



MAKING WAVES

The Fortnightly e-News Brief of the National Maritime Foundation

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The Developing India-China Maritime Dynamic

-Abhijit Singh

India's decision to send the warship INS *Shivalik* to participate in a multilateral naval exercise at the north eastern Chinese port city of Qingdao last week generated some curiosity among maritime watchers. The naval exercise, meant to commemorate China's 65th anniversary, was held alongside the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) – the first time China has ever hosted the meet. Beijing had earlier cancelled a fleet-review planned to precede the exercise, citing “special conditions” occasioned by the ongoing efforts to locate the lost airliner MH370 in the Southern Indian Ocean.

While the naval drill involved ships from Bangladesh, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia, it was the presence of a Pakistan Navy vessel that caused the most excitement among Indian analysts. Coming on the heels of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in Perth last month – attended by the Chief of the Pakistan Navy – the joint appearance by naval ships of the two ostensible Indian Ocean arch-rivals was indeed a significant development. The Indian Navy and Pakistan Navy share a famously frigid relationship, and even though neither has, in a very long time, presented proof of the profound hostility that each side suspects the other harbours, the lack of strategic trust has been glaring. Qingdao, needless to say, would have presented both navies with a good opportunity to initiate some form of operational contact

The thrill of seeing Indian and Pakistani naval ships in the same photo-frame, however, is unlikely to have shifted the focal point of analytical interest: the emerging India-China maritime dynamic. As “routine” as official sources sought to portray India's participation in a People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) organized maritime exercise, it came laden with symbolism and strategic possibility, making it apt for a deeper examination.

To begin, it is important to see the Indian Navy's presence at Qingdao in conjunction with certain other recent developments. By itself, one country's invitation to another to participate in a multilateral naval exercise does not represent a seminal strategic shift. Maritime forces – even those that share an adversarial relationship – often come together for a regional or collective cause. Indeed, the Indian Navy and PLAN have cooperated regularly in combating piracy off the coast of Somalia, and even exercised together in the northwest Pacific. India and China are, however, known to have separate geographical areas of maritime interest and are both distinctly uncomfortable with the other's presence in their respective theatres of nautical influence.

India's wariness about Chinese military modernization and growing maritime prowess led New Delhi to consistently deny Beijing legitimacy in the affairs of the Indian Ocean – especially a voice in matters of maritime governance in regional institutions like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), fast perceived to be succumbing to China's growing diplomatic and economic sway. Beijing likewise hasn't been welcoming of Indian naval forays into the South China Sea.

And yet, New Delhi has in recent months shown greater willingness to accommodate Chinese maritime concerns. During the 17th round of Special Representative Talks in February this year, India seemed open to the possibility of joining the Maritime Silk Route – a grand maritime project proposed by Beijing that promises connectivity, infrastructure, and commercial development. Reportedly, while the Indian interlocutor didn't overtly display enthusiasm for the proposal, he wasn't unfavourably disposed to the suggestion either. India's contingent optimism about the MSR – however qualified – could, in fact, be construed from its willingness to engage in a structured maritime dialogue with China. Interestingly, only two weeks earlier the PLAN had held a much-publicized exercise on the eastern edge of the Indian Ocean. The drills, which marked the first deployment of the *Changbaishan*, China's largest landing-ship, did not elicit any protests from India, almost as if the occurrence were unworthy of official reaction.*

New Delhi's political ambivalence about the growing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean bears deeper analysis. India, like other Indian Ocean states has been overwhelmed by the enormity of the Maritime Silk Route. The project, which complements China's "New Silk Road" – an economic initiative to develop regions along an ancient route connecting Western China with South and Central Asia – has clear short-term benefits, which Beijing has amply emphasized to all its potential clients in the IOR. The promise of commercial gains has, indeed, been a crucial factor in drawing regional support for the project. The financial payoffs, however, come at a price and entail long-term strategic implications that impinge on regional maritime security.

While its finer details are still unclear, the MSR is said to involve the construction of ports, logistical stations, storage facilities, and free-trade zones. The MSR's essential rationale is the leveraging of Chinese soft power. By undertaking a maritime initiative potentially beneficial for all regional states, Beijing hopes to shore up its image as a benevolent power. The idea is to use the project's commercial returns to establish China's legitimate interests in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, an allied proposal for a maritime cooperation fund announced by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang last year only makes it harder for regional states to resist the MSR.

Interestingly, when President Xi Jinping first made the proposal during his visit to Southeast Asia in October 2013, the MSR was planned as a project meant to foster cooperation and goodwill between China and the ASEAN countries. China's

subsequent outreach to Sri Lanka and India, inviting them to join the project, revealed a broader vision spanning the entire Indo-Pacific region.

The sales pitch of shared economic gains, however, does little to conceal the proposal's real purpose: ensuring the security of sea lines of communications (SLOCs) in the Indian and Pacific oceans. Since African resources are China's focus right now, the project is a surrogate for a giant Chinese SLOC running all the way from the East African coast, to the Southern coast of China – created, maintained and controlled by Beijing. In its ultimate form, therefore, the MSR could end up setting up Chinese logistical hubs in the Indian Ocean, linking up already existing string of pearls.

At the heart of India's seeming re-appreciation of its maritime perspective is an objective appraisal of these new realities. China's burgeoning economic relationship with individual IOR states, the considerable financial and diplomatic investment in entrenching Chinese state-owned companies in Asia and Africa, and the vast infrastructure network being created in Asia will make it impossible for India – or any other regional power – to halt the PLAN's thrust into the Indian Ocean. More crucially for India, Beijing's considerable logistical and technological competence is matched by a commensurate political will and military strength to realize its grand vision.

India's policy elite realize the Indian Navy could soon face competition from the PLAN in the Indian Ocean. Following the MH370 incident, China has arguably been the most active participant in the rescue effort, with more than eleven naval and Coast Guard ships scouring vast tracts of the Southern Indian Ocean. With its growing maritime capability, China's navy is poised to play a growing role in the security of the Indian Ocean. Notwithstanding its strategic anxieties, therefore, New Delhi is required to make a politically prudent compromise.

India's predicament highlights a fundamental axiom: on the chess-board of international geopolitics, the context of a strategic proposition is as important as its content. India might be opposed to idea of being surrounded by Chinese maritime infrastructure and PLAN logistical outposts in the Indian Ocean, but the context of China's rise in the region, and India's own institutional weaknesses prevent it from forestalling such a possibility.

New Delhi's new pragmatic approach, however, has a sobering flipside: Beijing's growing involvement in the security and governance of the IOR will eventually pose a strong challenge to India's power and stature in the Indian Ocean. What seems like a win-win proposal today could prove to be the ultimate zero-sum proposition tomorrow – a complex equation that India will have little chance of resolving in its favor, unless it has the gumption to take hard strategic decisions. China's gradual and organic appropriation of the Indian Ocean will only attenuate New Delhi's geo-political equities and strategic influence in the region.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 1st May, 2014

The Great Game Folio: Arabian Ports

- C. Raja Mohan

The rapid development of three new ports in the Arabian Sea — at Gwadar, Pakistan, Chabahar, Iran and Duqm, Oman — is set to transform sea and land connectivity to India's west. China, which is leading the development of Gwadar port, could also play a major role in the development of the other two. For Beijing, port development in the Arabian Sea is about connecting landlocked Xinjiang and West China to the sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean. The ports also form a part of China's ambitious strategy of building a maritime silk road in the Indian Ocean.

The largest economy in the littoral, India, has watched with some concern over the last decade, China's role in the construction of the Gwadar port and struggled to concretise its own plans for collaborating with Iran in developing the Chabahar project. The third port at Duqm, which is advancing more rapidly than the other two, hardly figures in India's strategic and economic discourse.

The plans for Gwadar took a big step forward a year ago when Chinese Premier Li Keqiang travelled to Pakistan and signed bilateral agreements for the expansion of the Gwadar port and construction of an ambitious transport corridor between Kashgar, Xinjiang and Balochistan. Earlier this month, in a meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the Boao Forum, Premier Li said China was ready to start work on these projects by the end of this year. Sharif, in turn, assured Li that providing security to the Chinese personnel would be a top priority for his government. There have been frequent attacks on Chinese engineers and workers in the restive Balochistan province, home to the Gwadar port.

Last week, Sharif was in Gwadar, emphasising the importance of the port project and addressing the political concerns of the Balochistan province. Sharif underlined that Gwadar will be a transformative project not only for Balochistan and Pakistan but for the entire region.

A few days earlier, the president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, was across the border in the province of Sistan-Balochistan, home to the Chabahar project. Chabahar is barely 70 km from Gwadar and is critical for Iran's plan to emerge as the gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia. While many in India see Chabahar and Gwadar as rival projects, China is operating on a different principle — having multiple connections between West China and the Indian Ocean is better than having just one.

In recent months, there have been reports on China's interest in investing in the development of the Chabahar project. Addressing a rally in Sistan-Balochistan, Rouhani announced that Tehran is in talks with Beijing to extend Chabahar's rail network to western China through Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Well before Gwadar and Chabahar become ports of commercial consequence, the Duqm port under development in Oman could become a major trade and transit hub of the region. Oman is all set to transform a sleepy village on the Arabian coast into a new Dubai or Singapore. Besides a large sea port, Oman is developing an airport, a special economic zone, petroleum refineries, oil storage farms, dry docks and tourist resorts. Road and rail networks radiating out of Duqm will connect it to other ports in Oman and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula.

The greatest advantage of Duqm is that it is located outside the Persian Gulf where the current trading towns like Dubai are. As tensions mount in the Gulf, Duqm could provide a safe and secure entrepôt for business with the region. As a potential transshipment zone, it would be of great value to Africa, the Middle East, India and China.

For the US military, Duqm could significantly reduce the risks of its operations around the Persian Gulf. Currently, Bahrain is the headquarters of the US navy's Fifth Fleet and Qatar hosts the local headquarters of the US Central Command.

In the last few years, the Chinese navy has regularly shown its flag in Oman's port of Salalah. The new facilities being built at Duqm will make it an attractive destination for Chinese and other navies seeking repair and resupply facilities in the Indian Ocean. Above all, Duqm will help Oman reclaim its historic role as the maritime fulcrum of the Indian Ocean littoral.

Source: [Indian Express](#), 2nd May, 2014

Code on Unplanned Encounters at Sea Conduces to Regional Maritime Security

- Zhang Junshe

The recently concluded 14th annual meeting of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) passed the Code on Unplanned Encounters at Sea (hereinafter referred to as the Code), which regulates the legal status of naval warships and aircraft and prescribes the maritime safety procedure, communication procedure as well as the signals, abbreviations and basic manoeuvring guide in case of unplanned encounters at sea.

The Code bears a very strong significance of guidance in terms of the safe navigation and operation of naval warships and aircraft from various countries as well as prevention from mutual disturbance and collision in open sea activities.

The safety procedure of the Code stipulates that since all the navies of the WPNS member countries abide by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at

Sea set up in 1972, if the situation allows, the naval ships of each country should exercise good seamanship to avoid collision in a timely manner.

First of all, a warship should adopt a safe speed to sail on the sea. During the navigation, it should keep a safe distance from other ships in accordance with the visibility, maritime situation, and the performance of the ship itself.

Second, in the event of unexpected encounter with the naval warships and aircraft from other countries, it should take proper action to avoid collision. Single warship should yield for taskforce and avoid approaching overly close to the taskforce or passing through or in front of the taskforce while the taskforce should also take the movement of the single warship into their consideration. In the event of encountering a warship from other countries or moving in the neighbourhood of the warship, it should avoid making any possible manoeuvre to obstruct the other warship's passage. It should avoid using the ship-borne guided missile, cannon, torpedo launching tube, laser weapon or other weapons and equipment to aim at the other ships or aircraft during the encounter. It should avoid making any dangerous moves, such as aerobatic flight or simulated attack in the neighbourhood of other ships encountered.

Third, in the event of any breakdown, the warship should use the whistle, signal lights, high-skilled seamanship or other measures to avoid endangering other ships.

Fourth, in the event of drills of surface warships and submarines, the surface warships should display proper signals as regulated in the International Signal Rules to signify the presence of submarines in the maritime area.

Fifth, as for those maritime activities likely to pose danger to the ships and aircraft from other countries, the authorities of the related countries should use radio broadcast and information system to publicize the navigation notice clearly so as to warn ships from other countries.

The Code also regulates the communication procedure in case of the unexpected encounter of ships and aircraft. In order to establish effective communication in time, naval ships or aircraft should first choose to use the radio for communication in the event of unexpected encounters. If the visibility is not good or the distance of mutual visibility is too short, signal flags, lights, or audio signals should be used as demanded by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea so as to express its maritime activities and intentions.

The Code demands various safety measures conducive to effective control of maritime crises and preventive of occurrence of accidents. As long as the navy of each country keeps the promise, rigorously follows the operation procedure to avoid making any moves likely to threaten the safety of the other party in open sea activities, and carries out the prescribed communication procedure, incidents of

misjudgement or collision will be prevented and the regional maritime security can be effectively safeguarded.

It is necessary to point out that such technical regulations of the Code under a multilateral framework shouldn't be intentionally distorted or selectively interpreted by any related country.

On the one hand, any individual country shouldn't misinterpret these rules or attempt to use this to limit the righteous actions of the Navy of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLAN) to defend China's national sovereignty of territorial waters and national maritime interests. The PLAN has the unswerving determination to safeguard China's national sovereignty of territorial waters, maritime interests and maritime security.

