



MAKING WAVES

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Editorial Team

*Captain (Dr.) Gurpreet S Khurana
Commander Dinesh Yadav
Ms. Abhiruchi Chatterjee*

Address

*National Maritime Foundation
Varuna Complex, NH- 8
Airport Road
New Delhi-110 010, India*

Email:

maritimeindia@gmail.com

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IFR: India's maritime awakening?

The International Fleet Review that begins today in Visakhapatnam, is a mega maritime event that will bring together 54 nations. The theme of the IFR is “United through Oceans”.

Traditionally, fleet reviews are held periodically for the head of state to review the naval capability of the nation and, while being visibly ceremonial, it has multiple relevance that spans the political, diplomatic and military strands.

Of recent vintage, an IFR is multi-national and the host nation subtly conveys a message that seeks to establish its credibility in the maritime domain that will reassure friends and allies, even while signalling the contours of a latent military deterrence index that professional peers will interpret in an appropriate manner.

The maritime domain acquires its relevance primarily for the seamless connectivity it provides to the global landmass that is separated by vast stretches of water. Consequently, facilitating maritime trade and commerce is a primary attribute of the oceans.

This geo-economic compulsion axiomatically extends into the security domain, wherein flag and trade are synergistically linked and the co-relation between the global hierarchy of power and a credible maritime profile is abiding.

Over the last 500 years, since the beginning of the colonial era, major powers have sought to maintain an effective naval presence in two of the three navigable oceans of the world (the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian) either on their own or as part of an alliance.

The colonisation of Asian and African nations may be ascribed to their inability to comprehend and acquire the sinews of appropriate naval power and India is no exception.

This inadequacy is also related to the distinctive political and strategic culture of non-European nations who were more insular and inward looking and either unable or unwilling to internalise the criticality of trans-border maritime military capability.

Former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee outlined a “sagar-mala” vision that promised to transform India’s maritime infrastructure, but it was killed by a lethargic bureaucracy.

The maritime domain was not prioritised in any sustained manner by the UPA and some promising initiatives were indifferently pursued.

Signalling a welcome departure from his predecessors, Prime Minister Modi has accorded visible priority to India’s maritime potential and this is reflected in his numerous references and assertions apropos “SAGAR” – which is the innovative acronym for “security and growth for all in the region”.

Are these the “green shoots” of a comprehensive maritime orientation at last?

Paradoxically, the Indian Navy will remain the Cinderella service for the foreseeable future by way of its size and funding.

India has a skewed military composition wherein the Army, Air Force, Navy ratio by way of personnel is 20:2:1 and the budgetary allocation for the Navy is a modest 16 per cent of the total defence outlay.

Yet, the Indian Navy has acquired a credible profile and has acquitted itself with aplomb when required. Assessing the effectiveness of a Navy is a complex metric and, more than tangible capability, what is equally relevant is the perspicacity and deftness with which the national political leadership is able to utilise naval power in the furtherance of the national interest.

The Indian response to the tsunami of December 2004, and the subsequent anti-piracy and evacuation operations are cases in point.

Nations invest in navies to protect their national interest and win wars if such an exigency arises. In the security domain, cooperation at sea is unlikely outside of a formal military alliance and India has eschewed such a choice.

However, cooperation and collective effort are desirable in pursuit of many other shared and collective objectives. The need to ensure the safety and stability of global maritime commons in a consensual manner is one such endeavour and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief is another.

India has consistently demonstrated its ability to be a net security provider at sea as well as a source of maritime assistance.

Engaging with Indian Ocean littoral nations to maximise the opportunities of the maritime domain through improved sea-borne connectivity to enhance trade and commerce and burnishing prosperity, is a SAGAR objective, in as much as harnessing the many possibilities of the “blue revolution” – the ability to harvest the vast potential of the ocean. These are normative objectives that all IFR participants share.

Source: [Deccan Chronicle](#), February 4, 2016.

IFR can change dynamics in Indian Ocean: Navy chief

The International Fleet Review (IFR) can change the dynamics in the Indian Ocean, Indian Navy chief Admiral R.K. Dhowan said on Friday, stressing the need for global naval collaboration to safeguard international waters.

