodia has openly sided with Beijing.

Not helping are Malaysia and Brunei, which have claims over the southern Paracels Islands, and have adopted a softly-softly approach, preferring to negotiate quietly with Beijing through diplomatic channels.

The wild card in the ASEAN equation is Indonesia, with recently elected President Joko Widodo yet to declare his hand after Beijing ended years of speculation and confirmed that its maritime claims, as defined by its nine-dash line, does indeed overlap Indonesia's hold across the Natuna Sea.

*Divisions within ASEAN have been to China's advantage.*

“Beijing’s relentless claims to the scattered atolls and reefs that fall within its now infamous Nine-Dash Line are national territory based on often the most flimsy and tangential claims is now literally being made concrete through a high speed construction program,” said Gavin Greenwood, an analyst with Hong Kong-based regional security firm Allan & Associates.

“For Beijing this may appear as a logical measure intended both to claim valuable resources while extending China defensible space. To the neighbors, the U.S. and much of the rest of the international community it appears as a softer version of Russia’s policy towards Ukraine: The creation of a line that can only be crossed with consequences.”

Greenwood said the U.S. card, particularly in the case of the Philippines, would be prominent given that its Asian pivot policy was at least partially responsible for China stepping-up its island construction program, which had not yet been matched by a serious counter response from Washington.

“While the U.S. Navy plans to increase its presence in the region through eventually forward basing in Singapore up to four small warships capable of little more than ‘flying the flag,’ China is developing a powerful force of highly capable destroyers that will serve as a credible deterrence.”

### *Familiar Ring*

He also said China’s strategy held a familiar ring. “Creating facts on the ground is a traditional rationalization for a revolutionary movement – which can mean among other things like the transition from theory, or weakness, into practice, or strength. “The program of dredging and construction on the remote islets appear – like so many of China’s more utilitarian infrastructure projects – to be beyond accountancy and pursued without regard to cost.

“From Beijing’s perspective once the cement on an airstrip or fortification set atop a reef has hardened China’s claim has become a reality and the new land is as sovereign as Tiananmen Square and just as non-negotiable.” “The size of the reclaimed features is also surprising, and will probably allow China to begin projecting more air and sea patrol and surveillance capabilities over the Spratlys by the end of 2015. “Overall, I expect this increased presence of Chinese units in the area along with tensions from the probable arbitration court ruling to make this another tense and potentially dangerous year in the South China Sea,” he said.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 10 Mar 2015

### **The Philippines and Vietnam Forge a Strategic Partnership**

- Carl Thayer

On January 30, the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario hosted his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Binh Minh in Manila for the inaugural meeting of the Joint Commission on Concluding a Strategic Partnership. According to a Joint Statement issued after the talks, the two ministers agreed “on the basis of amity,

equality, mutual respect and cooperation... to elevate the level and intensity of bilateral exchanges between the two countries.”

The bulk of the Joint Statement focused on the South China Sea and expressed concern “over the ongoing massive land reclamation activities that pose threats to the peace and stability in the region as well as to the lives of many people across the various coastal states.” Del Rosario and Minh agreed that the “concerned Parties” should adhere to the ASEAN-China Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, conclude a Code of Conduct, exercise restraint, and resolve disputes peacefully in accord with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

It appears likely that a formal strategic partnership agreement could be reached this year. Del Rosario noted that the strategic partnership with Vietnam would be the Philippines’ third after the United States and Japan.

The Philippines and the U.S. became treaty allies in 1951. In 2011, the Philippines and Japan upgraded their bilateral ties to a strategic partnership. In late 2014, the Philippines and South Korea initiated discussions on a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Vietnam has already negotiated thirteen strategic partnership agreements. Its first agreement was with the Russian Federation in 2001. This was followed by agreements with Japan (2006), India (2007), China (2008), South Korea and Spain (2009), the United Kingdom (2010), and Germany (2011). In 2013, Vietnam negotiated an additional five strategic partnership agreements with Italy, France, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand. Vietnam’s on-going negotiations with the Philippines represent a determined diplomatic effort to shore up Vietnam’s relations with fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Vietnam and the Philippines established diplomatic relations in 1976 and initiated a series of high-level exchanges two years later. Three Vietnamese prime ministers (Pham Van Dong, Vo Van Kiet, and Nguyen Tan Dung) and two presidents (Le Duc Anh and Tran Duc Luong) visited the Philippines between 1978 and 2007. Four

Filipino presidents (Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Aquino) visited Vietnam in 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2010, respectively.

In 1994, the two sides set up a Joint Committee on Economics, Science, and Technology as the initial framework for bilateral relations. This evolved into a Bilateral Cooperation Committee that held its seventh meeting in Manila in late July/early August 2013. The eighth meeting is scheduled for Hanoi in 2015.

In 2011, Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang paid an official visit to the Philippines. Sang and Aquino agreed to enhance information sharing and cooperation between their two navies and to establish a hotline between their coast guards. A second Philippines-Vietnam Plan of Action was adopted for the 2011-16 period that covered thirteen areas of cooperation.

In 2013 Vietnam's Minister of National Defense visited Manila for the first time. In March last year the two countries held their first navy-to-navy staff talks and agreed to increase exchanges in sharing intelligence, naval technology and training. In June, Vietnam hosted "goodwill games" with Filipino military personnel on Southwest Cay, and in November two Vietnamese navy frigates paid their first port call to Manila.

In December 2014, Vietnam filed a statement of interest with the Permanent Court of Arbitration implicitly backing the Philippines' claims against China over territorial claims in the South China Sea. The two government leaders reaffirmed that maritime cooperation was a pillar of bilateral ties. They therefore agreed to continue regular exchanges through their Joint Committee on Sea and Ocean Cooperation and the Group of Legal Experts on Marine Issues. The two leaders renewed their commitment to carry out existing agreements on defense and security and step up cooperation between their logistics and defense industry agencies. They also agreed to accelerate negotiations on an Extradition Agreement.

Two-way trade grew impressively from a low level of \$541 million in 2000 to \$2.2 billion in 2008. Vietnam's exports of rice, ranging from 1.5 to 2 billion tons a year, form a central component of the trade relationship. But between 2008 and 2014, bilateral trade rose to only \$2.8 billion. In January this year, the two foreign ministers

agreed to reactivate a bilateral trade cooperation sub-committee to draft measures to raise two-way trade to a modest \$3 billion by 2016.

Vietnam's strategic partnership agreements include a clause on defense and security cooperation. The Philippines-Vietnam strategic partnership agreement very likely will have a defense and security clause with provisions for high-level defense visits, staff exchanges, naval goodwill port calls, information sharing, and joint training, exercises and naval patrols.

If Japan decides to conduct reconnaissance flights over the South China Sea, quadrilateral cooperation in maritime domain awareness and security could result. A future Philippines-Vietnam strategic partnership could serve as the basis for promoting multilateral maritime security cooperation in the South China Sea.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 10 Mar 2015

### **Why the Navy Is More Important Than Ever**

- Reihan Salam

the Pentagon has requested a substantial increase in the Navy's budget, and Gregg Easterbrook, writing in the New York Times, insists that an increase is unwarranted. Why? First, Easterbrook observes that while the United States has 10 advanced nuclear super carriers, no other country, China included, has anything comparable. Second, he asserts that concerns about the threat China's new weapon systems might pose to the Navy are nothing more than "fear mongering," as "there's no evidence that [China's] anti-ship missile has had a realistic test." Third, he claims that rising Chinese naval power is not a threat to the United States, and to complain against Chinese dominance in the South China Sea or the East China Sea is like complaining about U.S. dominance in the Caribbean. There are a few problems with Easterbrook's line of thinking. China is not the only major power in the Western Pacific, and a number of its neighbours would greatly prefer that the United States preserve its strategic primacy in maritime Asia, or at the very least preserve its ability to contest Chinese dominance. Most serious defence analysts recognize that

America's relative position in the region is deteriorating. (Elbridge Colby, a National Review contributor, has written extensively on the dangers posed by this deterioration.) I appreciate that Easterbrook considers it unfair that the U.S. dominates the Caribbean while it objects to the thought of China doing the same in its backyard. Yet surely one can appreciate why Japan or South Korea might prefer to have more strategic independence vis-à-vis China than Jamaica and the Dominican Republic do vis-à-vis the United States. American naval power is essential to shielding these and other East Asian states from the threat of Chinese military coercion. You will notice that I haven't mentioned Taiwan — that is because at this point, it is not at all clear that the United States could shield Taiwan from Chinese coercion in a controlled escalation scenario, which is why many Taiwanese defence analysts have reconciled themselves to "Finlandization."

Something similar is arguably happening in South Korea as well. Will East Asia be better off if we allow China to establish military dominance in the region? I doubt it, not least because there are growing signs that China is about to enter a period of political turmoil. Given East Asia's central importance to the global economy, I'd say there's very good reason for the United States to want to maintain the ability to shape the course of events in the region. When Easterbrook observes that the U.S. is the only power with advanced nuclear super carriers, he neglects the rise of China's anti-access/area-denial capabilities. China does not need to match the U.S. Navy ship for ship. Rather, they just need to limit the U.S. Navy's freedom of action in maritime Asia. Easterbrook addresses this concern glancing when he discounts the threat of China's anti-ship missiles. What he fails to appreciate is that China's anti-ship missiles do not have to clear a high bar to greatly undermine America's ability to project power in the Western Pacific.