On the other hand, any individual country should follow the Code. From now on, on any unplanned encounter with the PLAN in the open sea, the individual country should take full consideration of the safety of the PLAN ships and avoid being overly close to PLAN ships or passing through or in front of PLAN fleet so that misjudgement or accidental discharge can be prevented from happening.

Source: [Xinhua](#), 4th May, 2014

Maritime Mess in Indian Ocean

-Geeta Madhavan

Two major discussions that dominate any discourse on maritime challenges in the Indian Ocean region are piracy and the emergence of China as a major naval power and its growing ambition. Both issues raise grave concerns for major and smaller powers in the region and other extra-regional global powers. Trade and livelihoods of the people of the nations surrounding it, as well as those of the small island nations, are contingent on the living and non-living marine resources of the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, many other landlocked countries in the region like Nepal, Afghanistan and Bhutan depend on access to the ocean for international trading and for steady growth of their economies. Transnational and non-traditional threats in the region are growing and should be addressed with far more diligence than being done at present as they will decide the future balance of power. Maritime challenges extend beyond national strategic ambitions and are far more complex. These challenges may not be perceived as being compelling at present but they will have significant impact over a period of time. It is, therefore, incumbent to not only identify the other issues but also to include them while framing national policies and concluding multilateral and international conventions and agreements.

The Indian Ocean region comprises 26 nations in various stages of social and economic development. There's disparity among them in terms of economic growth,

social development and societal stability that has resulted in competition for scarce resources among the nations, as in case of fishing and other living resources. It has also led to the disproportionate exploitation of the constantly depleting resources by some technologically developed nations to the detriment of others. As the region is rich in mineral resources like uranium, cobalt, nickel, gold and also has 55% of the world's oil reserves and 40% of gas reserves, foreign powers, too, which are not geographically placed in the region, are displaying keenness to gain a foothold here. Besides, counter-piracy efforts and counterterrorism measures have approved the naval presence of the foreign powers. With an extra-regional power like the US positioning itself here, regional powers like China India, Russia, Iran and Pakistan are strengthening their positions and increasing their naval prowess to counter potential strategic threats by the US and US-aligned states. Thus, new maritime disputes stemming from geo-strategic interests and new maritime boundary claims are the result of the new players in the region.

There are various other non-traditional threats that require regional cooperation. Development of port security is essential for healthy sea-borne trade and safe harbours and ports for economic development of the region. But, the spurt of recent attacks in which technologically superior warships have been threatened by low-tech attacks has raised serious concerns. Many ports are vulnerable, as are various offshore installations. The island nations and archipelagos are most vulnerable as they can be accessed from any point of exposure. Environmental threats also abound in the region. Forty per cent of the 4 billion people in Asia live within 100km of the coast. Rising ocean level and changing weather patterns due to global warming will increase the stress in coastal regions. The island nations face greater threats as the seas close in on them. It will result in demographic changes from migration that will create severe stress and perceivable imbalances in the mainland. Destruction of natural barriers in the seas will also lead to erosion that will adversely affect the population in coastal areas as well as in the mainland.

The overall effects of these factors will be serious destabilisation in the region's countries creating conflicts as they will struggle with changing realities. Depletion of water resources due to coastal salinisation will affect not only lives of people along the coast but also affect food production elsewhere. Land-based pollution from sewage and drainage discharges and marine based pollution from spillages, ballast waters and illegal waste dumping affects not just a single nation but the region as a whole. All these issues are hardly addressed by the countries that place huge reliance mainly on the enhancement of their naval capabilities.

Resources of the ocean have to be brought under the scrutiny of protection. Illegal and unregulated fishing by local vessels has led to depletion of stocks in national waters of many countries while similar action by foreign vessels has caused antagonism among nations. The constant engagement of Sri Lanka and India in the fishermen issues is well-known but other countries in the region face similar confrontations. Indonesia faces an estimated loss of \$ 4000 million annually due to

illegal, unregulated fishing. The link of this component to maritime security issues is that the vessels are also used for trafficking humans, arms, drugs and other illegal activities.

Non-state actors in the region raise different threat issues. Terrorist groups have attacked oil tankers, passenger ships and offshore installations with impunity. The attack in Aden of USS Cole, of the French super tanker Limburg and several such incidents has underlined the dangers. Weak governments and insufficient controls along the coast have exposed their vulnerability. The Mumbai 2008 attack, where terrorists chose the sea route to enter India, highlighted the dangers of unregulated maritime domain. Numerous incidents of piracy in the region in recent times have resulted in the creation of private security agencies to safeguard the ships. However, recent incidents especially in the Indian context; namely, the Enrica Lexie and the Seaman Guard Ohio cases have underlined the dangers of the presence of private armed guards aboard ships. Lack of regulations and insufficient coherent policy framework has created more concerns instead of solving the safety issues. The flouting of norms of international laws by the agencies is the undesirable fallout.

Maintaining good order at sea and constant engagements between the nations of the region is the only way to address these issues. International maritime assistance and building strategic confidence will lead to the increased safety of sea lanes for trade. Transparency in national maritime policies will reduce maritime coercion and mitigate tensions created by the strategic placement of large and imposing naval assets. The nations of the region have to redefine the role of their navies from that of constabulary and expand it to one of maintaining good order at sea and protection of maritime resources.

Source: [Indian Express](#), 6th May, 2014

Enhancing Regional Security with Littoral Combat Ships (LCS)

-Cindy Thebaud

A year has passed since the first of four planned United States Navy littoral combat ships (LCSs), USS Freedom, arrived in Singapore on an inaugural LCS deployment overseas. From April to November last year, Freedom operated throughout South-east Asia and conducted a series of port visits, exercises and exchanges with regional navies that operate comparably-sized frigates and corvettes.

The ship hosted thousands of visitors from across the Asia-Pacific region when it was in port. And like many US Navy ships deployed to the US Seventh Fleet, it spent a lot of time at sea enhancing maritime security and stability throughout South-east Asia.

In the US, recent media reports reflect debates over the relevance of the LCS class in the Asia-Pacific region. Some reports attributed comments to anonymous officials who suggested the LCS might be better suited to the Middle East.

From my perspective, as a Seventh Fleet commander of naval forces in South-east Asia, the LCS is a perfect fit for this region and I look forward to future deployments of these ships, which will resume when USS Fort Worth is deployed later this year.

Quite simply, the LCS is tailor-made for South-east Asia, a region with many coastal and archipelagic states linked together by a dense network of shipping lanes and strategic waterways through which more than 50 per cent of global maritime trade passes.

With its speed, shallow draft and manoeuvrability, the LCS is ideal for this thriving littoral region. The LCS' maritime security capabilities can help address illicit activities that persist at sea today and well into the future. As a dedicated asset rotationally deployed to South-east Asia, the LCS can go places other US Navy ships cannot, operating hull-to-hull with regional allies and partners, and be ready to provide a sustained naval presence when needed.

Although Freedom returned home to San Diego last December, we continue to receive positive feedback from a wide array of allies and partners across the region.

Indeed, from the early feedback received from government and military officials who toured the ship during port visits and exhibitions such as Singapore's International Maritime Defence Exhibition to the commanding officers and sailors from regional navies who worked and operated alongside Freedom, the regional interest in this ship and the potential it represents has not wavered.

And the interest our South-east Asian neighbours share is not just a hunch on my part, but a sentiment I hear on my frequent travels throughout the region for training exercises and meetings.

When the subject of Freedom and follow-on LCS deployments comes up, my counterparts are encouraged to hear that each successive ship and rotation will be more advanced than the last. Moreover, they are comfortable with the size of the LCSs, which again, is comparable with many of their own ships. In fact, the most consistent questions I hear from partners are: "When is the next LCS coming?" and "When can it make a port call and conduct exercises here?" The resounding takeaway has been that my regional counterparts are excited and eager to work with these ships.

I am pleased to note that Singapore is among those nations that most appreciate what Freedom had to offer. As noted in joint statements released by Singapore's Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen and US Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel in Washington last December, and more recently by Dr Ng and US Pacific Commander

Admiral Samuel Locklear in Hawaii last month, senior leaders from both our countries are looking forward to Fort Worth's deployment.

I join these leaders in my belief that the US Navy can and will build upon the lessons learned from Freedom's deployment and incorporate regional feedback in follow-on deployments of LCSs to Singapore and South-east Asia.

Freedom has paved the way for Fort Worth this year and a third LCS next year. Like Freedom, Fort Worth will be deployed with a surface warfare mission package that permits the ship's crew and the fleet commander to operate with confidence in the littorals.

This configuration includes two 11m rigid hull inflatable boats with boarding teams and an MH-60R helicopter, and now a Fire Scout vertical take-off unmanned aerial vehicle to enhance maritime domain awareness and information sharing.

Fort Worth will also have enhanced operational reach through greater fuel capacity, a more flexible maintenance schedule and access to additional logistics support facilities.

Because Fort Worth's deployment will last six months longer than Freedom's, portions of the 2014 and 2015 LCS deployments will overlap, providing the presence of two LCSs simultaneously.

As maritime forces in South-east Asia continue to expand relationships, the US Navy needs more LCSs in this "region on the rise". Indeed, as more LCSs are deployed here to promote regional peace and prosperity, I can confidently predict that both this class of ship and the region share bright futures ahead.

Source: [Today](#), 7th May, 2014

China's Oil Rig Gambit: South China Sea Game-Changer?

China's placement of the giant state-owned oil rig HD-981 in Block 143 inside Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on May 2 was unexpected, provocative and illegal.

This incident marks the first time China has placed one of its oil rigs in the EEZ of another state without prior permission. This was an unexpected move because China-Vietnam relations have been on an upward trajectory since the visit to Hanoi by Premier Li Keqiang in October. At that time, both sides indicated they had reached agreement to carry forward discussions on maritime issues. China's move was also unexpected because Vietnam has not undertaken any discernible provocative action that would justify China's unprecedented actions.

China's deployment of the rig was provocative because the oil rig was accompanied by as many as 80 ships, including seven People's Liberation Army Navy warships. When Vietnam dispatched Coast Guard vessels to defend its sovereign jurisdiction, China responded by ordering its ships to use water cannons and to deliberately ram the Vietnamese vessels. These actions were not only highly dangerous, but caused injuries to the Vietnamese crew.

China's actions are illegal under international law. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying justified China's actions by claiming the rig's operations were in Chinese "territorial waters" and had nothing to do with Vietnam. In other words, China has adopted a position similar to Japan with regard to the Senkaku Islands by declaring there is no dispute with Vietnam.

China has placed itself in an inconsistent position. China has been provocative in using paramilitary ships and aircraft to challenge Japan's assertion of administrative control over the Senkakus. China seeks to get Tokyo to admit that the Senkaku Islands are disputed. Yet Beijing has adopted Japan's stance with respect to Block 143 by refusing to acknowledge that there is a legal dispute between China and Vietnam.

Chinese spokesperson Hua Chunying only presented a general statement, not a detailed legal argument in support of China's actions. Her claim that the oil rig is in Chinese "territorial waters" lacks any foundation because there is no Chinese land feature within twelve nautical miles of Block 143 on which to base this assertion. Chinese statements refer to the Paracel Islands – and not Hainan Island – as the basis for its claim.

China's lack of clarity has led academic specialists and regional analysts to speculate about the possible legal basis of China's claim. In 1996 China issued baselines around the Paracel Islands, including Triton Island. Specialists argue that China's claim could be based on the proximity of Triton, and its entitlement to a continental shelf and EEZ.

Other specialists point out that the 1996 baselines do not conform to Article 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and cannot be used to advance a legal claim over Block 143.

If the former line of argument is accepted, China's hypothetical EEZ would overlap with the EEZ promulgated by Vietnam. This would constitute a legal dispute. International law requires the two parties to enter into provisional arrangement, refrain from the use of force or the threat of force, and take no action to upset the *status quo*. Clearly China's placement of the oil rig and its 80 escorts in Block 143 constitutes a violation of international law.

Analysts are divided on the motivations and objectives of China's current bout of aggressiveness. Three main interpretations have been put forth.

The first interpretation views the placement of the HD-981 rig in Block 143 as the inevitable response by China to Vietnam's promulgation of the Law of the Sea in mid-2012. Prior to the adoption of this law by Vietnam's National Assembly, China unsuccessfully brought intense diplomatic pressure on Hanoi not to proceed. Immediately after the law was adopted, the China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) issued a tender for blocks in the South China Sea that overlapped with blocks issued by Vietnam within its EEZ.

According to this interpretation, the current controversy is the result of a decision by CNOOC to follow through and begin exploring these blocks. In CNOOC's view, Block 143 fell within Chinese jurisdiction. In China's view, commercial exploration activities in Block 143 would undercut Vietnam's claims to sovereign jurisdiction.

The first interpretation is questionable given the sheer size and composition of the fleet of 80 ships and vessels that accompanied the oil rig. This was clearly no ordinary commercial venture but a pre-emptive move to prevent Vietnam from defending its EEZ.

Diplomatic sources in Beijing also report that CNOOC officials revealed they were ordered to place the rig in Block 143 despite their misgivings on commercial grounds. CNOOC officials pointed to the costs of keeping the rig on station until mid-August when oil exploration is scheduled to cease. Other observers point out that the prospects of finding commercial reserves of oil and gas in this area are quite low.

A second interpretation posits that China's actions were in response to the operations by ExxonMobil in nearby blocks.