"The dynamics will change (in the Indian Ocean)... a large number of navies participating, there will be interactions, it will enhance coordination," Admiral Dhowan told IANS here after a press conference that was also attended by chiefs and officers from several navies, including the US, Japan and China.

The naval chief said the IFR theme of 'United through Oceans' signifies that the global navies need to come together to guard international waters.

"Security and safety of global commons is the collective responsibility of navies around the world. No single navy is robust enough to provide security and safety to the global commons on its own," Admiral Dhowan said.

"Maritime medium lends itself to cooperation; that is where it is the responsibility of men in white uniform, the navies and coast guards, to come up with cooperative mechanisms so that we can provide that safety and security," he said.

Around 50 navies from across the world are participating in the IFR, the second of its kind and the largest military exercise by India.

"As we sail out, we will have the opportunity for exercises where crew of various ships will have opportunities to display their skills and this will increase our aspects of mutual cooperation and inter-operability," the navy chief said at the press conference earlier.

The IFR is set to see the participation of 90 ships, including 24 warships and over 70 aircraft. In addition, ships of the Indian Coast Guard and mercantile marine would also participate.

Source: [Business Standard](#), February 5, 2016.

President reviews Naval fleet at IFR 2016

President Pranab Mukherjee reviewed the Naval fleet off Visakhapatnam coast here on Saturday morning as a part of the International Fleet Review (IFR) being conducted here.

It is the second time the IFR is being conducted in the country, the first being off Mumbai coast in 2001.

The President conducted the fleet review aboard INS Sumitra, the Presidential yacht. Six rows of warships of the Indian Navy and the navies of 50 other countries participated in the review, with the sailors saluting the President.

INS Vikramaditya, INS Viraat, and other ships of the Navy participated in it. The naval helicopters and submarines were also on display during the review. The IFR was witnessed by thousands of spectators from the shore.

Along with the President, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral R.K Dhowan, were on board INS Sumitra to witness the event.

President Pranab Mukherjee said it was a memorable event off Visakhapatnam coast bringing together naval personnel of various nations, binding them together through the oceans.

Welcoming the foreign delegates, he said: "It is our belief that the present day maritime domain requires navies across the world to refocus their efforts to counter the rising tide of non-traditional maritime challenges in the brown, green and blue waters across all oceans."

He said: "Accordingly, the Indian Navy has realigned its maritime strategy to reflect the changes in the global environment. It has established a credible record of co-operative initiatives to promote stability of oceans and played a central role in ensuring safety of the vital sea lines of communication across the Indian Ocean."

The President complimented the Indian Navy, especially the Eastern Naval Command (ENC), for the flawless conduct of the prestigious event. He also congratulated the Andhra Pradesh Government and the public of Visakhapatnam for their co-operation.

At the end of the ceremony, the President was given a guard of honour by the Naval personnel. After his departure, the Prime Minister and other dignitaries disembarked from INS Sumitra and left the venue.

Source: [The Hindu](#), February 6, 2016

Sea-borne terror, piracy challenge to maritime security: Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that India was a direct victim of sea-borne terrorism and that threat from sea-borne terror and piracy were two key challenges to maritime security of the country.

He also highlighted that a peaceful and stable maritime environment was critical for regional and global security.

Addressing the valedictory function of the International Fleet Review (IFR) after watching the Operational Demonstration of India Navy at RK Beach in Vizag city on Sunday, Mr Modi pitched for respecting the freedom of navigation against the backdrop of the South China Sea dispute.

He said given the scale and complexity of modern day challenges, international maritime stability could not be preserved by a single nation. It had to be a shared goal and responsibility.

Oceans were the lifelines of global prosperity. They presented great economic opportunities to build nations, he added. The Prime Minister mentioned that the threat of sea-borne terror, of which India had been a direct victim, continued to endanger regional and global peace and stability. Piracy, too, remained a strong challenge.

Source: [Deccan Chronicle](#), February 8, 2016.