As Jerry Hendrix of the Centre for a New American Security explains: the Chinese approach is to launch a slew of (relatively) low-cost missiles to overwhelm U.S. defences: Using a manoeuvrable re-entry vehicle placed on a CSS-5 missile, China's Second Artillery Division states that its doctrine will be to saturate a target with multiple war heads and multiple axis attacks, overwhelming the target's ability to defend itself. MaRV warhead itself would use a high explosive, or a radio frequency or cluster warhead that at a minimum could achieve a mission kill against the target

ship. While the United States does not know the cost of this weapons system, some analysts have estimated its procurement costs at \$5 million to \$11 million.

Assuming the conservative, high-end estimate of \$11 million per missile gives an exchange ratio of \$11 million to \$13.5 billion, which means that China could build 1,227 DF-21Ds for every carrier the United States builds going forward. U.S. defences would have to destroy every missile fired, a tough problem given the magazines of U.S. cruisers and destroyers, while China would need only one of its weapons to survive to elect a mission kill. Although U.S. Navy and Air Force leaders have coordinated their efforts to develop the means to operate in an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) environment by disrupting opposing operations, the risk of a carrier suffering a mission kill that takes it off the battle line without actually sinking it remains high. [Emphasis added] Even if Easterbrook is right to say that there is no evidence of a successful test of China's anti-ship missiles, China doesn't need every one of its anti-ship missiles (or one in every hundred, or even one in every thousand) to do its job. If anything, the size of America's advanced nuclear super carriers has become a liability rather than a strength, which is why Hendrix has called for slowly moving away from today's carriers and towards smaller, cheaper ones that could as platforms for unmanned combat aerial vehicles. But this transition will require a substantial investment. I don't doubt that there is fat in the Pentagon's budget request that can be cut. But if you think it will be cheaper in the long run to allow America's strategic position in East Asia to continue to erode than to make smart, targeted investments in weapons systems that will preserve our ability to project force, you're mistaken.

Source: [National Review](#), 10 Mar 2015



### **Indian Navy Planning to Acquire 50 Ship Borne Drones**

Indian Navy is planning to acquire 50 ship borne drones for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions as part of its effort to boost maritime security. "We want to have such a capability and want to know what kind of products are available in the market," defense sources said.

At present, the Navy operates two squadrons of Israeli- origin Heron and Searcher Mk-II UAVs, which are based in Kochi and Porbandar. The force, which had recently issued a request for information seeking details about naval ship borne unmanned aerial system, feels that with such drones, the range of the machines can be increased.

The sources said NSUAS should have the capability of operation from ships of size of at least 50 meters and be able to perform during night conditions as well. The Navy wants these drones to be capable of flying either pre-programmed or operator-initiated missions guided by the Global Positioning System and its on-board flight control system. NSUAS is primarily intended for operations from ship, but should also be capable of operating from ashore, the sources said.

Source: [Brahmand.com](http://Brahmand.com), 3 Mar 2015

### **In South China Sea Row, Top US Commander Roots for India**

Less than two months after the release of the US-India Joint Strategic Vision statement for the Asia-Pacific region during President Barack Obama's visit, one of America's top military commanders has made it clear that China has no right in opposing Indian naval operations in the disputed South China Sea.

Admiral Harry Harris Jr, whose area of responsibility extends to the Pacific and Indian Oceans, said, "The South China seas are international waters and India

should be able to operate freely wherever India wants to operate. If that means the South China Sea, then get in there and do that."

In July 2011, when the Indian Navy amphibious warfare ship INS Shardul set course from the Nha Trang military port in south Vietnam towards Haiphong port in north Vietnam to make a friendly visit, she was buzzed on an open radio channel and told by the Chinese Navy, "You are entering Chinese waters. Move out of here." In 2014, China opposed the India-Vietnam agreement, which would enable the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to explore oil wells in waters which China claims to administer.

Voicing his concerns on China's regional disputes in the South China Sea, Admiral Harris said, "I view with concern China's land reclamation process. I think it's provocative, and it causes tensions to be raised in the South China Sea and all of the countries in the South China seas. So, I am concerned about it. For all of us who are concerned about freedom of navigation, it behoves us to pay attention to what China is doing in the South China Sea and its dramatic land reclamation. They are, in fact, changing facts on the ground."

Though the US Admiral did note the increased Chinese submarine presence in the Indian Ocean, his primary concern was on safeguarding maritime security and ensuring the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, very much in line with the joint statement released by the US and Indian delegations during President Obama's visit to New Delhi in January.

China, for its part, claims much or all of the South China Sea as its territorial waters. The region contains several islands, reefs and sandbars and is thought to be a region enormously rich in hydrocarbons, particularly around the highly disputed Spratly Islands.

Though this has remained largely unstated in public, the United States sees India as a key part of its pivot towards the Asia-Pacific region. Not only is the Indian Navy one of the most powerful forces in the region, it is a useful training partner which engages the US Navy in exceptionally high-level war-game in the annual Malabar series of exercises which are held during the fall. According to Admiral Harris, "I was involved

with Malabar 1995 and now you look at Malabar 2014, and it is leaps and bounds beyond what it was. I would like to have an increase with India in special operations exercises."

Last year, India opened up the Malabar exercises to include Japan, a strong ally of both New Delhi and Washington. Australia – another regional partner of the US and India – also has concerns with Chinese naval expansionism. While India and the United States stand committed to engaging China economically, a new strategic order clearly seems in the process of being established across both the Pacific and Indian Oceans with the US being the big brother.

"As part of the US rebound, the Pacific fleet is going to get bigger. 60 per cent of the US Navy will be in the Pacific fleet by 2020. For me, my area of responsibility for the US Navy is the Pacific and Indian Oceans and so, I say that my area of responsibility goes from Hollywood to Bollywood and Polar Bears to Penguins. So that's kind of all of it. That is 52 per cent of the world. That's my area of responsibility," Admiral Harris said. The US sees India as an important part of this new order.

Source: [NDTV](#), 4 Mar 2015

### **Is Sri Lanka the Next Hub for Indian Ocean Trade?**

Sri Lanka is set to become a destination of choice among businesses looking to tap opportunities in pan-Indian Ocean trade due to its strategic location. Maithripala Sirisena, the country's new president, will have to carefully balance the conflicting interests of neighboring India and the country's largest business partner-China - to sustain economic momentum.

On 15 February, Indian officials welcomed the new Sri Lankan president, Maithripala Sirisena, to New Delhi. The four-day visit to neighboring India was Sirisena's first trip overseas since being sworn into office in early January. Sirisena and India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, signed four agreements, including a bilateral deal on civil

nuclear cooperation. These diplomatic efforts underline the countries' mutual intent to forge closer ties.

Furthermore, the pursuit of closer ties with China has strained relations with India and put Sri Lanka at the centre of geostrategic rivalry in the Indian Ocean.

### *Sri Lanka's appeal to investors*

Sri Lanka is strategically positioned in the Indian Ocean along the major shipping route that connects (South) East Asia with the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and Eastern Africa. In a bid to revive the "maritime Silk Road" (MSR) - referring to an ancient series of land routes that connected China to the Mediterranean Sea - Beijing became a key supporter of the island's economy after the 26-year civil war ended in 2009.

Source: [Seeking Alpha](#), 4 Mar 2015

### **Modi to Ramp up Help for Indian Ocean Nations to Counter China Influence**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will offer island nations in the Indian Ocean a broad range of military and civilian assistance next week in a bid to wrest back some of the influence China has gained by spending billions of dollars in the region.

Modi will make the pledges during a visit to Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles after decades of neglect by successive Indian governments. His trip to Sri Lanka will be the first in 28 years by an Indian prime minister. China has built seaports, power plants and highways across the small island nations. Its navy has also made forays into the Indian Ocean, including when submarines docked last year in Sri Lanka, rattling New Delhi, which has an uneasy relationship with Beijing.

New Delhi is hoping to tie the islands into a closer security embrace, Indian officials said. "India has a role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region," said a defense official involved in preparations for Modi's trip, which begins on March 10.

"We are providing patrol ships, surveillance radars and ocean mapping for the island states."

At the top of Modi's agenda is Sri Lanka, the tear-shaped island off the southern coast of India where a new government, concerned at Beijing's growing influence, is reviewing infrastructure contracts the previous administration awarded to China. It has also ruled out additional Chinese submarine visits in the near future.

### *Security Needs*

During the past year, the Indian defense ministry carried out a survey to identify the maritime needs of the island nations and has begun addressing them, the Indian defense official said.