This interpretation seems unlikely. ExxonMobil has been operating in Block 119 from 2011. While China protested the award of oil exploration contract to ExxonMobil, China has not stepped up its objections in recent months. It is also unclear how the placement of a Chinese oil rig in Block 143 would deter ExxonMobil from operating elsewhere.

Finally, China's actions appear to be disproportional and very likely counterproductive. Block 143 does not directly affect U.S. interests. Chinese interference with ExxonMobil would be a direct challenge to the Obama administration's statement that U.S. national interests included "unimpeded lawful commerce."

The third interpretation, first publicized by *The Nelson Report* (May 6, 2014), argues that China's actions were pre-planned in response to President Barack Obama's recent visit to Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines. During his visit, President Obama publicly opposed the settlement of territorial disputes by intimidation and coercion.

China was angered by the Obama administration's prior criticism of China's nine-dash line claim to the South China Sea and U.S. support for the Philippines' decision

to request international arbitration to settle its territorial dispute with China. In addition, China was outraged by President Obama's public declaration of support of Japan and its administration of the Senkaku islands as well as President Obama's declaration that U.S. alliance commitment to the Philippines was ironclad.

In sum, the third interpretation argues that China chose to directly confront the main premises of the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia. China chose to expose the gap between Obama's rhetoric and U.S. capability to respond to China's assertion of its sovereignty claims.

Some analysts who support the third interpretation argue that China has taken heart from President Obama's inability to respond effectively to the crises in Syria and the Ukraine. Therefore China manufactured the oil rig crisis to demonstrate to regional states that the United States is a "paper tiger."

The third interpretation has plausibility. But it begs the question of why Vietnam was the focus for this crisis. Also, China's actions could prove counter-productive, coming on the eve of a summit meeting in Myanmar of the heads of government of the ten states comprising the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

On March 18, China and ASEAN held the tenth joint working group meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in Singapore. This was followed up by the seventh ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the DOC in Pattaya, Thailand on April 21. While progress has been slow, there were some encouraging signs that confidence building projects under the DOC might be developed. As one ASEAN diplomat put it to the author, "the journey [consultations with China] is more important than the destination [achieving a binding COC]."

China's deployment of the oil rig and accompanying fleet ensured that the South China Sea would be a hot button issue at the ASEAN Summit. ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a stand-alone statement on May 10 expressing "their serious concerns over the on-going developments in the South China Sea, which increased tensions in the area." It is significant that a separate statement was issued on the South China Sea. This statement implicitly expresses support for Vietnam and lays the foundation for a similar statement by ASEAN heads of government/state.

The Foreign Ministers' statement did not specifically mention China by name but it reiterated ASEAN standard policy on the South China Sea. The statement urged the parties concerned to act in accord with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to exercise self-restraint, avoid actions that could undermine peace and stability, and to resolve disputes by peaceful means without resorting to the threat or use of force.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement called on all parties to fully and effectively implement the DOC. The Statement also called for the need for "expeditiously

working towards an early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.”

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Statement did not mention China by name in deference to Beijing. But the Statement may be read as a shift in the views by individual members of ASEAN that territorial disputes involving the Paracel Islands and its surrounding waters are a bilateral matter between China and Vietnam.

An endorsement of the Statement by the Foreign Ministers on the South China Sea by the ASEAN Summit will provide political and diplomatic cover for the United States and other maritime nations to express their concern.

Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has already come out in public in support of Vietnam. The U.S. State Department issued a statement characterizing Chinese actions “provocative.” More importantly, Assistant Secretary of State Danny Russel just visited Vietnam on a scheduled trip. He will be able to take his first-hand assessment back to Washington to shape the Obama Administration’s response.

Beneath the ASEAN diplomatic surface, however, China’s actions are likely to stoke anxieties already held by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. These states will seek to shore up their own maritime capabilities and to seek reassurance of support from the United States and other maritime powers such as Japan, Australia, and India.

Vietnam has reiterated its determination to respond to Chinese tactics of ramming its vessels. The current stand-off between Chinese and Vietnamese vessels in the waters around the CNOOC oil rig therefore holds the potential for an accident, a miscalculation, or the use of deadly force.

It is more likely that China and Vietnam will manage this affair by preventing matters from escalating to the extent that armed force is used. As of May 2, China and Vietnam have held six face-to-face diplomatic meetings in Beijing and three meetings in Hanoi between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chinese Embassy officials.

Vietnam has requested that China receive a high-level special envoy. Diplomatic rumour has it that the special envoy will be a member of the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) Politburo. Vietnam has resorted to sending special envoys to Beijing on two occasions in recent years and both visits resulted in a lowering of tension.

On May 8, the VCP Central Committee opened a long-planned executive session. This will provide Vietnam’s leaders with an opportunity to review the current crisis and to work out an effective political and diplomatic strategy to deal with China. Consensus on this issue will give the special envoy authority to speak on behalf of the Hanoi leadership.

When China first announced the deployment of its oil rig, it stated that its operations would terminate on August 15. This provides plenty of time for both sides to orchestrate and manage the confrontation in Block 143 and provide a face saving means for ending the confrontation.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 12th May, 2014



Bangladesh Agrees to Allow India to Use Its Waterways to Ashuganj River Port

Bangladesh has agreed to allow India to use its waterways to Ashuganj river port on Meghna, for carrying food grains from Kolkata to Tripura. Tripura Principal Secretary, Food and Civil Supply department BK Roy told reporters today that Bangladesh Government agreed to a request by the Centre to use its waterways up to Ashuganj port from Kolkata to carry 10,000 MT of food grains and more than 500 trucks would be engaged by that country's government. "We have been immensely benefitted as Bangladesh has given us this facility," Roy said. Bangladesh had allowed India for carrying the same amount of grains last year, he added.

The distance between Kolkata and Agartala via hilly areas of Assam by surface transport is about 1,700 km, which is reduced to 350 km if the movement is through the plains of Bangladesh. Currently, Indian and Bangladesh waterways connect West Bengal and Assam and Inland Waterways Authority of India and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority are operating vessels on these routes.

India has for long pressed for using Bangladeshi waterways and ports, especially for easy transport of goods from Kolkata and other mainland cities to Northeastern States through that country. The multi-dimensional machines for the 726 MW gas-based thermal power project at Palatana in Tripura's Gomati district, which started generation last year, were brought via Kolkata port by ship to Ashuganj port by using the waterways of India and Bangladesh and then from Ashuganj port to the site via Agartala in special vehicles. Bangladesh allowed India to use Ashuganj river port for the first time to transship goods from Kolkata to Agartala under the 2010 Inland Water Transit Protocol in September, 2011. It provided transshipment facility on a trial basis and tonnes of steel sheets from Khidirpore dock in Kolkata formed the first consignment to Ashuganj river port from where it was sent to Akhaura land port on the frontiers with Tripura.

Source: [Assam Tribune](#), 3rd May, 2014

Germany Backs Philippines Move on Sea Disputes

The Federal Republic of Germany continuously supports the Philippine government's arbitration initiative to peacefully resolve the territorial disputes in the West Philippine Sea.

Philippine Ambassador to Germany Maria Cleofe R. Natividad said the German government rallied behind the Philippines' filing of a "memorial" or a written pleading against China's "aggressive" assertion of its "expansive and illegal" nine-dash line claim over the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

"Germany supports our action against China. They believe in the Philippines' advocacy for a peaceful and rules-based settlement of territorial and maritime disputes in accordance with universally-recognized principles of international law, including UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea)," she said in an interview at the Philippine embassy in this multicultural city with this reporter who participated in this year's 20th anniversary celebration of Internationale Journalisten Programme (IJP).

On March 30, 2014, the Philippines formally filed its "memorial" before the International Tribunal on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) at The Hague, Netherlands.

During her three-day visit to the Philippines from March 26 to 28 this year, German Minister of State Maria Böhmer reiterated last year's statement made by former Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, seeking a rules-based and peaceful settlement of the territorial disputes in the region.

During his trip to Germany in June last year, Vice President Jejomar C. Binay expressed the Philippines' gratitude to European Union for its support to Manila's arbitration initiative. On March 14, 2013, the European Parliament adopted a resolution "approving a report which included its support for the Philippines' arbitration initiative," under the 1982 UN Convention. The European Parliament expressed alarm over "the escalating tension and therefore urgently appeals to all parties involved to refrain from unilateral political and military actions."

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the report made by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs on European Union-China relations also called on China "to commit itself to observing the UN Charter and international law in pursuit of its goals abroad."

Source: [Manila Bulletin](#), 3rd May, 2014

Hainan to be Base for China's First Domestic Aircraft Carrier

Designed based on the Liaoning carrier purchased from Ukraine, China's first domestically built aircraft carrier is likely to enter service with the People's Liberation Army Navy in 2024, according to Kanwa Defense Weekly operated by Andrei Chang, also known as Pinkov, a military analyst from Canada.

Since the Liaoning is currently stationed at Qingdao in eastern China, the article said there is a good chance that China's first domestically built carrier, and the country's second aircraft carrier, will be deployed to Hainan. An aircraft carrier base has recently been built on the southern island province, though some commentators still question the timeframe for when the next carrier will be commissioned.

It took between six and seven years for the former Soviet Union to construct the Varyag, the carrier that would later become the Liaoning after a complete refit. Additional two or three years were needed for the ship to undergo sea trials. For this reason, Kanwa estimates that China needs at least eight or even 10 years to complete the construction of its first domestically built carrier.

After construction of the carrier base in Hainan is completed, the article said the PLA Navy then will have to build a naval air station in the region for J-15 carrier-based fighters this year. This is likely to take between five and six years. The article said that a major problem for the next carrier is that it will have to return to the Dalian shipyard in the north eastern province of Liaoning for routine maintenance, which means a maintenance facility may be needed as well.

Source: [Want China Times](#), 3rd May, 2014

First Coastal Security Exercise of 2014 - 'Sagar Kavach' on May 6, 7

To assess the preparedness of security forces in handling seaborne threats, the state administration will hold a two-day coastal security exercise, Sagar Kavach, on May 6 and 7. This is the first Sagar Kavach exercise for 2014. The coastal security exercise is being supervised by the chief secretary and coordinated by the Indian coast guard.

Sagar Kavach involves all security agencies like the Indian coast guard, Indian Navy, Goa police, Goa coastal security, intelligence agencies, MPT, captain of ports department, CISF and customs, etc. "In the exercise, intelligence and infiltration will be induced and the alertness and preparedness of all stakeholders, including the people of Goa, will be tested," police said. The exercise will also assess the effectiveness of the coastal fishing community. This time, the services of Drishti lifeguards will also be utilized, police added.

Source: [TOI](#), 3rd May, 2014

'USNS Spearhead'- First Deployment a Success

The U.S. Navy informs that its first -in-class joint high-speed vessel USNS Spearhead (JHSV 1) has left the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations, after more than

three months of operating in the European and African theatres.

"I am extremely proud of the work *Spearhead* has achieved in theatre, primarily for her efforts in supporting Africa Partnership Station and the pillars that program represents," said Vice Adm. Phil Davidson, commander, U.S. 6th Fleet, who recently visited the ship during a port visit in Gabon. "I commend the Sailors and civilians who performed superbly over the course of their work here in U.S. 6th Fleet. They accomplished a wide range of mission sets and had a positive impact on maritime security."

Since entering the theatre in late January, *Spearhead* conducted maritime security operations in the Mediterranean, participated in multinational maritime exercises Saharan Express and Obangame Express, conducted a bi-lateral maritime law enforcement operation, and delivered more than 22.5 tons of humanitarian supplies under the U.S. Navy's Project Handclasp program.

In addition to the Express series exercises, *Spearhead* conducted Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP) with Ghana, patrolling Ghanaian waters with an embarked boarding team consisting of Ghanaian navy and marine police personnel, a Ghana fisheries agent, and members of a U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment. The combined boarding team boarded three vessels fishing illegally, and the fisheries agent recorded six infractions under Ghana fisheries regulations.

Spearhead also embarked a U.S. Marine Corps squad for a crisis response exercise off the coast of Liberia. The vessel hosted Liberian coast guardsmen for a shipboard familiarization visit while the Marine Corps personnel launched ashore. *Spearhead* concluded her time in Africa with a port visit in Libreville, Gabon, where the civilian and military crew conducted a community service project to assist the country's national art school. The ship also hosted a reception for Gabonese dignitaries.

Civil service mariners aboard *Spearhead* were glad to play a part achieving the multi-faceted missions while *Spearhead* was deployed to U.S. 6th Fleet. "In my 25 years with MSC, this is the best group I've ever sailed with, CIVMAR and military," said Capt. Doug Casavant, civil service master aboard *Spearhead*. "We have worked hard together, and we're leaving a good legacy." After it leaves U.S. 6th Fleet, *Spearhead* will briefly return to its lay berth at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Va., for a maintenance period before continuing its maiden deployment as scheduled to U.S. 4th Fleet.

Source: [Marine Link](#), 4th May, 2014

Iranian Navy Rescues Indian Oil Tanker

The Iranian Navy's 30th Fleet has thwarted an attempt by pirates to hijack an Indian oil tanker in the Red Sea, Rear Admiral Siavash Jareh announced on Sunday, according to the public relations department of the Iranian Navy.

The Deputy Commander of the Navy for Operations said that the Iranian naval warships intercepted seven pirate boats that had surrounded and attacked the tanker and forced them to flee after clashing with them. He also said that the tanker was not seriously damaged in the attack, adding that the tanker's captain thanked the Iranian fleet in a radio message.