Other nations require similar maritime assistance, according to the Indian defence ministry assessment. Sri Lanka also needs help with fisheries patrols while the Maldives needs assistance with surveillance against piracy as well as the threat of Islamic State supporters finding a sanctuary in the island chain. Meanwhile, India and Seychelles are expected to sign an agreement on mapping of the waters around the archipelago during Modi's visit. At the same time, China is upgrading the Maldives' international airport after authorities cancelled a deal with an Indian firm in 2012.

However, Modi should not push the smaller states to choose between India and China, said Vijay Sakhuja, director of the government-funded National Maritime Foundation of India and a specialist on Indian Ocean security issues.

"China's overt military support to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Seychelles and Mauritius is an issue which has caused enormous anxiety in India. Notwithstanding that, it will be prudent for Modi to avoid raising the issue, which could result in an "India or China" dilemma."

Source: [Mail Online Wires](#), 5 Mar 2015

## **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Shores Up Strength to Defeat Naval Threats**

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has stepped up efforts to unify naval operations and to set up a joint maritime security force to respond to the increased threats of conflict in the regional waters.

"A joint GCC naval exercise will run until March 12," said a GCC statement released here. "The joint GCC naval exercise is a right step toward an ambitious goal to achieve unified naval command system, in case of emergency situations," said the statement.

The joint naval exercise began in the UAE on Monday with the participation of naval forces of the six Gulf states. The exercise will help raise the level of GCC's preparedness, combat efficiency and cooperation. The aim of the exercise is to unify the naval operations of the GCC states and to exchange expertise to make the GCC navy a deterrent force in a region. Saudi Arabia is participating in the GCC exercise with a number of naval units, boats, special naval security units and Super Puma aircraft.

A local GCC official contacted by Arab News on Saturday could not provide details on the plan of setting up a strong GCC naval force. On maritime threats, a report published recently said that "threats to regional waters over the past year have extended from the Strait of Hormuz further south to the Bab Al-Mandal gateway in Yemen and north to the Red Sea." The report has quoted Maj. Gen. Ahmed Yousif Al-Mulla, a Kuwaiti defense official, as saying that "the new force is expected to be formed within coming months."

The creation of a GCC force will complement international efforts in the field of maritime security, especially at a time when radical groups and militants have become very active in the waters. These groups are also backed by some nation states.

At a recent meeting between GCC Secretary-General Abdul Latif Al-Zayani and Adm. John Miller, commander of US Naval Central Command, concerns were raised about the maritime security.

The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and military cooperation between the GCC states and the US in addition to the issues of common concern such as territorial and maritime security.

The GCC has already set up the Gulf Shield Force, which played a major role in controlling riots in Bahrain. The six-member bloc has also decided to create a common GCC police force and a common counterterrorism body.

Source: [Zawya](#), 8 Mar 2015

### **Modi's Indian Ocean Tour Aimed at Muscling out China**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was set to begin a tour of three Indian Ocean countries Tuesday as he seeks to prevent China from establishing a military foothold in a region his nation has dominated for decades.

Modi was scheduled to visit Seychelles and Mauritius before ending the trip in Sri Lanka, the first visit by an Indian prime minister in 28 years, and where a January election produced a new government vowing to reduce dependence on China.

During the stops, he will look to expand military as well as economic ties — something that India had avoided until recently. India has started to bolster its naval presence to assert greater control in waters that carry most of the world's oil trade, underscoring its growing discomfort after a Chinese submarine docked twice at a Chinese-built port in Sri Lanka last year. The visits fueled doubts that China's strategy of building ports in the Indian Ocean was one based purely on economics.

“Modi's visit to the Indian Ocean reflects the heightened strategic significance of these island states in Indian thinking,” said David Brewster, a specialist in Indo-Pacific security at the Australian National University in Canberra. “India takes great exception to the presence of extra regional powers in the Indian Ocean and the reaction of New Delhi to the sub visits was an indication of that.”

“The navy has to be built up,” said Vivek Katju, former Indian ambassador to Afghanistan, Myanmar and Thailand. “As India’s global role will increase, it’s inevitable that India will have to pay far greater attention to the Indian Ocean region, which includes the eastern seaboard of Africa.” China over the past decade has strengthened its economic ties with countries bordering the Indian Ocean, and in 2013 was the second-largest trading partner to Sri Lanka and Mauritius behind India, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. In Sri Lanka, China’s share of total trade rose to 11 percent from 3 percent a decade earlier, outpacing India.

Sri Lanka is India’s biggest neighbour in the Indian Ocean, as well as its most crucial partner. Modi has sought to mend relations damaged during the decade-long regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa, who went to great lengths to court Chinese investment, including a \$1.4 billion project to build a city on reclaimed land off Colombo.

After taking power two months ago, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena suspended the project and sought to rebalance his country’s ties with India. On a trip to New Delhi last month, Sirisena signed a deal to receive training for Sri Lanka’s civilian nuclear program. India’s state-run National Thermal Power Corp. is awaiting environmental clearances before starting work on a 500-megawatt thermal power plant in Trincomalee, a port on the eastern coastline, Jaishankar said on Monday before the trip.

Modi is concerned that China wants to expand its military presence in the region by establishing naval bases in key Indian Ocean ports. This is the “string of pearls” theory first expounded by U.S. consultant Booz Allen Hamilton in a 2005 report for U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

President Xi Jinping rekindled those worries among Indian analysts last year when he visited Sri Lanka and Maldives, and met the president of Seychelles in Beijing, to promote his so-called Silk Road trade route rejuvenation project. The initiative is backed by a \$40 billion infrastructure fund and includes a maritime route through the ocean states.

Modi has sought to build closer ties with Japan, Vietnam and Australia, all countries that share concerns about China’s maritime actions. During U.S. President Barack

Obama's trip to New Delhi in January, the two leaders pledged to uphold freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

While China's naval prowess poses a direct threat to nations with competing territorial claims close to its eastern seaboard, Beijing's leaders will struggle to overcome a geographic disadvantage in the Indian Ocean, according to Brewster at Australian National University. "China has a huge strategic vulnerability in the Indian Ocean that it can partially mitigate but never get rid of," he said. "That's not going to change even if there are a handful of Chinese vessels hanging.

Source: [Japan Times](#), 10 Mar 2015

### **India, ASEAN to Discuss South China Sea Dispute at Delhi Meet**

in the backdrop of growing Chinese influence in South China Sea, India and ASEAN countries will discuss the evolving security architecture in the region, including in maritime and cyber space, during a two-day meet here beginning tomorrow.

"Yes, we will be discussing regional security architecture (with ASEAN countries), as well as South China Sea issues, maritime security, cyber security," Secretary East in the Ministry of External Affairs Anil Wadhwa told reporters here.

Asked specifically about South China Sea, which was witnessing growing Chinese influence and whether it would figure during the Delhi Dialogue VII, he said, "When we discuss security issues in the South China Sea, maritime security etc, obviously these issues will come up. "The idea is to evolve a security architecture in the region... The code of conduct in South China Sea, which is engaging China in the ASEAN countries... All these issues will come up," Wadhwa said.

India has been always maintaining that there should be a freedom of navigation in the high seas and the territorial dispute in South China Sea should be resolved through dialogue. The territorial disputes in South China Sea involve both island and maritime claims among several countries within the region including China, Vietnam and Philippines. To a question on military cooperation in South China Sea, Wadhwa

said: "We have a cooperative approach to solving all security problems, that includes the South China Sea.

"Our aim is to make sure that an approach which is based on conciliation and on peaceful means of negotiation. So whatever means we adopt in the future will be with that aim in mind,"

Source: [Business-Standard](#), 10 Mar 2015

### **China's Island Building**

Over the past two years, China has been methodically terraforming small reefs and shoals into islands in the highly contentious South China Sea. The SCS is important because of its not only strategic, trade, and resource potential but also because many of the claimants' direct links with the U.S. such as the Philippines. China's progressive pace of reclamation and the exponential growth of infrastructure on these islands has alarmed the international community. China's ambitions have yet to be confirmed since Beijing remains tight-lipped, adding cause for concern by the SCS's surrounding nations.

It appears that Beijing's efforts are a coordinated attempt to wrest control of the SCS by a novel policy of "island-building" that is analogous to the systematic encroachment policy pejoratively known by China watchers as "salami-slicing." It is important to draw a distinction between terraforming claims by other nations, such as United Arab Emirates' coastal city of Dubai, and China's claims. Dubai's reclamation efforts of the Palm and World Islands off the Emirati coast are not part of an expansive territorial grab or to defend Emirati territory. Meanwhile, the on-going island reclamation by China in the SCS is *not* the same since these reclaimed islands are hundreds of miles from the nearest Chinese dry land and manifest a Chinese bent toward military projection.

The international community is witnessing the unveiling of a new geopolitical reality: terriclaiming. Terriclaiming, short for *territorial-reclamation*, describes a nation's reclamation activity that seeks to preserve or expand its land and/or maritime

territory. The U.S. should address Chinese territorial claiming in the SCS with urgency and the international community as it serves our short term and long term national interest.