The Navy's 30th Fleet, which is comprised of the Alvand destroyer and the Bushehr logistic warship, will dock in Port Sudan in the next few days, the Navy's statement said. The fleet has recently been sent to the open seas to provide security for Iranian commercial ships and oil tankers. During its mission in the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Bab-el-Mandeb, the fleet will protect Iranian commercial ships and tankers against pirate attacks, according to Navy officials.

Pirates operating off the coast of Somalia have expanded the reach of their hijacking attacks on merchant vessels and oil tankers in the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea in recent years, making tens of millions of dollars in ransom, despite the fact that dozens of foreign naval vessels are patrolling the area.

Source: [Tehran Times](#), 4th May, 2014

Russian Official Sees Murmansk as Sole 'Gateway to Arctic'

The port of Murmansk should be the sole holder of a special status as Russia's "Gateway to the Arctic," Murmansk governor Marina Kovtun at a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"We certainly hope and believe that the port of Murmansk will remain the sole wielder of the 'Gateway to the Arctic' status because we have all the necessary conditions. We are now training personnel, both oil-field workers and drillers, with an aim of developing the Arctic shelf," Kovtun said.

Kovtun also mentioned a number of companies that are interested in developing the Murmansk Transport Hub, including Rosneft, Gazprom and Bashneft. Kovtun recalled that the contractor for the project was selected in March as a result of trading, and that agreements were signed April 22 with all participants of the project: the private investor Sea Commercial Port Lavna, Rostransmodernizatsiya and the government of the Murmansk region.

Lavna intends to invest 17.6 billion roubles in the construction of a coal terminal with a capacity of 18 million tons, and the government is willing to invest about 62 billion roubles on infrastructure work, including railway construction and dredging.

"We saved some money as a result of trading, the price of the contract dropped from 43 billion to 41 billion roubles," the governor said. The main private investor, Kuzbassrazrezugol (KRU), will build a coal terminal with a capacity of 18 million tons at the confluence in the Kola Bay, she added.

Talking about the problem of coal dust, the governor noted that a major environmental program is being developed. "We are aware of this problem. We will sign an agreement with the Siberian Coal Energy Company, the owner of the port ... to ensure they would run a major environmental program. This is important for people; they are paying attention to it and force the authorities to react. So we have no other choice," Kovtun said.

Arctic territories are believed to hold vast untapped reserves of oil and gas. They have increasingly been at the center of disputes between the United States, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark as rising temperatures lead to a reduction in sea ice and make energy reserves more accessible.

At a meeting of the country's Security Council on April 22, Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated the country is actively developing the region to protect its national security and economic interests. The Defense Ministry has already announced plans to reopen airfields and ports on the New Siberian Islands and the Franz Josef Land archipelago, as well as at least seven airstrips on the continental part of the Arctic Circle that were mothballed in 1993.

Source: [Rianovosti](#), 5th May 2014

SC Relief Against Government Decision to Scrap INS Vikrant

The Supreme Court on Monday granted a status quo on India's first warship INS Vikrant, which was to be converted into scrap. Vikrant successfully served the nation in couple of international wars. Recently in January, the Bombay high court gave the go-ahead for its auction after it rejected a public interest litigation filed by activist Kiran Paigankar to save the ship from being scrapped and to convert it into a maritime museum.

In March, the Indian Navy sold it to the highest bidder, a Mumbai-based Ship breaking company called I B Commercial for Rs 63 crore, way over its reserve bid of Rs 3 crore. The plan, in the deal, is to pull it down part-by-part and sell it as lucrative scrap. May 20 would have been the ship's last day at berth off Mumbai coast. Paigankar pursued the matter in the SC where he challenged the HC order. On Monday, a bench of Justices K S Radhakrishnan and Vikranjit Sen took up the

matter for hearing at 12.15pm and after hearing Paigankar's lawyers, issued notice to the ministry of defence and all other respondents.

The SC said a status quo be maintained on the aircraft carrier, which was built in England well before the end of World War II. The iconic aircraft carrier served England before the Indian Navy bought it in 1957. Four decades later, the ship was decommissioned in 1997 and about a decade later, it was turned into a maritime museum, berthed in Mumbai harbour. Advocate Shekhar Jatap, counsel for Paigankar, said the ship ought to be preserved as a national monument and the SC said it would hear the matter at length.

The winning bidders were otherwise expected to move the ship out of the Mumbai harbour within a month as the deal warrants. The Centre and the Navy had been saying that the museum project had run out of steam financially. It was not feasible, they said in the HC too, as more money was being spent on repairs than any earned. The HC in January had dismissed the PIL to preserve the ship as a maritime museum. The defence ministry had been insisting in the HC that the sale is important to prevent any disaster and was in the nation's interest. The hull is over 70 years old and is very weak, unsafe for even cadets to cross. The HC bench of Chief Justice Mohit Shah and Justice M S Sanklecha accepted defence ministry's stand that the foremost aircraft carrier is 'completely unsafe' and unfit for preservation as museum. The Centre said that it was not feasible to retain the ship as a permanent museum and the decision taken last year to scrap it was based on government policy.

Source: [TOI](#), 5th May, 2014

Philippines, U.S. Begin War Games Focusing on Maritime Threats

Thousands of Filipino and American soldiers began annual war games, the first under a new security pact with the United States, focusing on maritime security in the face of China's growing naval presence in the disputed South China Sea.

The joint exercises "Balikatan" (shoulder-to-shoulder) would test the combat readiness of the two oldest allies in this part of the world to respond to any maritime threats, including piracy and humanitarian assistance and disaster response. The new security pact was signed last week just hours before U.S. President Barack Obama visited. Obama said the agreement was a testament to Washington's "pivot" to Asia and was an "ironclad" commitment to defend the Philippines. The Philippines has territorial disputes with China over the South China Sea, which is said to be rich in deposits of oil and gas and carry about \$5 billion in ship-borne trade every year.

The Spratlys in the South China Sea are also claimed by Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei. "Tensions in Asia-Pacific region have increased due to excessive and expansive maritime and territorial claims, undermining the rule of law," Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario said at the opening ceremony at the main army base in Manila.

"The aggressive patterns of behavior aimed at changing the status quo threaten peace and stability in the region. Balikatan 2014 with its focus on maritime security strongly supports our capabilities to address these challenges." A navy plane dropped food and water to troops stationed on a transport ship that ran aground on the disputed Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea. Chinese coast guard ships have set up a blockade around the shoal.

Nearly 5,500 American and Filipino troops are taking part in the two-week drills in different parts of the main island of Luzon. The war games will see U.S. F-18 fighters rehearse bombing runs and troops involved in live fire drills. Under a new security pact, the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, signed last week during Obama's visit, the U.S. will have wider access to local bases and construct facilities to store supplies and equipment for 10-years in exchange for increased support on maritime security and humanitarian assistance.

The annual war games come under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, part of a web of security alliances the United States built in the Asia-Pacific region during the Cold War. Outside the main army base in Manila, dozens of Left-wing activists protested, saying the Americans are using China as a bogeyman to gain a forward base in the Philippines. "It is silly that China is even being mentioned since the U.S. has expressed its non-committal to defend the Philippines in the event of an armed confrontation with China," said Renato Reyes, Bayan (Nation) secretary-general.

Source: [Reuters](#), 5th May, 2014

Vietnam Says China's Oil Rig Movement into South China Sea is "Illegal"

Vietnam says China's plan to move its first deep-water drilling rig into the disputed South China Sea, one of Asia's most volatile hotspots, is illegal and has called for the rig to be removed from what it says is Vietnam's territorial waters. The \$1 billion offshore oil rig called Haiyang Shiyou 981 owned by the China's state-run CNOOC oil company has been drilling south of Hong Kong.

Maritime Safety Administration of China (MSAC) on Saturday published an announcement on its website saying it prohibits all marine vessels entering into a one mile radius of the Haiyang Shiyou 981's South China Sea drilling work.

Vietnam's Foreign Ministry spokesman on Sunday objected to the move, saying the oilrig coordinates were within Vietnam's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, about 120 nautical miles off its coast. "All activities of foreign countries in Vietnam's waters without Vietnam's permission are illegal and worthless, Vietnam resolutely opposed," spokesman Le Hai Binh said in a statement. Vietnam's state Oil and Gas Group PetroVietnam sent a letter to CNOOC on Sunday saying it strongly objected to China's action and "insisted CNOOC stop immediately the illegal activities and pull out Haiyang Shiyou 981 of Vietnam's waters". Despite Hanoi's objection, MSAC on Monday expanded the prohibited area around its oil rig to a three miles radius.

CNOOC, China's top offshore oil producer, in 2012 invited foreign companies to jointly develop nine blocks in the western part of the South China Sea, a move Vietnam said was illegal because the blocks overlap its territorial waters.

China and the 10 countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations, which will hold an ASEAN summit in Myanmar on May 10-11, are trying to negotiating a code of conduct to ease tensions in the South China Sea.

Source: [Reuters](#), 5th May, 2014

Chinese Marine Corps will not be Abolished

Chinese Defense Minister Yen Ming that his ministry has no plans to abolish the Marine Corps, in response to concerns that the amphibious arm of the country's navy will be scrapped under a military downsizing plan. "There are no plans to abolish it. Only organizational changes will take place," Yen said in a legislative session when questioned by lawmakers on the issue.

The corps will be adjusted to meet the requirements of future tasks, but its current deployments on the Pratas Islands and Taiping Island — the biggest of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea — are still needed, the minister said. Yen said the ministry will keep its best branches and get rid of the weakest. The minister also denied speculation that the Marine Corps headquarters will be transferred to the Army from the Navy.

Source: [China Post](#), 6th May, 2014

Japan to Deploy P-1 Aircraft in Event of PLA Sub Attack

In the event of any potential confrontation with Chinese submarines in Japan's territorial waters, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force will likely deploy the P-1

patrol aircraft designed by Kawasaki Heavy Industries to the disputed East China Sea according to the Tokyo-based Sankei Shimbun on May. 4.

The newspaper reported that China's most sophisticated sea research vessel, the Kexue, was conducting activities off the coast of Japan's exclusive economic zone on Kume island in Okinawa for half a month. Despite receiving warnings from Japanese coast guard vessels to leave, the Chinese ship remained until its mission was completed. For this reason, more countermeasures will be needed for Japan to confront any potential invasion of Chinese vessels into its territorial waters.

A source from the Japanese defense ministry told the paper that the submarine along with a destroyer of the People's Liberation Army Navy could eventually enter the Japanese exclusive economic zone or neighboring territorial waters in the same way the sea research vessel had. A Chinese nuclear-powered submarine was spotted for the first time in Japanese waters back in November 2004.

With speed 1.3-times faster than the P-3C patrol plane, the P-1 designed domestically in Japan is the most suitable choice for anti-submarine warfare in the East China Sea, with a longer range than the P-3C purchased from the United States. When confronting Chinese warships, the P-1 is capable of attacking with air-to-surface missiles like the AGM-84 Harpoon, the ASM-1C, and the AGM-65 Maverick. Torpedoes, mines and depth charges are also carried by the aircraft to attack submarines.

Under the US-Japan security treaty, the P-1 can offer more of a threat to Chinese submarines in its waters when coordinated with the P-8 patrol aircraft of the US Navy. Six, P-8 Poseidon were deployed to the Kadena Air Base in Okinawa in December. Chuck Hagel, the US secretary of defense, said the P-8 will be deployed to defend Japan's territorial waters in the event that Japan is attacked by a foreign aggressor.

Source: [Want China Times](#), 6th May, 2014

Iran Navy Chief Asserts Destroying US Navy Remains Top Priority

Iranian navy chief Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi has asserted that destroying the US navy remains one of the top operational goals of the Tehran forces. Fadavi, in unusually aggressive remarks, has said the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has been routinely conducting drills on how to sink US vessels in the region.

"Conducting trainings, exercises and drills to get prepared for operational goals is always on our agenda and Americans and the entire world knows that one of the operational goals of the IRGC Navy is destruction of the US naval force," the naval commander told Iran's semi-official Fars News Agency (FNA).

Fadavi added that the Iranian navy has the potential to sink US vessels in less than a minute if a combat breaks out between the two countries. Noting that US aerial combat operations in the region are dependent on aircraft carriers, Fadavi said: "Hence, that is a natural thing that we want to sink these vessels."

"They [Americans] know nothing. We have been making and sinking replicas of US destroyers, frigates and warships for long years, and we have sunk the replica of their vessels in 50 seconds through a series of operational measures."

"We practice the same drills on replica aircraft carriers because sinking and destroying US warships has, is and will be on our agenda."

The IRGC Navy is in charge of securing Iran's interests in the Persian Gulf while Iranian Army's naval force is largely responsible for the Caspian Sea and the Sea of Oman. The navy chief's remarks came at a time when verbal tirades between the countries had come down as Iran's relationship with the western world improved following several rounds of nuclear talks.

Source: [Business Times](#), 6th May, 2014

Busy April for NATO Counter Piracy Task Force

NATO's counter-piracy task force (CTF-508) supporting Operation Ocean Shield wrapped up a busy second half of April with regional engagement opportunities throughout its area of operations.