Inaction by the U.S. or international community will effectively grant a green light for copycat behaviour. There are more than 150 littoral (coastal and island) nations with maritime claims. The Earth's seascape is filled with multiple, shallow and littoral areas that are crisscrossed by adjoining national borders. Many of these boundaries sit atop vast resource-rich and strategic areas and could have their maritime borders redrawn by the territorial claims of an ambitious neighbour. Aside from the SCS, three of the most vulnerable areas to territorial claiming are the Arctic, the Persian Gulf, and the Baltic's. Each of these areas borders a strategic, economic, and political fault line for U.S. policymakers.

Source: [Real Clear Defense](#), 10 Mar 2015

### **Indonesian Navy to Give 10 Ships to Maritime Security Board**

The Indonesian Navy said on Tuesday that it planned to hand over 10 Navy Patrol ships to the Maritime Security Board (Bakamla) by the end of this year.

Navy chief of staff, Adm. Ade Supandi, said the 10 ships would require alterations before Bakamla could use them. "There needs to be some adjustments because they will be used as civilian patrol boats and we must follow several protocol," Ade told The Jakarta Post on Tuesday. Ade said large weapons on the ships would be removed and replaced with those of a smaller caliber.

He said the 37-millimetre cannon on one of the ships, for example, would be replaced by a 12.7-millimetre one, which would be more appropriate for Bakamla's patrol activities.

The Navy also plans to set up a survey team to assess the condition of the 10 ships before they are handed over to Bakamla. The 10 ships must obtain permits from the Defence Ministry and the Finance Ministry before being used. "The process is still

underway. We expect the 10 boats to be handed over later this year,” Ade said. Ade was tight-lipped about which 10 ships would be handed over to the security board.

Of the 60 seaworthy ships, the Navy can only operate 15 due to fuel shortages. Ade promised to help Bakamla boost the capacity of board’s ability to operate the ships independently. “We will teach them. But we can also temporarily deploy our own personnel to operate the boats. It depends on Bakamla,” the admiral said. Bakamla urgently needs additional patrol boats to support its appointed task of securing Indonesia waters. Currently, Bakamla operates two ships; the KN Bintang Laut and the KN Singa Laut. Thirty new patrol ships being built.

Bakamla was established to boost sea patrol effectiveness in line with President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo goal to turn Indonesia into a maritime axis. Currently, Bakamla is tasked with coordinating 12 institutions in the country’s maritime sector, including the Navy, the Water Police, the Customs Office, the Immigration Agency, prosecutors’ offices, the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry, the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Transportation Ministry. Bakamla’s operating chief, Commodore Wuspo Lukito, said the new agency was currently battling overlapping regulations and a lack of coordination among maritime stakeholders. Shortages in personnel and patrol boats have also limited the effectiveness of Bakamla in the short term.

Source: [Jakarta Post](#), 11 Mar 2015

### **Keep Indian Ocean Region Truly Indian**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ongoing visit to three Indian Ocean islands—Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka—shows their importance to India. One of the hallmarks of his foreign policy is his keenness to strengthen India’s relations with neighbors. Though two of the islands are situated thousands of miles away from Indian shores, they have always been considered as neighbors. They are of strategic importance because India’s security is intertwined with the security of the Indian Ocean. India also enjoys centuries-old cultural links with those islands. They have

many things in common with India. Mauritius is also India's gateway to the African continent.

That India's sphere of influence extends to these island nations is not something which some nations, especially China, cannot accept. China has, for instance, been doing everything possible with its cheque book diplomacy. Because it has deep pockets, it believes it can overtly and covertly influence the countries in the region. Sri Lanka is one country on which it showered a lot of attention, not so much to improve their bilateral ties as to pit it against India. Colombo even seemed to have fallen for the temptations. Fortunately, the new government of Maithripala Sirisena realised the dangers of aligning too much with China. Much of the flux in the Maldives is, again, because of the involvement of China in its internal affairs.

India cannot afford to ignore attempts to build garland-like defense posts around it. This can be countered only by strengthening political and economic ties with these islands. It will also act as a bulwark against foreign interference. Today many nations expect India to play a major role in keeping the Indian Ocean safe for shipping. This makes it obligatory for India to have stations in the region from where it can intervene effectively and at short notice. Much depends on the kind of agreements Modi reaches with these nations. India can also play a significant role in the economic development of these countries. Nothing should stop India from keeping Indian Ocean Indian.

Source: [Indian Express](#), 12 Mar 2015

### **Seafarer Welfare Vessel Gets to Work in Hong Kong**

A new sea-going motor launch, named Dayspring, has started providing essential welfare services for seafarers out of the port of Hong Kong, thanks to The Mission to Seafarers.

The Dayspring will bring help and hope to the hardworking crews onboard the many thousands of merchant ships that visit the marine anchorages every year, to bring essential food, medicines, supplies and goods from China and on to ports in Europe.

Dayspring, built by Cheoy Lee Shipyards in China's Guangdong province, was funded by donations to The Mission to Seafarers. The new vessel has replaced an existing vessel which had been in service for 20 years.

Stephen Miller, director for East Asia, The Mission to Seafarers, said the Dayspring is also designed to bring chaplains and other ship visitors to merchant ships, bringing comfort to those seaman who feel lonely and sad at being isolated.

"The Mission provides essential communications services to all seafarers by bringing news and the latest telecommunication data aids available. And for those fortunate crews to be allowed shore leave, she will operate as a regular shuttle service to and from shore."

Source: [Sea Trade Global](#), 12 Mar 2015

### **PM Modi Commissions India-Built Mauritian Naval Patrol Ship**

An India-built naval patrol vessel for Mauritius that will help in better policing its vast exclusive economic zone was commissioned today by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said it will make the Indian Ocean "more safer and secure".

The induction of the 1,300-tonne vessel 'Barracuda' for the Mauritian National Coast Guard amid attempts by China to establish its presence in the Indian Ocean Region marks the first of such sales to this strategic island nation which include fast attack craft under construction in Indian shipyards.

"Barracuda is a beautiful ship. She is also very capable and built to specifications of Mauritius...She will protect your islands and your waters," Modi said after commissioning the ship at Quay 'A' of Port Louis harbour in the presence of his Mauritian counterpart Aneerod Jugnauth.

"She will be there to help in times of disasters and emergencies. But she will do more than that. She will also help make our Indian Ocean safer and more secure," he said. Mauritius has a vast 2.3 million sq km of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Jugnauth, while observing that Mauritius by virtue of its strategic location is recognised as a hub of maritime activities in Indian Ocean, said the induction of coastal patrol vessel was yet another step for better control of its large assets besides helping in policing transnational crimes like piracy and bridging the communication gaps among its various islands. He said Mauritius requires armaments like Fast Attack Aircraft and light armoured personnel carriers and was hopeful India would extend support in this regard.

'Barracuda', which has automatic 30 mm Rapid Fire Gun and 12.7 mm Heavy Machine Guns as part of its ammunition, was handed over to Mauritius in December 2014 by Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE). The vessel has been built at an estimated cost of USD 60 million. It is the first defence export order for a warship built in India, which is optimistic about a follow up order.

Modi had said last night that he and Jugnauth considered security cooperation between their countries to be a cornerstone of their strategic partnership. He had also said that India was honoured to be preferred partner for Mauritius in developing its security capabilities. Modi had also assured his Mauritian counterpart of timely support in all areas, including delivery of other ships and equipment that Mauritius has ordered from India.

The commissioning of 'Barracuda' comes at a time when India is looking at supporting the maritime infrastructure of friendly foreign countries. Observing that the Indian Ocean is critical to the future of the world, Modi said India will be more dependent than before on the ocean and the surrounding regions.

"We must also assume our responsibility to shape its (Indian Ocean) future. So, Indian Ocean is at the top of our policy priorities," he said, adding, "Our vision for Indian Ocean Region is rooted in advancing cooperation in our region, and to use our capabilities for the benefit of all in our common maritime homes."

Source: [Economic Times](#), 12 Mar 2015

### **Sri Lanka Navy Hurls Petrol Bombs at Tamil Nadu Fishing Boat**

Sri Lankan naval personnel on Thursday allegedly hurled petrol bombs at a fishing boat from Thangachimadam in Tamil Nadu's Rameswaram district causing damage to the boat, police said. The five occupants of the boat escaped unhurt and managed to douse the fire and bring the boat to the shore.

Police said the Lankan naval men allegedly hurled bottles and wood to chase the fishermen fishing near Katchatheevu. The 'Q' branch wing of the police said they were investigating the incident. The Sri Lankan President's office had on Wednesday announced the release of 86 Indian fishermen, arrested for allegedly poaching in Lankan waters, as a goodwill gesture to mark Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, the first by an Indian premier to the island nation in over 25 years.

That gesture, however, came only a week after Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe sparked a controversy by saying that Indian fishermen will be shot if they cross the international borders. He even refused to consider the decision a violation of the fishermen's human rights.

Modi is scheduled to visit Sri Lanka on March 13 and 14 and hold important bilateral meetings with President Maithripala Sirisena and other senior leaders across the political spectrum.

Source: [India Today](#), 12 Mar 2015

### **U.S. Meddling on South China Sea Betrays Pirate-Style Sense of Insecurity**

The United States has once again violated its commitment to not holding position or taking sides on the South China Sea issue, and its so-called concerns about China's "threat" serve only to reveal its pirate-style sense of insecurity.

U.S. Department of State spokesperson Jen Psaki said earlier this week that China's development activities in the South China Sea were feeding suspicions that Beijing aimed to establish military bases across the South China Sea. Psaki's accusation is

strikingly biased and by no means conducive to solving the disputes and bolstering peace and stability in the busy body of water vital to international trade.

The United States has for long turned a blind eye to the solid argument China has made in response to the various ill-grounded charges leveled against it, and is even cobbling together a coalition in a thinly veiled attempt to contain China on the matter.

In a recent provocation, Vice Adm. Robert Thomas, commander of the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet, "welcomed" future Japanese air patrols over the South China Sea, claiming that such Japanese involvement "makes sense in the future." In its intentional description of peacefully developing China as a threat, the United States, notwithstanding the world's strongest military might and a long history of military aggression, is displaying a perverted sense of insecurity.

This pirate-style mind-set will only make things worse, both in the settlement of the South China Sea disputes and in the handling of other international affairs. Outside meddling on the South China Sea issue from the United States and other like-minded countries is not welcome, as it will serve nothing but to sow discord, stoke tension and thus hinder the search for a peaceful solution. China has exercised considerable restraint, and its actions, including carrying out some island construction and rejecting international arbitration, are lawful, justified and well explained.

It is advisable that Washington honour its neutral commitment, abandon its warped mentality, retract its meddling hand, and play a truly constructive role in the Asia-Pacific.

Source: [Global Post](#), 14 Mar 2015

### **US Navy can be Defeated by China, Claims Global Times**

In response to a New York Times piece by Gregg Easterbrook on March 9, China's nationalist tabloid Global Times wrote a commentary of its own, saying that China is

capable of defeating the US Navy in the Western Pacific with anti-ship missiles built at low prices.

In Easterbrook's article, he said that China currently possesses only one outdated, conventionally powered aircraft carrier and is rumored to be constructing two others. However, neither of those two vessels are likely to be nuclear super carriers, according to the author. Furthermore, Easterbrook questioned whether those two domestically built carriers have "blue water" or open ocean-going capabilities. Easterbrook said that the US Navy is more powerful than all other navies in the world combined in terms of its aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, naval aviation, surface firepower, assault ships, missiles and logistics. The article also went on to say that there is no evidence that China has conducted realistic tests of its anti-ship missile. "China's neighbors are unhappy that the growing Chinese Navy may back Beijing's claims regarding the South China Sea," Easterbrook wrote. "But Chinese naval expansion does not pose any direct threat to the national security of the United States, or to its dominance of the oceans." He then stated that making the US Navy more powerful does not help to solve the dispute over the South China Sea peacefully.

The Global Times was unhappy about Easterbrook's evaluation of Chinese naval power and said in its commentary that it is not necessary for China to build a strong and powerful navy to defeat the US in a regional conflict. With enough low cost anti-ship missiles, the People's Liberation Army Navy is capable of paralyzing the US Navy's freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, the paper said. Enough damage can be done to morale and equipment even if only one missile out of 1,000 hits an aircraft carrier.

Source: [Want China Times](#), 15 Mar 2015



### **Second Cruise Ship to Set Sail for Sansha**

Hainan province will launch another cruise ship route in Sansha in June to boost tourism in the South China Sea, Lu Zhiyuan, head of the provincial tourism department, said recently.

Lu said the current cruise ship Coconut Princess has only 200 beds, which can't meet the needs of increasing tourist numbers. Travelers can take Coconut Princess from Sanya to three islands in the South China Sea on a four-day trip that costs from 3,980 yuan (\$636) to 12,200 yuan.

According to Xiao Jie, mayor of Sansha, Coconut Princess sailed 36 times and carried nearly 6,000 tourists to Sansha last year. Xiao said there are more than 80 people working for five dining and entertainment centers for travelers in Sansha. In order to protect the environment on the islands, tourists are currently asked to eat and spend the night on the ship.

As an island city in the South China Sea, Sansha has unique tourism resources, said Xiao. This year, a tourism company will be founded there to boost the city's maritime tourism industry. The city also wants to build hotels and bring in new shipping routes to attract more visitors.

Projects including building roads and planting trees have been accelerated to cater to the demand of an increasing population and tourists. In July 2012, China established Sansha, with its government seat on Yongxing Island, to administer the Xisha, Zhongsha and Nan - sha islands and their surrounding waters in the South China Sea.

As China's newest city, Sansha administers more than 280 islets. However, it handles the smallest land area and population for a prefecture-level city. For generations, Sansha's islets have served as landmarks and post houses for Chinese anglers. Now the leafy islets attract people from other parts of China with their white beaches, ocean views and seafood.

Despite the city's rapid progress, the biggest challenge for Sansha's tourism industry is still the lack of basic infrastructure and transport. Most of its islands are more than 100 nautical miles from Hainan and are heavily dependent on supplies from outside. According to Hainan's annual government work report, maritime tourism will top the provincial government's agenda this year. "We have been increasing the investment in Sansha's tourism industry. Hopefully it will have a breakthrough in 2015," said Xiao.

Source: [China Daily](#), 3 Mar 2015

### **Is Islamic State (IS) a Threat to Shipping?**

Mediterranean shipping could be at threat after Quilliam – a British anti-terrorism think-tank – seized a document sent by the Islamic State outlining its intention to cause chaos to commercial shipping in Europe, according to a report by Charlie Bartlett in Seatrade-Global.

The document has been considered a bluff, despite claims made by the Islamic State that it will be targeting crusader ships and tankers, as well as closing shipping lines.

The document also outlines the possibility of using existing people-trafficking routes in order to smuggle jihadists into Southern Europe. It could prove to be the biggest threat of disruption to Mediterranean shipping since WWII if the document is sincere, according to Bartlett.

Ian Millen, COO of maritime operations company, Dryad Maritime, said: "With a strong foothold and logistic base in Libya, it would be theoretically feasible for Islamic State to target shipping in the Mediterranean. How likely this is and how capable they might be in open sea operations is another question. "Whilst privately contracted armed security personnel are more than a match for Somali pirates intent on boarding a vessel for hijack, a suicide attack from a ISIS terrorist would pose very different challenges. That doesn't mean that the shipping industry would not push to have this level of embarked protection."

Attempts thus far by Islamic terrorist groups to attack commercial shipping have proved largely unsuccessful. In other Mediterranean news, Hellenic Shipping News reported that European shipping is set to become more competitive after European Transport Minister Violeta Bulc announced initiatives such as more financial support to assist with shipping infrastructure and logistics innovation.

Source: [Port Technology](#), 3 Mar 2015

### **New Product for Shipping Industry**

Shipping companies can now save significant fuel on their ships, thanks to a new product unveiled by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS).

The institute has launched a customized service for the shipping industry in the form of daily bulletins on Ocean State Forecast along standard shipping routes. The bulletins will cover information and forecast on winds, swell waves, sea currents, high waves and rainfall for the next two days.

This will help ships to make changes in their routes to avoid sea and weather turbulence. A K Gupta, CMD of Shipping Corporation of India, said weather routing of ships play an important role in fuel savings. Wind speeds, swell waves and other ocean conditions make an impact on the speed of the ship and fuel consumption. The bulletins will cover standard sea lanes in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

"With these bulletins, we can now steer our ships through better weather routes, which will help in lowering our fuel consumption," Gupta said, after launching the product. INCOIS also launched other new products, including an atlas of potential fishing zones, an Android-based app for ocean information services for the benefit of fishermen. There are plans to make available the app on Google play store and on INCOIS Web site. The institute organized its fifth user interaction workshop here today.

Source: [Hindu](#) , 3 Mar 2015

## **'Overseas Shipping' Should See Ship Loads of Profits**

The hoopla about building a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road – one that will connect China's ports to Southeast Asia and points as far west as the Gulf of Persia – may sound like bombast from Beijing, but it underscores a new economic reality: Maritime trade in Asia is a rising tide that should lift many boats.

Increased shipping and China's plan to spend billions working with partners to develop maritime infrastructure is good news for everyone from port operators to logistics companies. But shares of one company in particular could leave others in its wake.

Orient Overseas is a Hong Kong-listed container shipping company. While its global market share is just 2.6%, the company is especially exposed to intra-Asia trade, which, according to Barclays analyst Jon Windham, drives 35% of its revenue and 51% of its volume. The stock is also cheap – shares are submerged below the level of its book value – and the company very well-managed, both of which improve the odds that Orient Overseas will sail toward higher investor returns.

Already, Asia's ports seem to reflect this bullish outlook, and their shares do not look cheap. In contrast, stocks of shippers seem more depressed, bogged down by perennial concerns about aggressive competition and over-capacity in the industry.