Earlier in the month, two members of the Yemeni military were embarked for a week aboard HNLMS Evertsen to familiarise them with NATO counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. The embarkation of the officers from the Yemeni Coast Guard and Navy is a product of NATO's effort to foster co-operation with neighbouring countries to enable them to provide security for the Gulf of Aden. During their time aboard, the Yemeni officers observed Evertsen's visits to dhows and skiffs to increase maritime situational awareness and more effectively combat piracy. They also observed live-firing exercises. The Yemeni officers also gave CTF-508 insight into the situation in Yemen and the problems faced by the Yemeni defence forces. HNLMS Evertsen also conducted an exercise with the Dutch merchant vessel MV Happy Dragon in the Gulf of Aden. During the exercise, Evertsen's Enhanced Boarding Element (EBE) practiced boarding and liberating the vessel while Happy Dragon's crew hid in a safe room. The EBE, a special operations unit of the Royal Dutch Marines, boarded the merchant vessel and simulated overpowering suspected pirates and liberating the crew.

CTF-508 flagship ESPS Cristobal Colon spent April 23 conducting training on counter piracy operations for an instructor and 16 students of the Seychelles Coast Guard. The students are conducting a maritime security and safety course

supervised by the European Union's capacity-building program EUCAP Nestor, whose liaison officers stationed in Seychelles co-ordinated the training. The students received a series of lectures on counter piracy operations in the Indian Ocean and on boarding team procedures using helicopters and boats, followed by a brief tour of the ship and a practical demonstration of boarding security team equipment.

The last week of April saw the staff of CTF-508 visit to the Regional Fusion Law Enforcement Centre for Safety and Security at Sea (REFLECS3) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) during a port visit to the Seychelles by the flagship. These visits help staff to become familiar with the activities and capacities of these organisations and how they interact with NATO's counter piracy operations in the Indian Ocean. The meetings produced constructive ideas to further enhance and improve co-operation in countering illegal activities at sea. REFLECS3 monitors regional traffic in order to detect suspicious activity and inform relevant local authorities. UNODC is a direct sponsor of REFLECS3 and supports the Seychelles government in bringing suspected pirates to justice and training local Seychelles law enforcement in evidence procedures and conducting judicial trials.

Source: [Defence Web](#), 6th May, 2014

China Set to Build on Disputed Johnson South Reef

A build up of Chinese activity has been observed around Johnson South Reef in the disputed Spratly islands in the South China Sea, and the country may build some facilities there, the news web portal of the China Internet Information Center reports.

The state media outlet asserted Beijing's claim to the reef, known as Chigua Reef in Chinese. China claimed six small islands in the vicinity of the reef after a brief naval battle between Chinese and Vietnamese forces on March 14, 1988 in which more than 70 Vietnamese sailors died.

Photos released by Vietnam and Taiwan showed that several large-tonnage vessels are operating around the area, with one military vessel equipped with missiles patrolling nearby, the report said. Unnamed Chinese officials said the operation is aimed at consolidating and maintaining the basic infrastructure of the reef.

The move to build infrastructure on the reef will strengthen the nation's sovereignty there and will give China a strategic influence in the South China Sea, the report said. It may also allow the nation more shipping freedom and fishing security in the region, it added. The Spratlys are the largest group of islands in the South China Sea and also the most contested. The islands are claimed in whole or in part by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

Source: [Want China Times](#), 7th May, 2014

U.S. to Send 20 Marine Brigades In Case of North Korean Invasion

The U.S. has established an operational plan to deploy 20 marine brigades to the Korean Peninsula in case of a North Korean invasion into the South, U.S. House Armed Services Chairman Howard McKeon.

During a forum in Washington, McKeon said that U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James Amos told him that most of the U.S. marines are to be dispatched to defend South Korea under the plan, according to Yonhap. The Republican lawmaker said that with the congressionally mandated budget cuts, or sequestration, the number of U.S. marines is to be reduced to 175,000 to form only 21 brigades, noting that only one brigade may remain in the U.S. while the rest are to be sent to the peninsula in case of a war. McKeon's claim was apparently welcomed news in South Korea, where some were concerned that with the U.S. troop drawdown, Washington would be reluctant to commit a large number of ground troops for peninsular contingencies.

Under the allies' joint war plan, the U.S. is to send its 690,000 troops to the peninsula in case of an all-out war. But given Washington's plan to slash its ground troops, analysts said that the plan was no longer realistic. Earlier this year, the Pentagon said that due to budget cuts, the active-duty army will be reduced over the next five years to between 440,000 and 450,000 from the current 520,000.

Washington officials argued that the force reduction is to "normalize" its troop structure after more than a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. But some observers stressed the need to craft a more viable plan to prepare for peninsular contingencies.

Bruce Bennett, a senior defense analyst at the RAND Corporation, said that the U.S. Army cuts will not seriously reduce U.S. deployments to South Korea if conflict occurs here. Bennett put the baseline number of the U.S. Army troops at 480,000, dismissing the current figure of 520,000. He said that the original figure rose as wars in Iraq and Afghanistan progressed. "Still, 480,000 is the rough baseline from which (Defense) Secretary Hagel is reducing the Army to about 440,000 or 450,000 — more like a 6 to 8 percent manpower decrease," he said. "A 6 to 8 percent personnel decrease in the U.S. Army will not prevent substantial U.S. Army deployments to Korea."

Source: [Starrisk](#), 7th May, 2014

Pipavav Plans Development of Naval Missile Production Facility

Mumbai-headquartered Pipavav Defence and Offshore Engineering has revealed plans to establish a facility in Hyderabad to manufacture missiles and torpedoes for the Indian Navy (IN).

Speaking at an event held by the Confederation of Indian Industry on 7 May, Pipavav's senior advisor Naresh Kumar said the company is seeking to support the facility through local industrial partners who would undertake subcontracted design and manufacturing activities.

He also said the work undertaken in Hyderabad will be in conjunction with a foreign partner, but did not elaborate. Two foreign companies that have entered missile-related partnership arrangements with Pipavav in recent years include Sweden's Saab and Germany's Atlas Elektronik.

Source: [Janes](#), 7th May 2014

7th Fleet Ships Emphasize CUES Training

With the endorsement of CUES at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) in April 2014, WPNS navies have affirmed their commitment to safety during unplanned encounters at sea. Across the Indo-Pacific Seventh Fleet ships and aircraft train for the expected increase in use of CUES to ensure quick and effective communication.

CUES (Codes for Unplanned Encounters at Sea), is a guideline for unplanned maritime encounters while at sea, providing standards for communication, safety procedures and manoeuvring instructions for naval ships and naval aircraft.

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer (DDG 108), underway in the Yellow Sea, reviewed CUES standards with all Officers and practiced different scenarios where CUES would be beneficial. One scenario included fast-reaction sound signals such as five short blasts to signify danger, and bridge to bridge communication procedures on international VHF channel 16. "Every member of our Bridge watch team needs to be proficient in CUES; timely and accurate communication can mean the difference between life or death at sea," said Cmdr. Randy Van Rossum, Commanding Officer, USS Wayne E. Meyer.

U.S. Seventh Fleet has been using CUES routinely and for the past three years, and with 21 maritime nations signing the code in April the Fleet is increasing its training and enthusiastic use of the standards. U.S. Navy support of CUES further emphasizes the overarching support for adherence to international norms, standards, rules and laws as well as the use of multilateral communication to resolve unexpected issues and avoid uncertainty while manoeuvring at sea.

"In addition to improving safety and reducing uncertainty at sea, CUES will help build trust and confidence in the navies of the region as we interact together more frequently and build our communication skills," said Vice Adm. Robert Thomas, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet. "It's a positive development that should help reduce the

risk of misunderstandings between military ships and aircraft operating in the region. These guidelines demonstrate the effectiveness of dialogue, transparency and multilateral approaches to dealing with the modern challenge of close interaction at sea.” said Thomas.

Source: [dvids](#), 7th May, 2014

‘Balikatan- 2014’ Exercise Starts

The ‘Balikatan- 2014’ Exercise between the Philippine and United States troops officially opened and focused mostly on humanitarian civic assistance (HCA), humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) and maritime security.

The opening ceremonies took place at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Commissioned Officers’ Clubhouse in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City at around 8:30 a.m. Among those in attendance were Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario, Defense Secretary Voltaire T. Gazmin, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg, AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Emmanuel T. Bautista, Philippine exercise director Major Gen. Emerald Magnaye and U.S. exercise director Lt. Gen. Terry Robling of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Lt. (SG) Annaleah Cazcarro, Combined-Joint Information Bureau co-director, said “Balikatan 2014” is the 30th iteration of the annual military manoeuvres. “This year’s exercise will focus on HCA, HADR and maritime security,” she added. “Balikatan” is an annual bilateral combined exercise initiated by the governments of the Philippines and the United States.

For this year, it is scheduled in the Philippines from May 5 to 16. Cazcarro said the staffs planning exercises are scheduled in Camp Aguinaldo and in Western Command in Puerto Princesa City, while the field training exercises will be conducted in military camps in Luzon, Clark Field, Crow Valley and Fort Magsaysay.

“Balikatan’ 2014 is structured to further develop the AFP in crisis-action planning, enhancing its ability to effectively conduct counter-terrorism operations, and promote interoperability with the U.S. Armed Forces”.

The annual exercise is consistent with the Mutual Defense Treaty and Visiting Forces Agreement between the Philippines and the U.S. which aim is to continue both countries’ commitment to train, share information and provide support to each other.

Source: [Balita Filipino News](#), 7th May, 2014

Vietnam Says Chinese Ships 'Intentionally' Rammed Two of its Vessels

Vietnam said a Chinese vessel intentionally rammed two of its ships in a part of the disputed South China Sea where Beijing has deployed a giant oil rig, sending tensions spiralling in the region. The Foreign Ministry in Hanoi said the collisions took place on Sunday and caused considerable damage to the Vietnamese ships. Six people suffered minor injuries, it said.

"On May 4, Chinese ships intentionally rammed two Vietnamese Sea Guard vessels," said Tran Duy Hai, a Foreign Ministry official and deputy head of Vietnam's national border committee. "Chinese ships, with air support, sought to intimidate Vietnamese vessels. "Water cannon was used," he told a news conference in Hanoi. Six other ships were also hit, but not as badly, other officials said.

Dozens of navy and coastguard vessels from both countries are in the area where China has deployed the giant rig, Vietnamese officials have said. "No shots have been fired yet," said a Vietnamese navy official, who could not be identified because he was not authorised to speak to media. "Vietnam won't fire unless China fires first."

The two Communist nations have been trying to put aside border disputes and memories of a brief border war in 1979. Vietnam is usually careful about comments against China, with which it had bilateral trade surpassing \$50 billion in 2013. Still, Hanoi has strongly condemned the operation of the drilling rig in what it says are its waters in the South China Sea, and told the owners, China's state-run oil company CNOOC, to remove it.

The United States has also criticised the move. The row comes days after U.S. President Barack Obama visited Asia to underline his commitment to allies including Japan and the Philippines, both locked in territorial disputes with China. Obama, promoting a strategic "pivot" towards the Asia-Pacific, also visited South Korea and Malaysia, but not China.

The United States is "strongly concerned about dangerous conduct and intimidation by vessels in the disputed area," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in Washington on Wednesday. Psaki reiterated the U.S. view that China's deployment of an oil rig was "provocative and unhelpful" to regional security. "We call on all parties to conduct themselves in a safe and appropriate manner, exercise restraint, and address competing sovereignty claims peacefully, diplomatically, and in accordance with international law," she told a regular news briefing.

China has not yet responded to the Vietnamese allegations of ramming. Earlier, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the rig's deployment had nothing to do with the United States, or Vietnam. "The United States has no right to complain about China's activities within the scope of its own sovereignty," she said.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea and rejects rival claims from Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei. Tensions are also brewing in another part of the sea, with Beijing demanding that the Philippines release a Chinese fishing boat and its crew seized on Tuesday off Half Moon Shoal in the Spratly Islands.

The boat had 11 crew members and police said they found about 350 turtles in the vessel, some already dead. A Philippine boat and its crew was also seized and found to have 70 turtles on board. Several species of turtle are protected under Philippine law.

Police said the boats were being towed to Puerto Princesa town on the island of Palawan where charges would be filed. China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said Hua China had "indisputable sovereignty" over the Spratly Islands and added: "We once again warn the Philippines not to take any provocative actions." The State Department's Psaki said the United States had seen reports about the boat seizures was concerned that the vessels appeared to be engaged in catching endangered sea turtles. "We urge both sides to work together diplomatically," she said.

In a commentary, Ernest Bower and Gregory Poling of Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank called the implications of the rig row "significant." "The fact that the Chinese moved ahead in placing their rig immediately after President Barack Obama's visit to four Asian countries in late April underlines Beijing's commitment to test the resolve of Vietnam, its Association of Southeast Asian Nations neighbours, and Washington," they said. Beijing may be attempting "to substantially change the status quo" while perceiving Washington to be distracted by developments in Ukraine, Nigeria and Syria, they said. "If China believes Washington is distracted, in an increasingly insular and isolationist mood, and unwilling to back up relatively strong security assertions made to Japan and the Philippines and repeated during President Obama's trip, then these developments south of the Paracel Islands could have long-term regional and global consequences," they said.

Tensions are frequent in the South China Sea between China and the other claimant nations, particularly Vietnam and the Philippines, both of which say Beijing has harassed their ships. However, while there are frequent stand-offs between fishermen and claimant states in the South China Sea, the actual detention of Chinese fishermen or the seizure of a boat is rare.

An oil industry official in China said deployment of the rig appeared a political decision rather than a commercial one. "This reflected the will of the central government and is also related to the U.S. strategy on Asia," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It is not commercially driven. It is also not like CNOOC has set a big exploration blueprint for the region." However, Wu Shicun, president of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, a Chinese

government think tank, said China was unlikely to pay much heed to Vietnamese concerns.