Yet Orient Overseas has many things going for it. For a start, the company has benefitted from the big decline in energy costs, and appears to have been able to capture the fuel savings for itself. Fourth quarter results released late-January showed that its average freight rate rose 3% year-over year, while Brent crude oil

Orient Overseas' shares have gained more than 30% over the past year, but are still 43% off their 2011 peak. Shares still fetch just 0.9 times book value. Jefferies analyst Bonnie Chan notes that institutional investors have "not looked at the sector for the past several years," thanks to perceptions of worsening over-supply, and concerns that cost savings from lower oil prices will be passed on to the end users of the logistics services. In reality, according to Chan, the sector's idle fleet has been reduced from 4% to 1.2% over the last year.

Barclays' Windham thinks the stock ought to trade at one time expected 2015 book value, which pegs his target price at HKD 63.50 a share, or roughly 29% above current levels. That price-to-book multiple could prove conservative as Asia's regional trade grows, and Orient's efficiency helps it capture more of that growing pie.

Investors can wait for Orient's 2014 earnings results, due March 9, to get the full measure on last year's performance and management's forecast for the future. But for longer-term investors looking to load up on Orient Overseas' undervalued shares, the ship by then may have sailed

Source: [Barrons](#), 5 Mar 2015

### **Cheap Oil Doesn't Deter Japan Shipbuilders from Betting on LNG**

At a shipyard in southern Japan, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. engineers envision the newest fuel-efficient engines for liquefied natural gas carriers while others design tanks with greater capacity.

Years after South Korean rivals became the world's largest shipbuilders, the Japanese stand at the cusp of clawing back some of the industry they once dominated. LNG is the catalyst. With several projects around the globe set to begin shipping in the next few years and Japan already the largest importer of the super-cooled fuel, Japan shipbuilders are anticipating a windfall. And while lower oil prices are threatening the viability of some LNG projects, some remain convinced the industry's growing pains are mere road bumps in a longer game and that their advances in technology provide an edge.

"The wind is in the sails of Japan's shipbuilders," said Nobutaka Nambu, chief executive officer at World Ships Future, a consultant for the shipbuilding and shipping industries in Tokyo. "They are now placed to take a step forward. They are now in a position to make a dent in the Koreans' oligopoly." LNG trade is set to exceed \$120 billion this year, overtaking iron ore to become the most valuable

physical commodity after oil, analysts from Goldman Sachs Group Inc., including Jeffrey Currie, said in an e-mailed report recently.

All that trade means more ships to move the fuel. LNG is formed by squeezing and cooling natural gas until it becomes a liquid, making it suitable to be shipped over long distances in specially built ships with insulated tanks. The carriers typically sell for as much as \$200 million apiece and the largest can measure about 345 meters (1,130 feet) in length, or almost four American football fields

Source: [Bloomberg Business](#), 9 Mar 2015

### **China's Biggest Shipyard Is Now a Ghost Ship**

Piles of rusty steel bars and old ship parts are virtually all that's left of a sprawling shipyard in the eastern city of Rugao, where Jiangsu Rongsheng Heavy Industries Group Co. used to employ more than 30,000 people.

Once China's largest shipbuilder, Rongsheng is on the verge of bankruptcy. Orders have dried up and banks are refusing credit. Questions have been raised about the shipyard's business practices, including allegations of padded order books. In addition, Rongsheng is apparently behind on repaying some of the 20.4 billion yuan in combined debt owed to 14 banks, three trusts and three leasing firms, sources told Caixin. The few hundred shipyard workers left – survivors of what's now a three-year downsizing – are wondering whether they'll ever see their overdue paychecks. Those with an uncertain future include a worker who cuts steel from abandoned ships into pieces that can be sold for scrap. "We haven't been paid since November," the worker said.

Rongsheng is on the ropes now that it has completed a multi-year order for so-called Valemax ships for the Brazilian iron ore mining giant Companhia Vale do Rio Doce. The last of these 16 bulk carriers, the Ore Ningbo, was delivered in January.

With a carrying capacity of up to 400,000 tons, Valemaxes are the world's largest ore carriers. Vale hired Rongsheng to build the ships starting in 2008, and has tolerated the shipyard's slow pace: The Ore Ningbo was delivered three years late.

Rongsheng employees said the Ore Ningbo may have been the shipyard's last product because no new ship orders are expected and all contracts for unfinished ships have either been canceled or are in jeopardy. A Rongsheng manager who asked not to be named said Shipping Corp. of India recently cancelled an order for a 300,000 ton bulk commodities carrier. "And work has been suspended on a 57,000 ton crude oil vessel for Shanghai North sea Shipping Co."

Another manager said he expected "no business after the delivery of the last ship to Vale. Most workers have been dismissed. Management can stay, but their numbers are falling. Their contracts will not be extended after they expire." In retrospect, said a Rongsheng executive, the company went too far. Financial reports for the years 2008 to 2011 show Rongsheng planned to spend between 1.5 billion yuan and 5.4 billion yuan annually on fixed-asset investments. The executive said company founder and former chairman Zhang Zhirong supported the expansion plan in hopes that greater production capacity would help accelerate shipbuilding and deliveries. In addition, a source close to Zhang said some expansion decisions were designed to improve the company's bottom line through real estate development that had nothing to do with building ships.

Nevertheless, the shipyard, a sprawling facility spread across one-third of Changqingsha Island in the middle of the Yangtze River, suffered from a lack of capacity and management problems. As a result, the company had trouble meeting its contract obligations, including delivery timetables.

"All of Rongsheng's problems are tied to difficulties with delivering ships," said a Rongsheng manager. "Many of Rongsheng's order cancellations were due to its own delivery delays."

Rongsheng built ships with a combined capacity of 8 million tons in 2010 and was preparing to begin filling US\$ 3 billion in new orders the following year. But the company's 2011 orders wound up totaling only US\$ 1.8 billion. That same year,

according to shipping information provider Lloyd's List, Rongsheng's customers canceled contracts for 23 new vessels. A former Rongsheng engineer said the company had to significantly cut its equipment purchase spending plan because "there was no money."

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), 12 Mar 2015

### **Arctic Warms up to Shipping**

Kenji Shinoda, the Japanese ambassador to Finland, said the "Arctic is becoming more and more promising for collaboration" between the two nations. The growth of shipping liquefied natural gas (LNG) through the Northern Sea route from Scandinavia to Japanese ports has been "impressive," and the Barents Sea, which cradles Scandinavia and Northwest Russia, is an "active and enticing region for various sectors."

"Now is not too early to start looking vigorously for these opportunities," Shinoda said. Malte Humpert, the director of the Arctic Institute and a maritime shipping expert, said shipping will play an outsized role in the region's future. However, he tempered notions that the Northern Sea Route -- which connects Europe and Asia by wrapping around Russia's north -- could soon replace more established routes.

At a high-level Arctic Summit, organized by The Economist magazine in Oslo on 12 March, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) – the global trade association for merchant ship operators – highlighted important issues associated with the growth of Arctic shipping and expressed confidence in the industry's environmental performance.

Peter Hinchliffe, ICS Secretary General, explained that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the appropriate forum for developing standards for ships operating in the Arctic as it has the necessary legal and technical expertise to take full account of the interests of all maritime nations including those with an Arctic coastline.

ICS stressed the critical importance of a mandatory and uniform regulatory framework to ensure maritime safety and environmental protection, as the volume of Arctic shipping gradually increases in response to new interest in developing the region's natural resources.

The speakers including business leaders, diplomats, academicians and government officials emphasized attracting foreign investors to the arctic region and its various sectors like industry, shipping, mining, energy, transport and logistics. Canadian Ambassador to Finland Andrée N. Cooligan said Finnish firms – shipping, maritime and arctic - have much to gain by establishing a first-to-market investment in Canada following the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic & Trade Agreement (CETA). She said CETA helps eliminate tariffs and reduce non-tariff barriers.

As sea ice decreases and Arctic navigation becomes more prevalent, IMO is developing the Polar Code to address ship safety and environmental protection in Polar waters.

Source: [Marine Link](#), 14 Mar 2015

### **Maritime Malta: The Success of Malta Freeport Terminals**

The only constant feature in the maritime industry is change and it is safe to state that this phenomenon is prevalent in all shipping sectors.

In the case of liner shipping, this sector is in a continuous state of flux, with the major carriers constantly adjusting and adapting their strategies not only in reaction to demand and supply but also in anticipation of future trends.

Perhaps it is not sensational news, but those of us whose livelihoods depend on the local maritime industry, were positively impressed to learn about the new development at Malta Freeport Terminals (MFT), namely the decision of the two leading shipping consortia, to choose MFT as their main transshipment hub in the central Mediterranean.

One of the major developments to hit the global liner industry at the beginning of 2015 was the grouping of diverse shipping lines into various consortia. The *raison d'être* behind the establishment of these consortia is to enable the carriers to operate even bigger vessels and to take full advantage of the economies of scale resulting from the larger vessels and to reduce costs through consolidation and rationalisation.

The two leading consortia worldwide are the 2M, made up of Maersk and MSC, and Ocean 3, made up of CMA-CGM, China Shipping and UASC, who will be operating over 350 ships, including vessels of 18,000 20ft container capacity.

Given the size of these entities and the anticipated financial impact that this development will have on the world economic growth, it is a highly commendable achievement for MFT and for Malta that these two leading consortia have chosen MFT as their main transshipment hub in the central Mediterranean.

Such developments are not the fruit of chance or coincidence. Rather, these are the results of years of strategic marketing, judicious directions and above all a consistent and credible track-record of the performance of the terminal.

The name of the game is efficiency. These global carriers have to monitor all their operations to the last minute because competition is so tough and there is absolutely no room for slack or delay. Hence, their choice of MFT is a credit to the terminal itself because were it not consistently efficient, such lines would not take the risk of choosing Malta.

Malta should build on such success and other success stories in the maritime field. From a macro perspective, such a development results in positive economic developments that trigger a multiplier effect mainly due to the range of service providers, apart from the terminal itself, who are involved in such operations.

The direct activities that are generated include: the call of the vessels in port; the transshipment of containers; the handling of the containers on the terminal; the generation of forwarding networks for the carriage of containers to their final destination; the generation of multiple economic activities through the support

services provided to ships calling at Malta; and the increase in demand for infrastructural development for terminals and quays.

It is not commercially prudent to go into the specifics of what these lines pay when calling at Malta. However, there is no doubt that on an annual basis this development will generate a substantial income for Malta's economy, the terminal and service providers. Apart from fees paid to the terminal, the shipping lines are also paying for services such as pilot age, mooring, towage, port services, ship agency services, ship chandlers and bunker supplies.

Apart from these direct services, it is normal for vessels to request and pay for additional services while in port, including stores, repairs, surveys, supplies of spare parts and transport services. These two consortia will be having an average of nine weekly calls or 468 when extended on an annual basis. These ship calls, together with other shipping lines already calling at MFT, will provide a regular network to 128 ports worldwide and the net beneficiary of this unique network will be Maltese imports and exports.

Malta's seaborne trade when compared to transshipment traffic is negligible, but because of these extensive networks, Malta's imports and exports will benefit from short transit times and competitive rates. If one takes a step back and views these developments within the perspective of Malta's geographical size, population and GDP, one is allowed to feel proud. This sense of pride, however, cannot be allowed to go to our heads because this is an industry which is constantly on the move and if the MFT and Malta do not deliver every time and all the time, these shipping lines just move on to the next best location.

Malta should build on such success and other success stories in the maritime field to cluster its resources to better market a maritime Malta, to enhance the existing services and to broaden its services to an even bigger audience. The positive experience of maritime clusters in other established and not-so-established maritime centres should serve as a beacon for Malta to steer itself on an even steadier course in this important industry and economic activity.

Source: [Times of Malta](#), 15 Mar 2015



### **Increasing levels of pollution in the Caspian Sea**

Caspian Sea is dying out of pollution and its littoral states (Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) are not able to decide who owns what and their responsibilities to the Caspian Sea, towards each other and the non-littoral states. The littoral states of the Caspian Sea have even concluded an agreement to combat the pollution in the Caspian Sea, but until such time that the regime of the Caspian Sea is not defined, these kinds of agreements are useless.

The main problem is that the newly independent countries (this includes Russia which is not the USSR) around the Caspian Sea are not ready to give an equitable share of the Caspian Sea to Iran. On the other side, Iran as a country run by the regime of the Islamic Republic is in no [position to force the other states, legally or practically, to accept the equal or fair share (as Iran demands) to it.

The cash hungry newly independent countries around the Caspian sea, are plundering, draining, drilling, dumping wastes, extracting any valuable sources, and pushing some of them like sturgeon fish (the source of Caspian Caviar), to the brink of extinction.

The Caspian Sea is in serious environmental danger. Iran has a small share from polluting point of view, but it gets a much extensive part of pollution created by other countries because of the sea currents in the Caspian Sea. Russians are the greatest polluters. They create 80% of the Caspian pollution. After that, Azerbaijan is producing some of the worst kinds of pollutions because of their outdated oil refineries and other oil installations in the Caspian Sea. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are after Azerbaijan in the pollution production.

According to the report of the Energy Information Administration in: Untreated waste from the Volga River, into which half the population of Russia - and most of its heavy industry - drains its sewage, empties directly into the Caspian Sea. Oil extraction and refining complexes in Baku and Sumgayit in Azerbaijan are major sources of land-based pollution, and offshore oil fields, refineries, and petrochemical plants

have generated large quantities of toxic waste, run-off, and oil spills. In addition, radioactive solid and liquid waste deposits near the Gurevskaya nuclear power plant in Kazakhstan are polluting the Caspian as well... The impact on human health has been measurable, and the Caspian's sturgeon catch has decreased dramatically in recent years.

Local and international environmental groups point out that the Caspian's ecosystem has already suffered decades of abuse from the Soviets, and is fragile and in need of recovery; not additional stress. Decades of lax environmental controls have dumped dangerous toxins into the Volga River, the main source of the Caspian and into the sea itself. Scientists estimate that each year an average of 60,000 metric tons of petroleum byproducts, 24,000 tons of sulfites, 400,000 tons of chlorine and 25,000 tons of chlorine are dumped into the sea. Concentrations of oil and phenols in the northern sea are four to six times higher than the maximum recommended standards. Around Baku, where oil drilling and industrialization have been happening for almost a century, these pollutants are ten to sixteen times higher.

The Caspian sturgeon and the Caspian seal, one of two freshwater species in the world, have been dying in large numbers as a result of polluters or poachers, who have operated with impunity since the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

"The sturgeon will be commercially extinct in two to three years," says a World Bank official. According to a report by AP, thousands of seals have died in Caspian Sea. "Thousands of dead seals have been found along Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea coast, in an outbreak that officials blame on unusually warm weather. But environmental experts say is connected to oil pollution. Workers have collected and destroyed the bodies of 11,000 dead seals."

Problems of Caspian Sea's pollution can be divided into three major types:

1. Chemical pollution by the running rivers.
2. Ecological problems, connected to the rise of the level of water.
3. Offshore and onshore oil industry activities.

The most important factor in endangerment of environment in the Caspian Sea is oil pollution and all other pollutions that come with it. Exploration and exploitation of oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea is the main activity of the future all around the Caspian Sea. Therefore, a special attention to the oil pollution is necessary. Happily, the body of laws and regulations concerning the oil pollutions very advanced in the international law. The littoral countries have to agree to apply most of those laws and regulations to the environment in the Caspian Sea. For this purpose, they do not even need to wait until the whole issue of the Caspian Sea's legal regime is solved because by that time, may be nothing much is left to take care of it. The most important instrument of the international law in this case is the 1973 London Convention or the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships. Generally the oil pollutions are the result of two main categories of factors: The operational or deliberate factors, and accidental or un-deliberate factors.

In the field of operational factors the “ballast water” has a special position. This is the water taken on by all kinds of ships, especially oil tankers when they are not carrying oil cargoes, to keep them operating smoothly. Naturally they throw the water, which is contaminated when they want to reload. This causes a considerable amount of pollution. 1973 Convention has very important articles for these cases.

Source: [liranian.com](http://liranian.com), 4 Mar 2015

### **BillerudKorsnäs Contributes to Finding Solutions to Marine Plastic Pollution**

BillerudKorsnäs, the leading Swedish provider of renewable packaging materials and solutions, has launched a partnership with the French scientific research foundation Tara Expeditions. The partnership will concern scientific research on the consequences of plastic littering in the oceans.

Eight million tones of plastic waste are deposited into the sea each year. This corresponds to 16 plastic bags per meter of the world's total coast lines. These findings were recently published in the journal Science. There is, however, still very

little research that shows how all this plastic affects the oceans, animals and people. In order to fill the gap, Tara Expeditions conducts scientific expeditions aimed at collecting and understanding how plastic affects the marine ecosystem.

“Our goals with the results of this research are to inform the public that a change in behavior is crucial. We also hope to influence decision-makers to regulate and reduce plastic littering in the oceans as well as to encourage industries to develop innovative alternatives to plastic. BillerudKorsnäs, with its renewable fiber based product range, proposes an alternative to plastic packaging, and is thus a relevant and suitable partner for us”, says Romain Troublé, secretary general, Tara Expeditions.

BillerudKorsnäs challenges conventional packages for a sustainable future. The company’s notion is that smart packaging solutions made of paper and carton board reduce detrimental environmental impact and contribute to a sustainable future. In order to gain valuable knowledge and new insights, BillerudKorsnäs works closely with brand owners, packaging manufacturers and partners around the world.

“BillerudKorsnäs has a lot to learn from Tara, lessons we can use in our product development. Both Tara and BillerudKorsnäs are constantly seeking new answers to sustainability challenges and want to drive a change towards a more sustainable future. We also share a vision of a future in which plastics in the ocean is an issue of the past”, says Henrik Essén, director of Communications and Sustainability, BillerudKorsnäs.