"If we stop our work there as soon as Vietnam shouts, China will not be able to achieve anything in the South China Sea," Wu said. "We have lost a precious opportunity to drill for oil and gas in the Spratlys. Also this time we are drilling in Xisha (Paracel Islands), not Nansha (Spratlys), there is no territorial dispute there. I think China will keep moving ahead with its plan (in Xisha), no matter what Vietnam says and does."

Tran Duy Hai, the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry official, raised the possibility of Hanoi taking the dispute to international arbitration. "We cannot exclude any measures, including international legal action, as long as it is peaceful. "We are a peace-loving nation that has experienced many wars," he said. "If this situation goes too far, we will use all measures in line with international law to protect our territory. We have limitations, but we will stand up to any Chinese aggression."

Source: [Reuters](#), 8th May, 2014

INS Vikramaditya Operationally Deployed

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Robin Kumar Dhowan announced that the newly inducted aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya, is now operationally deployed and its integral MiG-29K fighters have been fully integrated with the carrier.

Stressing the importance of the men behind machines, Admiral Dhowan, on his maiden visit to the Southern Naval Command here after taking over the reins of the force, said while the multi-dimensional maritime force maintained high professional standards, the very nature of its job put the Navy and warships in harm's way.

"However, we follow stringent procedures, have taken serious note of incidents and whatever recommendations for enhancement of safety thereon and continue to carry out safety audit of platforms to ensure that standard operating procedures are not bypassed. Safety check of platforms is carried out on a regular basis," he said.

Source: [Hindu](#), 8th May, 2014

Chinese Navy will Participate in RIMPAC Exercise for First Time

For the first time ever, China's PLA Navy will take part in the international RIMPAC naval exercise hosted by the U.S. Pacific Fleet. This year, RIMPAC is slated to take place between June 26 and August 1. The exercise will involve 47 surface ships, six submarines, over 200 aircraft, and 25,000 troops. China will send four ships. The

exercise will be the world's largest maritime exercise, involving 23 nations, and comes as tensions are high in the Asia-Pacific region over disputes in East and South China Seas. In addition to China, Brunei will be participating in the exercise for the first time as well.

The United States originally extended an invitation to the Chinese navy in 2012 when then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta visited China. Panetta invited China to participate in the exercise as a gesture that would increase military-to-military trust (which remains lacking today) between the United States and China. In June 2013, Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi expressed China's intent to accept the United States' invitation to participate in the exercise.

RIMPAC 2014 will be led by the United States with support from Australian and Japanese commanders. Rear Admiral Yasuki Nakahata of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force will serve as vice commander to the deputy commander of the Combined Task Force during the exercise. China's involvement in RIMPAC will mean that its navy will cooperate with the Japanese navy at a time when the two countries are at an impasse over disputed islands in the East China Sea.

Apart from China, Japan, the United States and Australia, the other countries participating in RIMPAC 2014 are Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Tonga, and the United Kingdom.

Operationally, the exercise will focus on increasing naval interoperability in activities including disaster relief, maritime security operations, sea control, and complex war-fighting. According to the U.S. Navy, "the relevant, realistic training syllabus includes amphibious operations, gunnery, missile, anti-submarine and air defense exercises as well as counter-piracy, mine clearance operations, explosive ordnance disposal and diving and salvages operations."

RIMPAC's stated goal is to provide "a unique training opportunity that helps participants foster and sustain the cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans." The exercise takes place biennially during the summer in the waters off Honolulu, Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 8th May, 2014

Malaysian Authorities Crack Down on Maritime Security in Sabah

Stung by the recent spate of kidnappings, Malaysia is cracking down on all foreign vessels entering and exiting the east coast of Sabah, insisting that they must now follow designated routes, especially in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (Esszone), with immediate effect, local reports said. Home Minister Zahid Hamidi was quoted as

saying that all foreign vessels must follow the seven gazetted entry zones into Sabah or face action under Malaysian law.

A Chinese national fish farm manager was kidnapped by five armed men from Pulau Baik near Lahad Datu on the east coast near the border with the Philippines and is believed to have been brought to the southern Philippines. Last month, the same group of rebels, believed to be from the same notorious Abu Sayyaf group, kidnapped a Chinese tourist and an employee from a dive resort in the area.

Source: [Seatrade Global](#), 8th May, 2014

PLA's New Destroyer Could Bring Down F-35 Stealth Fighter

The US fifth-generation F-35 stealth fighter can be detected by the radar system installed aboard the People's Liberation Army Navy's new Type 052D destroyers, according to the Moscow-based Voice of Russia, citing military experts.

Vladimir Evseev, director of the Moscow-based Center for Social and Political Studies, told the Russian broadcaster that details of China's radar project, including the amount spent on its development, remain unknown, however it is a great leap forward in regards to the nation's military modernization

China has encountered a lot of obstacles in its attempts to develop its own radar system, but it has managed to overcome these issues with Russian help, Voice of Russia said, citing Konstantin Sivkov, director of the Russian Academy for Geopolitical Issues. Sivkov said that the most crucial part of China's success is that the PLA Navy finally knows how to handle active electronically scanned array radar systems. With this technology, Chinese destroyers are able to track and shoot down F-35 fighters from a distance of 350 kilometres.

Meanwhile, Pavel Zolotaryov, deputy head of Institute for USA and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, said that the Chinese warship not only has the ability to locate the US stealth fighter but can also deploy countermeasures against the fighter's electronic interference capability. The new system will gradually increase the combat capability of the PLA Navy in Western Pacific region, Voice of Russia said.

Source: [Want China Times](#), 9th May, 2014

Iran, Pakistan Stage Joint Naval Drill in Indian Ocean

The Iranian and Pakistani naval forces staged joint naval drills in the Northern waters of the Indian Ocean to promote military cooperation between the two countries.

During the one-day drills, Iranian and Pakistani naval forces rehearsed different types of military and tactical formations of vessels and submarines. The Iranian naval fleet present in the exercises comprised Falakhon (Sling) and Khanjar (Dagger) missile boats, Hendijan and Deylam replenishment ships as well as a Ghadir midget submarine. Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari announced on Sunday that several Iranian Navy warships and submarines dispatched to the high seas have berthed in Pakistan.

Early in April, Iran and Pakistan started their joint naval exercises in the Persian Gulf. Iranian and Pakistani naval forces began their joint drills in the Eastern waters of the Strait of Hormuz with the message of peace and friendship. In recent years, Iran's Navy has been increasing its presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for trade vessels and tankers. The Islamic Republic has repeatedly asserted that its overseas naval presence is meant to convey a message of peace and friendship to other countries. Iranian officials and commanders have repeatedly underlined that all military exercises and trainings of the Iranian Armed Forces are merely meant to serve deterrent purposes. Late in December 2011, the Iranian Army's Navy staged 10-day war games, dubbed as Velayat 90, to test its latest achievements in the fields of missile technology and sub-surface vessels. The war games were conducted in an area stretching from the East of the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Aden.

During the drills, the Navy test-fired long-range missiles from coasts and navy vessels. Different types of short and long-range coast-to-sea, surface-to-surface, surface-to-air missiles were tested by Iranian vessels. Iranian submarines also launched smart torpedoes in the exercises. Iran's naval power has even been acknowledged by foes. In a Sep. 11, 2008 report, the Washington Institute for the Near East Policy said that in the two decades since the Iraqi imposed war on Iran, the Islamic Republic has excelled in naval capabilities and is able to wage unique asymmetric warfare against larger naval forces.

According to the report, Iran's Navy has been transformed into a highly motivated, well-equipped, and well-financed force and is effectively in control of the world's oil lifeline, the Strait of Hormuz. The study said that if Washington takes military action against the Islamic Republic, the scale of Iran's response would likely be proportional to the scale of the damage inflicted on Iranian assets.

Source: [Fars News Agency](#), 10th May, 2014

SE Asia Group Calls on China to Speed Up Maritime Security Talks

Southeast Asian foreign ministers voiced "serious concerns" over naval clashes between Vietnam and China as the regional group's top official urged Beijing to step up efforts to advance talks on maritime security.

Foreign ministers and heads of state of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are facing a test of unity at their summit this weekend as some members express alarm over China's growing assertiveness in the disputed South China Sea and push for a strong joint statement. Tensions ratcheted up in the past week after China positioned a huge oil rig in an area also claimed by Vietnam, with each country accusing the other of ramming its ships in the region close to the disputed Paracel Islands.

ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh, who is Vietnamese, told Reuters the incident added urgency to concluding talks between ASEAN and China on agreeing a code of conduct in the resource-rich sea - a set of maritime rules to ease tensions. But he pointedly said China's efforts to conclude the talks had fallen short of ASEAN's. Despite holding three rounds of talks since last year, the discussions had yet to focus on "substantive issues," he said. "We need efforts on both sides," he said in an interview on the sidelines of the summit in Myanmar's capital, Naypyitaw.

Tensions over the sea, which is claimed in part by four ASEAN members as well as China and Taiwan, have strained the group's unity in recent years, resulting in an embarrassing breakdown of a summit in Cambodia in 2012. In their statement, ASEAN foreign ministers on Saturday called for "an early conclusion" of the code of conduct and expressed concern about "increased tensions in the area".

At the summit, which ends on Sunday, countries including Vietnam and the Philippines are pushing for a strong statement, while others - mindful of China's economic weight - are reluctant to directly criticise Beijing. Myanmar, which is chairing ASEAN for the first time this year, signalled a softer approach to China. Myanmar's government spokesman, Ye Ht, said ASEAN and China have a "very good relationship" and both recognise China's continued growth as a political and economic power should not be marred by conflict with its neighbours.

"China is not only big friends with Myanmar, but China is also the biggest trade partner with most of the ASEAN countries," he told reporters in Naypyitaw. "So China's peaceful rising is very important for the ASEAN region."

Both Vietnam and staunch U.S. ally the Philippines have insisted the South China Sea be discussed at the summit. Philippine diplomats told Reuters some member states were opposed to issuing a separate statement on the latest South China Sea dispute or mentioning the tensions in the final communiqué due to be released. China says territorial disputes should be discussed on a bilateral basis. It claims the entire South China Sea, putting it in conflict with Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. The last four are ASEAN members.

Speaking to reporters in Manila, Philippine President Benigno Aquino rejected calls from China for bilateral talks to resolve territorial issues and said dialogue will not resolve the issues that are also affecting other regional countries.

Tensions spiked in another part of the South China Sea over the past week when Beijing demanded the Philippines release a Chinese fishing boat and its crew seized on Tuesday off Half Moon Shoal in the Spratly Islands, which both countries claim.

Source: [Reuters](#), 10th May, 2014

ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Current Developments in the South China Sea

ASEAN Foreign Ministers expressed their serious concerns over the on-going developments in the South China Sea, which have increased tensions in the area. They urged all parties concerned, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to exercise self-restraint and avoid actions which could undermine peace and stability in the area; and to resolve disputes by peaceful means without resorting to threat or use of force.

They reaffirmed the importance of maintaining peace and stability, maritime security, freedom of navigation in and over-flight above the South China Sea as well as the ASEAN's Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea and the Joint Statement of the 15th ASEAN-China Summit on the 10th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. They also called on all parties to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) to undertake full and effective implementation of the DOC in order to create an environment of mutual trust and confidence. They emphasised the need for expeditiously working towards an early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).

Source: [ASEAN](#), 10th May, 2014

China Deploys Naval Vessels in Scarborough Shoal

China deployed blue-water naval vessels in the Scarborough Shoal or Bajo de Masinloc near Zambales, which it declared off-limits to Filipino vessels in what is seen as a deliberate and determined effort to occupy the shoal.

This was noticed when the United States Navy's 7th Fleet reported spotting two frigates from China's People's Liberation Army Navy while it was conducting flight operations in support of its maritime security operations in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

The military, through Col. Edgard Arevalo, the commander of the Navy's civil-military operations office, however, declined to comment on the presence of Chinese frigates in the shoal, saying they still need to verify the reports.

The continuing occupation by China of the Bajo de Masinloc by maintaining its presence there, which began more than two years ago, has prompted the country to file a territorial-dispute case against Beijing before the United Nation.

According to the US 7th Fleet, its M-60 helicopter attached to its flagship, the USS *Blue Ridge*, saw one of the frigates in the vicinity of Scarborough while the chopper was in flight operations in support of the US maritime operations in the South China Sea.

The presence of the frigate in the shoal was the first time that such type of naval vessel from China was spotted in the area, more than two years after Chinese ships and the BRP *Gregorio del Pilar*, the flagship of the Philippine Navy, were involved in a standoff there. The *del Pilar* was later replaced by a Coast Guard vessel and a fishery ship, which later pulled out from the shoal after the US brokered an agreement for both China and the Philippines to leave the shoal in order to de-escalate the tension.

China, however, reneged on its commitment by maintaining its paramilitary vessels there from its Fisheries Law Enforcement Command, whose number even increased along with Chinese Coast Guard vessels. The sightings of the frigates came as Filipino and American soldiers held military exercises in Zambales, Tarlac and Nueva Ecija under the annual Balikatan. Arevalo said they have no monitoring reports from the shoal, and as such, he could not comment on the sightings, adding territorial issues also fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

“If there’s an event such as that, we defer to the DFA for them to comment because of the underpinnings, the repercussions,” he said. More than a week ago military troops who dropped provisions to the Filipino Marines guarding Ayungin Shoal also reported seeing a Chinese frigate near the shoal.