The partnership will begin with BillerudKorsnäs’s participation at “Beyond Plastic Med”, an international conference which Tara is co-arranging with other organizations. BillerudKorsnäs will be speaking on the theme “Innovation: a solution that works for ecological transition?”

“We want to communicate how our innovation agenda and our products can contribute to the solution of the plastic waste in ocean. Packages made of paper and carton board are of course not the entire solution, but can through correct use make a difference. The conference, which points to innovation as one possible solution to plastic littering, is therefore an excellent forum for us”, says Henrik Essén. Beyond

Plastic Med will be held in Monaco on the 10th and 11th of March 2015.

Source: [Packaging Europe](#), 9 Mar 2015

### **US Researchers Find Fishing Boat Wastewater Is Potentially Harmful**

Life-cycle assessments that analyze the environmental impacts of fishing may include impacts on fish stocks or pollution caused by discarded plastic fishing gear. However, they often do not include the impact of wastewater that is emptied into the sea as part of routine fishing activities.

Broadly, there are two sources of this wastewater. The first is water that has been used to store fish aboard the fishing vessel, which may contain fish waste from gutting and bleeding, as well as materials and coatings from the hold itself and any on-board refrigeration systems.

The second source is water that has been used to clean the holding tanks, which may contain detergents and disinfectants. The researchers tested wastewater from 26 different fishing boats as they arrived to offload their catches at docks across the US. They sampled both types of water — hold and cleaning water. They tested for pollutants including metals, organic pollutants and nutrients such as ammonia. To put their concentrations into context, they set benchmarks based on levels established in the US that are known to be toxic to aquatic life or harmful to humans. These benchmarks were set at the lowest (most protective) levels. Out of 48 substances found in hold water, 19 exceeded the benchmarks. Fifteen out of 35 exceeded the benchmarks in cleaning water.

The researchers say that the high concentrations of metals were unexpected, although some were already present at similar concentrations in seawater. Perhaps most concerning of the metals were arsenic and dissolved copper, which the researchers think may have come from refrigerated seawater, ice added for cooling or the sea organisms themselves. On average, hold water samples contained arsenic and dissolved copper at levels above the benchmarks. Of the 62 per cent of hold water samples in which arsenic was detected, all contained levels well above

the 0.018 micrograms per litre (µg/L) benchmark and some up to 20 000 times this level.

Not all hold water samples containing dissolved copper exceeded the benchmark of 3.1 µg/L, but four samples contained levels that were at least ten times higher. Dissolved metals tend to be more toxic than undisclosed metals because they are taken up more easily by organisms. However, undisclosed metals in wastewater can also dissolve at a later stage. Levels of organic contaminants were close to those found in raw sewage. This is likely due to decaying fish parts in the wastewater. Levels of ammonia, nitrogen and phosphorus were also similar to those in raw sewage.

The researchers also detected various nonylphenols in cleaning water, which are chemicals found in detergents. However, there were no benchmarks set for these substances. Compared with other sources of marine pollution, the impact of hold and cleaning water might be smaller in open water, but could be more serious in areas where fishing traffic is high and water circulation is low — as in harbors, for instance. The researchers suggest that further research could focus on fishing wastewater's overall impact on harbors. They also say that fishing wastewater could be included as an additional category in life-cycle assessments of seafood production.

Source: [The Fish Site](#), 9 Mar 2015

### **Clean Shipping Coalition (CSC) Calls for Shipping Industry Emissions**

#### **Reduction Target**

The CSC, the global NGO coalition campaigning for cleaner shipping, said in a press release that as the only remaining major economic sphere yet to tackle its carbon emissions, shipping must act urgently to do their part to keep the global temperature increase below 2 degrees.

Last year's third International Maritime Organisation study on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions predicted shipping emissions to grow up to 250% by 2050, threatening to undermine other initiatives to keep global warming below dangerous

levels. The CSC wrote to seven industry groups, and in addition to a target, is calling on them to work with EU member states and others attending the IMO's environment committee (MEPC68) session in May this year for an early agreement on mandatory fuel-burn reporting for ships.

The CSC also called on industry groups to push for transparent reporting of ships' energy performance. This information will enable shipping users in Europe and worldwide to identify the most efficient ships and practices, leading to increased competition, fuel savings and emissions reductions, and a level playing field for all players.

"Shipping industry groups are on record as supporting efforts to promote sound environmental stewardship, but now they must deliver by pushing for both an emissions cut target and the measures to make it happen," said John Maggs, CSC president and senior policy advisor at Seas At Risk. "They must join with other industry organizations and IMO member states to publically support this approach and seek these measures at IMO and in time for Paris."

Last year's GHG study by the IMO found that projected growth in demand for shipping will wipe out any improvements in ship efficiency. The European Commission last month said a climate deal in Paris later this year must cover 100% of emissions in all sectors, including shipping.

Source: [Marine Link](#), 9 Mar 2015

### **Sulphur Emissions from Ships at Gothenburg Port Slashed**

Measurements at the Port of Gothenburg show that sulphur emissions from ships have fallen by 80 per cent since stricter rules came into force at the turn of the year.

Namely, the sulphur content in fuel was reduced from 1.0 to 0.1 per cent in the short-sea shipping area around Gothenburg. The measurements are being carried out using a 'sniffer' located at the Älvsborg Fortress, in the fairway leading in to the port.

The sniffer has been developed by Chalmers University of Technology with support from Vinnova, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and Gothenburg Port Authority. The sniffer measures the sulphur and carbon dioxide levels in the gas emissions, thus revealing the sulphur content in the fuel.

uring the first few weeks of this year, the emission plume from around 200 passing ships was measured. It is estimated that 80 per cent of these were approved whilst for 20 per cent the sulphur emissions were too high.

“It is incredibly positive to see that the new rules are having such an effect and that sulphur emissions are falling. At the same time there is still uncertainty regarding the control system for vessels that are failing to comply with the rules. The industry has reason to be concerned that less serious shipping companies will not follow the rules and that this will lead to a distortion in competition,” said Edvard Molitor, Senior Manager Environment at the Port of Gothenburg.

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), 11 Mar 2015

### **NOAA Doubles Size of Marine Sanctuaries along Northern California Coast**

A pair of marine sanctuaries off the coast of northern California are doubling in size, offering more protection for globally significant and productive marine ecosystems. The sanctuaries encompass estuarine wetlands, rocky intertidal habitat, open ocean, and shallow marine banks. Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, located 42 miles north of San Francisco, will expand from 529 square miles to 1,286 square miles. Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary will expand from 1,282 square miles to 3,295 square miles of ocean and coastal waters.

“We are thrilled to announce the expansion of two of our sanctuaries in California,” said Holly Bamford, Ph.D., acting assistant secretary of conservation and management and NOAA’s deputy administrator. “It’s important to conserve these special places that encourage partnerships in science, education, technology, management and community.”

The expansion is based on years of public comment and research by NOAA and its scientific partners that identified the nutrient-rich upwelling zone originating off Point Arena and flowing south into the original sanctuaries as one of the most productive in North America. "This expansion is the outcome of a tremendous collaborative effort by government, local communities, academia and elected officials to provide additional protection for critical marine resources," said Daniel J. Basta, director of the NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. "It presents a bold vision for protecting the waters off the northern California coast for current and future generations."

Beginning in December 2012 through June 2014, NOAA conducted a public engagement process to allow the public to weigh in on the proposed expansion. The agency received more than 1,300 comments, most in support of the proposed expansion.

Source: [Summit County Citizen Voice](#), 13 Mar 2015

### **Shipping Industry is "Confident About Arctic and Environmental Performance"**

At a high-level Arctic Summit, organized by The Economist magazine in Oslo on 12 March, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the global trade association for merchant ship operators, highlighted important issues associated with the growth of Arctic shipping and expressed confidence in the industry's environmental performance.

The ICS stressed the "critical importance" of a mandatory and uniform regulatory framework to ensure maritime safety and environmental protection, as the volume of Arctic shipping gradually increases in response to new interest in developing the region's natural resources.

ICS Secretary General, Peter Hinchliffe, said: "The International Maritime Organization is the appropriate forum for developing standards for ships operating in the Arctic as it has the necessary legal and technical expertise to take full account of the interests of all maritime nations including those with an Arctic coastline."

He added that the shipping industry is fully committed to the implementation of the mandatory IMO Polar Code, following its recent adoption by IMO Member States and its expected entry into force in January 2017.

"The Polar Code will deliver an even greater level of confidence in the environmental performance of shipping using a risk-based approach which addresses the hazards relevant to the type of ship operation, the ship's location and the season of operation," he said. ICS asserts that the shipping industry's environmental performance is "very impressive," but the industry "fully recognizes" concerns about the potential sensitivity of Arctic ecosystems and the need for a high degree of care when ships navigate Arctic waters, which is fully reflected in the new IMO Polar Code.

Source: [Offshore Shipping Online](#), 13 Mar 2015