The frigate is in the company of three Chinese Coast Guard vessels and a Chinese research ship.

Source: [Business Mirror](#), 11th May, 2014

US, Philippines Stage War Games Amid Rising South China Sea Tensions

Scores of US and Filipino marines launched mock assaults on a South China Sea beach in the Philippines in war games aimed at honing the allies’ combat skills. The exercise came as tensions simmer between the Philippines and China over rival claims to the strategic waters.

Three US rubber raiding craft and two small-units Filipino river-going boats made repeated sallies at a desolate beach at a northern Philippines navy base in a practise stealth landing of squads of armed marines. Shouting “volume fire” and “bounce up”, the teams scrambled up the sloping shore with assault rifles to surround a mocked-up enemy tent before running back to their boats in rapid manoeuvres.

“We’re here for the sake of training, to build up and develop our capabilities,” US Marines spokesman Captain Jeremy Scheier said, when asked if they had a specific enemy target in mind. The exercises began well before dawn and involved about 40 US and 80 Filipino marines. About 5,500 US and Filipino forces took part in this year's games, whose opening ceremonies included officers from Australia and elsewhere. At the opening ceremony in Manila last week, Filipino Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said this year’s joint manoeuvres were designed to help the hosts boost their “maritime capability” to address “challenges” in the South China Sea.

The Philippines, which signed a mutual defence treaty with the United States in 1951, has been involved in increasingly tense maritime confrontations with regional power China, which claims most of the sea including waters close to its neighbours. The United States has said it takes no position in the territorial dispute. However US President Barack Obama, on a state visit to Manila last week, warned China against using force in territorial disputes and said Washington would support Manila in the event of an attack. Philippine military spokeswoman Navy Lieutenant Annaleah Cazcarro said the amphibious landing exercises also involved two Filipino navy ships serving as launch pads about 3.7 kilometres offshore.

“This was planned years before,” she said when asked if the exercises had any bearing on the latest maritime incident involving China, which the Philippines said occurred near Half_Moon Shoal, 106 kilometres west of the large western Philippine island of Palawan.

The Philippines on March 30 filed a formal plea asking a United Nations arbitration tribunal to declare as illegal what Manila said was Beijing’s claim to 70 per cent of the South China Sea. The seabed in the area is believed to contain huge deposits of oil and gas and the waters straddle vital shipping lanes. Beijing has rejected UN arbitration and urged Manila to settle the dispute through bilateral talks instead.

Source: [South China Morning Post](#), 11th May, 2014

South China Sea Dispute Overshadows ASEAN Summit

The ongoing dispute over the South China Seas carried into the 24th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in the Myanmar capital of Naypyitaw over the weekend as leaders from the 10-member nations uniformly expressed their concern over the escalating situation. On May 1, the stand-off between Vietnam and

China reached new heights after China moved a deep-water oil rig into an area near Paracel Islands, a territory claimed by Vietnam. There have since been several collisions between ships from the two sides, along with the use of water cannons. The broken glass from the ensuing attacks has injured at least six people, Vietnamese officials claim.

Since then, anti-China protests have gripped Vietnam, while officials accuse China of illegally drilling in their waters. The recent escalation prompted ASEAN foreign ministers to issue a statement on Saturday calling on all involved parties to restrain themselves from a violent outbreak and follow the protocol of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC).

“ASEAN Foreign Ministers expressed their serious concerns over the on-going developments in the South China Sea, which have increased tensions in the area,” the statement reads. “They urged all parties concerned, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including ... to exercise self-restraint and avoid actions which could undermine peace and stability in the area; and to resolve disputes by peaceful means without resorting to threat or use of force.” The statement represents what experts believe is a bold first offering of a joint stance on the ongoing conflict on behalf of the entire ASEAN community, which comprises Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

“The statement by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers was issued as a standalone document and not buried in the longer summary of proceedings. This is significant,” Southeast Asia expert and emeritus professor at the University of New South Wales, Carl Thayer, told The Diplomat. “It highlights ASEAN unity on the fact that ongoing developments in the South China Sea are a source of serious concern because they have raised tensions.”

Vietnamese officials have reacted to last week’s development saying that restraints on continued provocation “have limits” as officials from Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs claim that there are at least 60 ships, including military ships, escorting the oil rig. Maritime tensions ahead of the ASEAN Summit were also driven by a separate incident in the South China Sea after the Philippines seized a Chinese fishing boat and its crew on May 6 off Half Moon Shoal in the Spratly Islands. The incident has drawn the ire of China, who is demanding the ship be released.

During the May 11 opening ceremony of the 24th ASEAN Summit, titled “Moving forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community,” Myanmar President Thein Sein said the high-ranking delegation would speak about regional problems, but did not refer to the South China Sea dispute directly. “As we are building an ASEAN Community in the Global Community of Nations, regional and global issues of great concern to ASEAN will be extensively discussed among ourselves,” he said.

For Myanmar, which was hosting the ASEAN Summit for the first time in its 17 years as a member, the Summit was considered a test for the country, once the problem member of the regional bloc prior to its switch to a quasi-civilian government in 2011. “Myanmar so far has acquitted itself quite well as ASEAN chair. It has come under intense Chinese pressure to toe the line on the South China Sea, but Myanmar – as ASEAN Chair – is acting according to the current consensus,” said Thayer, adding that additional efforts on the part of Myanmar to fall in line with ASEAN policy would be looked upon favourably in the West. The maritime crisis in the South China seas was not the only regional development on the agenda of the two-day summit; however, as ASEAN leaders discussed the growing political turmoil in neighboring Thailand, following the removal of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from office last week.

On May 8, one day after the Thai Constitution Court ousted Ms. Shinawatra from her position after finding her guilty on abuse of power charges, the country’s anti-corruption commission handed the former prime minister an indictment that could see her impeached for her role in a rice subsidy scheme that resulted in the loss an estimated \$4.4 billion in state money. Political experts fear that the development could result in a renewed violent outbreak in Thailand as both pro- and anti-government protesters began marching in Bangkok over the weekend.

With demonstrators taking to the streets, ASEAN officials – accompanied by caretaker Deputy Prime Minister Phongthep Thepkanchana – in Naypyitaw called on officials in the Thai capital to continue dialogue and respect the rule of law in the wake of political instability. “ASEAN Member States continue to follow closely the recent developments in the Kingdom of Thailand and emphasize their full support for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing challenge in the country through dialogue and in full respect of democratic principles and rule of law,” ASEAN foreign ministers said in a joint-statement on May 11. “[They] expressed confidence in the resilience of the Thai nation to overcome the present difficulties and stand ready to extend all appropriate support based on the principles provided in its Charter,” it continued.

While China territorial disputes and Thailand’s political problems set the tone for the historic summit, the delegation reaffirmed its commitment to establish the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) next year by pledging to expedite several initiatives including regional connectivity through the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. “Such a link will spur trade, SME [small and medium enterprise] development and consequently, community empowerment in Southern Philippines and Sulawesi, opening the doors of opportunity for our peoples—and at the same time, providing a model for future initiatives to emulate and learn from,” Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, said during a speech on Sunday.

Nevertheless experts still question whether or not it is feasible that all the provisions of ASEAN’s various goals can be achieved in time for the looming January launch of the economic union. “In our view, [the AEC] is going to happen. It may not be that

everything happens on January, but the direction is there, the momentum is there,” said Chew Seng Kok, regional managing partner of law firm ZICO law.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 12th May 2014

Asia, Europe Mull Better Maritime Security Cooperation

Officials and experts from Asia and Europe held extensive discussions in Beijing on improving maritime security cooperation. Organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Germany-based Konrad Adenauer Foundation, more than 30 participants, including navy, coastguard, police and maritime officials and scholars from a dozen Asian and European countries attended the policy conference on Euro-Asian cooperation in combating transnational organized crime by sea.

The experts shared studies on and experience in counter piracy, arms trafficking, drug smuggling and human trafficking by sea, and exchanged views on promoting closer cooperation among Asian and European countries. Within the framework of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the experts agreed that information sharing and mechanism building were needed to enhance cooperation.

Rear Admiral Marco Santarini, assistant director of the Italian Institute for Advanced Defense Studies, called for "more complex and dedicated approaches" among European and Asian countries to combat maritime piracy that not only harasses the Gulf of Aden, but also haunts Southeast Asia. Chang-Hoon Shin, director of international law and conflict from the Asian Institute for Policy Studies in South Korea, said "trust building" on hard issues among countries was necessary to promote the sharing of information. The conference, which took place in Beijing's eastern Chaoyang district, was also part of the EU-Asia Dialogue program, co-funded by the European Union.

Source: [Xinhua](#), 13th May, 2014

China and US Discuss Disputed South China Sea Areas

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi discussed the South China Sea dispute with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and urged him to speak and act cautiously, a spokeswoman said. Tensions rose in the resource-rich South China Sea last week after China positioned a giant oil rig in an area also claimed by Vietnam. Each country accused the other of ramming its ships near the disputed Paracel Islands.

Source: [Marinelink](#), 13th May, 2014

US Naval Chief Meets Pakistan PM

Pakistan and the United States discussed efforts to strengthen their maritime security cooperation following talks between the visiting American Chief of Naval Operations and senior Pakistani military leaders, officials said. Admiral Jonathan Greenert, US Chief of Naval Operations, held a series of meetings with senior officials, including Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Asif Sandila, Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif and Air Chief Marshal Tahir Rafique Butt.

He also met Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to discuss important regional developments. According to a statement issued by the US Embassy, Admiral Greenert and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reaffirmed the importance of the US-Pakistan security relationship to regional stability and agreed to continue working together towards building a stronger partnership based on common objectives.

The statement said US assistance to Pakistan continues to help build the counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism capabilities of the security forces, which are critical to curbing violence in the western border regions. Since 2002, Pakistan has received more than \$16 billion in security assistance and reimbursements, it added.

During his meeting with the naval chief, a comprehensive briefing was given to Admiral Greenert on the role of Pakistan Navy in regional maritime security and the latest operational developments. The US naval chief appreciated Pakistan's efforts in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.

Source: [Tribune](#), 14th May, 2014

UK Launches National Strategy for Maritime Security

The UK's national strategy for maritime security was launched on May 13, 2014. The strategy outlines, for the first time, the UK's approach to delivering maritime security at home and internationally, setting out how the UK organizes and uses its extensive national capabilities to identify, assess and address maritime security challenges.

The strategy highlights the importance of the maritime domain to UK prosperity and security. It sets out how, through effective collaboration across government, with industry and our international partners, and through the integration of our assets and personnel wherever possible, the UK will deliver maritime security. Maritime security is a cross-government activity which brings together 16 government departments and agencies. At the forefront of these are the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and the Department for Transport.

The strategy outlines 5 priorities: to promote a secure international maritime area where international maritime laws are upheld, to help other nations develop their own maritime security, to protect the UK and the Overseas Territories, their citizens and

economies by supporting the safety and security of ports and offshore installations, and passenger and cargo vessels, to assure the security of vital maritime trade and energy transportation routes, to protect the resources and population of the UK and the Overseas Territories from illegal and dangerous activity.

The strategy also introduces a robust government approach to maritime security decision-making and confirms our commitment to preserving the flow of maritime trade and upholding international maritime law.

Source: [Maritime Executive](#), 14th May, 2014

Tackling Maritime Crime in West Africa

The shipping industry and coastal countries in West Africa should increase levels of training and cooperation to prevent maritime crime from spreading in the region, says leading maritime security company GoAGT. For the last five years, increasing instability in the Sahel and Sahara region has been a source of growing concern for the world's governments. Western onlookers have worried that the weakness of state control in the area would allow al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb a foothold.

Nick Davis, CEO of GoAGT, said: "When there was instability of this type in East Africa, piracy began spreading rapidly in the waters off Somalia. Simply put, piracy offered a viable economic alternative. In West Africa, the persistent threat to shipping and infrastructure is widespread, costly, and dangerously underreported, and with few barriers to entry other than speedboats, weapons and desperation, it could spread to the north." He added: "The situation demands a coordinated response like the UKMTO and MSC-HOA for the whole of West Africa. This idea has been floated for a while; however, the multilateral naval cooperation that exists between coastal nations around the world, which has helped enormously in Somalia, seems to be far from reality off the West coast of Africa. Countries in the region don't seem to be willing to cooperate or even agree on a structure for a reporting system, and this is essential to tackle maritime crime at source before it becomes a major problem."

Between Western Sahara's disputed northern border to Cape Palmas, Liberia, lies a coastline of over 4000km and an Exclusive Economic Zone that is almost 1 million km², which is around half of the total size patrolled in the Indian Ocean. Nick said: "Sources suggest naval assets in the region suitable for the task of disrupting piracy number around 150 – that's over 6500km² each, if they're all fully serviceable and work together. However, these lack the necessary training and coordination and, with the high number of merchant vessels transiting cargo north to Europe, it creates an environment in which maritime crime could flourish very quickly.

He added: "The maritime industry should examine the potential for crime now rather than take the reactive stance it has taken in the past. Unified action, training of local

assets and communication could defeat piracy before it becomes a threat. However, with ever-present disputes over offshore energy ownership and fishery zones a solution only seems possible after governments start seeing a sustained loss to their GDP. “

Source: [Maritime Executive](#), 14th May, 2014



German Shipyards Turn Around With Focus on High-Tech Vessels

German shipyards expect orders to rise this year as they focus more on high-tech vessels for oil and gas exploration and for installing and servicing offshore wind farms, and as the global shipping industry emerges from a five-year slump.

Orders for new container and dry bulk ships plummeted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis as global demand fell for manufactured goods and for commodities such as iron ore.

Shipyards in Germany, Europe's biggest shipbuilder, have since exited the business of making container ships. The shipping industry is now emerging from its worst slump in 30 years as an improving global economy leads to increased demand for imports, although overcapacity remains a concern.

Source: [Business Times](#), 5th May, 2014

Indonesia's Ambitions and Challenges in Shipping and Offshore Industry

Visiting Jakarta is always a fascinating thing to do. It is the capital of Indonesia the world's fourth most populous nation, rich in natural resources, which is also almost certainly by ratio of population to international news stories one of the most under-reported countries on the entire planet.

In the somewhat more niche world of oil and gas, and its related offshore marine industries and, coal mining and shipping exports, Indonesia is though a rather big deal. Indonesia perhaps typifies the complexity of dealing with a developing nation that has much potential but on the flipside many challenges. It has by global standards high GDP growth, which although dropping to 5.8% in 2013, is still a level that is very respectable. Similar levels of growth are expected in 2014.

Indonesia's shipping and offshore marine industries have undergone a major sea change over the last decade. In 2005 after many years of campaigning by the Indonesian National Shipowners Association (INSA) a cabotage law was finally enacted. Cabotage has been phased in across various sectors reaching offshore in 2011. Under the cabotage law foreign ship owners can own a maximum 49% stake in a local joint venture to ply vessels in domestic trades. It has sparked a boom in joint ventures and the Indonesian-flagged fleet has jumped from 6,000 vessels in 2005 to 13,000 ships in 2014, which carry around 99% of domestic cargoes.

There is little doubt the law has benefitted the Indonesian ship owning and offshore vessel owning communities as previously high taxes and expensive finance had put them at a distinct financial disadvantage to their foreign counterparts.

Attending the Mare Forum Indonesia conference, there were two new areas of ambition outlined. First from the ship owners was a concept called “beyond cabotage”. This essentially involves capturing a greater portion of Indonesia’s international shipping trade of which roughly 90% moves on foreign-flagged vessels. To achieve this Oentoro Surya, commissioner of Arpeni Pratama Ocean Line said if the new government, to be formed after presidential elections in July, was more focused on maritime he hoped for more subsidies for the sector.

When it comes to competing in the international arena RINA Services CEO Michele Francioni noted, “There is a bit of an issue with standards with Indonesian-flagged vessels. If you want to go beyond cabotage you need to make sure that your ships are fit for the purpose.”

There is also a question of larger financing, and newer vessels required for international trade. One western shipping banker noted rather dryly that while they had lost money in many countries over the last five years they had lost the most in Indonesia. Worryingly for financiers despite many years of lobbying, Indonesia still does not have a ship arrest law, although Oentoro said it had been drafted and just needed to be enacted. With the upcoming change in government it is not clear when this will happen.

The second area of ambition covers the offshore sector where cabotage will be extended to include highly complex vessels such subsea and inspection, maintenance and repair (IMR) and what was described as the “golden goose” of cabotage - drilling rigs.

There are though a number of hurdles facing this ‘move up the ladder’ in the offshore sector. Looking at drilling rigs that cost hundreds of millions of dollars financing one would be extremely difficult for a local owner. This means going down the joint venture route and it is going to be a pretty brave foreign investor who gives up majority ownership of an asset of that kind of value. Crewing complex and expensive assets with suitably trained and qualified Indonesia crew required under cabotage could also be an interesting challenge.

Source: [Seatrade Global](#), 8th May, 2014

A Port Sinking Under the Weight of Dredged Silt

Despite delivering a better performance last year, the Cochin Port Trust (CPT) is still in troubled waters. Trade union leaders, who are on a war path demanding central

aid to overcome the crisis, point out that this would not have helped the Port to overcome the financial constraints.

The growth in income as a result of growth in cargo handling will not be sufficient even for temporary relief, they said. "Considering the huge liabilities, no change can be made unless there is a favourable decision on part of the Union Government regarding expenses towards dredging," said C D Nandakumar, general convener of Joint Trade Union Forum, which had been agitating for more than 100 days.

Despite the adverse situation, the total cargo handled by the Cochin Port in the 2013-14 fiscal stood at 208.9 lakh tonnes, as against the throughput of 198.4 lakh tonnes in 2012-13. This is the highest cargo throughput at the Port in a year and shows a growth rate of 5.25 per cent. Break bulk cargo, including timber, also grew by 40.8 per cent while bulk cargo, including cement, showed an increase of 17.2 per cent. Oil cargo, another major component, also increased by 3.1 per cent over the previous year's figure.

The container handling grew by 3.4 per cent. The port also showed a marked increase of 9.3 per cent in stuffing and de-stuffing of containers in its Container Freight Station (CFS).

P M Mohammed Hanif, another leader of the joint Trade union Forum, said the International Container Transshipment Terminal should be taken over by the Union Government. "The Port is spending its earning for dredging the channels for ICTT. If the ICTT is taken over by the government, Cochin port need not be bother about it. It can also utilise its earning for own needs," Hanif said.

When the Rajiv Gandhi Container Terminal (RGCT) was operational, the port used to earn an average net profit of Rs. 20-22 crore. At the time of Commissioning of ICTT the quantity of cargo handled at RGCT was 3.25 lakh TEU. The operator of ICTT has not so far achieved this figure in cargo handling even three years after commissioning and getting relaxation in cabotage law," he said.

Source: [Indian Express](#), 12th May, 2014

Cargo Containers Jam Manila Docks Amid Truck Ban

Cargo containers filled with goods from toys to electronics are piling up on Manila's docks as a rush-hour truck ban threatens to dent growth in the Philippines, Southeast Asia's fastest-expanding economy.

Incoming cargo boxes have lingered at International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICT)'s 100-hectare port facility for an average of 10 days -- up from the usual six -- since Mayor Joseph Estrada declared the ban in February, Christian Gonzalez, the company's regional head, said in an interview. The port, which can't be accessed

without going through Manila's roads, handles more than half of the nation's overseas freight.

While the ban was intended to ease chronic gridlock in the heart of a region of almost 23 million people, the shipping backlogs have become so severe they are being called a drag on the country's growth. The former American colony saw its debt rating raised to investment grade last year after decades of corruption, political upheaval and lacklustre growth that led to it once being dubbed the "sick man of Asia."

"You're effectively closing the tap on growth," Gonzalez said of the truck ban. "People need to start realizing this is a long-term issue for the economy." Estrada today said he would suspend the ban for eight days, starting on May 13 and ending at noon May 20. The national government requested the moratorium because "the Port of Manila needs to be cleared of [the] heavy volume of containers in time for the World Economic Forum," according to a statement posted on the City of Manila's official website. The Geneva-based economic policy organization is hosting an East Asia summit in the capital region from May 21 to May 23.

Citigroup Inc. estimated in a note dated March 7 that delays could lead to an annual loss of 61 billion pesos (\$1.4 billion) to 320 billion pesos, or as much as 2.9 percent of gross domestic product in Southeast Asia's second-most populous nation. That would dwarf a potential annual gain of roughly 30 billion pesos from having less-congested roads in the capital, said Jun Trinidad, a Citigroup economist based in Manila.

Estrada enacted the truck ban on Feb. 24 in an attempt to ease traffic in a place notorious for daily commutes of five hours or more. Eight-wheeled trucks and vehicles weighing more than 4,500 kilograms (10,000 pounds) are prohibited from Manila roads from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., Monday to Saturday.

"Some quarters are still pushing for a few more revisions to the truck ban," said Abigail Valte, spokeswoman for President Benigno Aquino. "We leave it to the local government to act on these requests." The city with a population of 1.7 million is part of the urban sprawl that is Greater Manila. The region, which includes Metro Manila, is projected to have a population of more than 30 million by 2025, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The former president, who was forced from office in an anti-corruption uprising 13 years ago, has made fighting urban decay a priority since returning to politics and winning election as mayor last May. The city estimated in February that the ban would affect more than 4,000 trucks. "The days when buses and trucks were king of the road are over," Estrada, 77, said in a speech after the regulation took effect. "Billions of pesos are lost due to the daily gridlock." He has scaled back the ban since his initial announcement, which could have barred trucks from city roads from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., or 16 hours a day. Trucks carrying fuel and perishables such as

food are excluded from the rules. The traffic-control measure faces opposition from truckers and business owners. “Despite the fact facilities are being developed to handle substantially more cargo, this truck ban is effectively reducing the country’s growth potential and is damaging the economy,” the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines said in a statement posted on its website May 6.

Alberto Suansing, director of the 2,000-member Confederation of Truckers Association of the Philippines, said the changes did little to alleviate delays because haulers are restricted to certain routes and prohibited from returning empty containers during daytime hours. Daily truck trips to the port of Manila have fallen to as low as 3,500 from about 6,000 before Estrada’s order, Suansing said. One round trip -- from the garage to the port to the importer and back -- can take two days or more, he said. Importers and exporters are bracing for higher charges from shippers, port operators and truckers.

Source: [Bloomberg](#), 12th May, 2014



Global Warming Real but Not Uniform

Even as the world gets warmer, some may still not feel it, as global warming has not happened everywhere at the same rate, according to a study that looked into global land surface warming trends over the past 100 years.

"The global warming is not uniform," said Eric Chassignet, director of centre for ocean-atmospheric prediction studies at Florida State University in the US. You have areas that have cooled and areas that have warmed, Chassignet added. While the regions of northern middle latitudes have experienced largest accumulated warming to date, in some areas of the world, cooling had actually occurred.

Noticeable warming first started around the regions circling the Arctic and subtropical regions in both hemispheres, the researchers noted. From about 1910 to 1980, while the rest of the world was warming up, some areas south of the equator - near the Andes - were actually cooling down, and then had no change at all until the mid 1990s.

Other areas near and south of the equator did not see significant changes comparable to the rest of the world. Using a new analysis method, the researchers examined land surface temperature trends from 1900 onward for the entire globe except Antarctica.

Source: [Business Standard](#), 5th May, 2014

The Red Sea - An Ocean like All Others, After All

Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Ocean, with the land masses of the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia in between – that's how we know our earth. From a geologist's point of view, however, this is only a snapshot. Over the course of the earth's history, many different continents have formed and split again. In between oceans were created, new seafloor was formed and disappeared again: Plate tectonics is the generic term for these processes.

The Red Sea, where currently the Arabian Peninsula separates from Africa, is one of the few places on earth where the splitting of a continent and the emergence of the ocean can be observed. During a three-year joint project, the Jeddah Transect Project (JTP), researchers at the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and the King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, have taken a close look at this crack in the earth's crust by means of seabed mapping, sampling and magnetic modelling. "The findings have shed new light on the early stages of

oceanic basins, and they specifically change the school of thought on the Red Sea," says Dr. Nico Augustin from GEOMAR, lead author of the study. It has now been published in the scientific journal "*Earth and Planetary Science Letters*".

It is, and was, undisputed that a continent is stretched and thinned out by volcanic activity before it ruptures and a new ocean basin is formed. The rifting occurs where the greatest stretching takes place. However, the detailed processes during the break-up are debated in research. "On the one hand, one needs to better understand the dynamics of our home planet. On the other hand, most marine oil and gas resources are located near such former fracture zones. This research can therefore also have economic and political implications," says Professor Colin Devey (GEOMAR), co-author of the study.

Until now, conventional knowledge said that a continent is breaking apart more or less simultaneously along an entire line, and the ocean basin is formed all at once. The Red Sea, however, did not fit into this picture. Here, a model was favoured with several smaller fracture zones, lined up one after the other, that would unite gradually, which in turn would lead to a relatively slow emergence of the ocean during a long transition phase. "Our studies show that the Red Sea is not an exception but that it takes its place in line with the other ocean basins," says Augustin. The previous picture we had of the ocean floor in the Red Sea was simply corrupted by salt glaciers. "The volcanic rocks we recovered are similar to those from other normal mid-ocean ridges," says co-author Froukje van der Zwan, working on her PhD as part of the JTP.

During the early formation stages of the Red Sea, the area was covered by a very shallow sea that dried up repeatedly. This created thick salt deposits that later on broke apart with the continental crust. Over geologic time periods, salt shows tar-like behaviour and begins to flow. "Our new high-resolution seabed maps and magnetic modelling show that the kilometer-thick salt deposits, after the break-up of the Arabian Plate from Africa, flowed like glaciers toward the newly created trench and thus over the oceanic crust due to gravity," says Augustin. Since these submarine salt glaciers do not cover the rifting zone uniformly over the entire length, the impression of several small fracture zones was created.

The consequences of this discovery are profound: For one, there really seems to be only one single mechanism worldwide for the dispersal of a continent. And secondly, is not yet known how much ocean crust is covered by salt. This questions the previous dating of the opening of the Red Sea. In addition, the volcanically active trench rift zone of the Red Sea, surrounded by salt glaciers, is host of a giant sink filled with a very hot and very salty solution. "Since the sediment in the salt solution is rich in metals, this so-called Atlantis II Deep is also of economic interest," says co-author Devey. It is quite conceivable that over the course of the earth's history similar deposits associated with volcanism and salt deposits were created during the opening phase of other oceans. "Thus, our studies help to clarify older research

questions. But they also provide starting points for new investigations in all of the oceans," says Augustin.

Source: [Science Codex](#), 6th May, 2014