IOR littoral security tops fleet review agenda: Navy

The pomp and show aside, there is a greater agenda to the International Fleet Review 2016 that formally got under way on Friday. The ever-growing importance of the Indian Ocean Region and the existing threats to maritime interests will mean sitting together to discuss possible partnerships for a secure future. Littorals are countries that share the shores of a water body. In this case the Indian Ocean.

"Even in the 21st century, threats from piracy loom large. Added to that are issues like asymmetric warfare and maritime terrorism. No country can tackle these threats by

itself. The security of the 'Global Commons' is the responsibility of all coastal states. That is why networking is so essential to create a new order. Hence the theme, 'United by Oceans'. So far as India is concerned, the three issues that are foremost for a more secure environment are anti-piracy measures, information exchange and interoperability and humanitarian relief and disaster relief," said Admiral R K Dhowan, Chief of Naval Staff.

Compared to the last fleet review in 2001, in which 21 navies from across the world had taken part, the participation has grown to nearly 50 this time. As many as 24 foreign warships, including two each from the US and China, are anchored off Visakhapatnam, apart from the 71-odd vessels from India. Warships dot the horizon till as far as the eye can see when one stands on the beach. According to Dhowan, India's aim during IFR 2016 will be to showcase indigenisation, innovation and the skills of the country's youth. The Navy has already discussed a science and technology roadmap with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and plans for the next 15 years have been shared with industry.

"The Indian Navy has grown over the last 15 years since the last IFR was held in Mumbai. There are tight resource constraints but the Navy has always thought ahead. We had set up a design directorate in 1954 and are enhancing our capabilities in all three wings - the air, surface and sub-surface. Our aim is to be self-reliant. The anti-submarine warfare Corvette INS Kadmat, the youngest ship to participate in this event, is nearly 90% indigenous. Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, she was commissioned a few weeks ago. Even as I speak, we have 46 ships under construction at Indian shipyards, both public sector and private," Dhowan added.

According to the CNS, the Navy has displayed its footprints from the western Pacific to the north Atlantic as well as far to the north of the globe to Australia in the south. At present, the Navy holds several bilateral and multilateral exercises with foreign powers including the US, UK and the French. Immediately after IFR 16, the Navy will participate in an exercise with other countries including South Africa off the Goa coast. Till recently, this exercise was held in South Africa.

"Our maritime history goes back 3,300 years. We are now witnessing the revival of India as a maritime nation. As the maritime interests of the country grows, the security umbrella will also have to grow accordingly. We are taking several steps in the right direction. The US has made great strides towards a green navy. We have also got some of our fast-interceptor crafts using a percentage of bio-fuel. A pilot project on ocean Thermal Energy Conversion is also on in the Andamans. It has taken a lot of effort to get this massive show off the ground. The entire naval community worked together to make this happen," the CNS said.

Source: [The Times of India](#), February 6, 2016.

India, Bangladesh discuss border security, maritime cooperation

Border security and maritime cooperation were among the issues that came up for discussion during a meeting between Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar and his Bangladeshi counterpart. Md. Shahidul Haque, who is here on a two-day visit from Monday, an official source said here on Tuesday. The meeting on Monday reviewed the progress made on the decisions that were taken during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka in June last year. Twenty two agreements were signed between India and Bangladesh during the visit.

"The foreign secretaries emphasised the need for stepping up cooperation between the border security agencies so that no lives are lost along the border," the source said.

The two foreign secretaries also highlighted the need for strong maritime cooperation between the two South Asian neighbours.

"With the decision on the international maritime boundary line being taken, it was suggested that both countries should be more proactive on the issues related to fishermen. The fishermen should be sensitised so that incidents related to straying into each other's waters are minimised," the source said.

The Teesta waters issue also came up for discussion with both sides agreeing to schedule a meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission at the earliest.

The two sides also discussed beginning shipping services at the earliest for the benefit of both Indians and Bangladeshis.

Among the other issues discussed were cooperation in water and power sectors, boosting bilateral trade, improving people-to-people contact and visa facilitation.

Source: [New Kerala](#), February 2, 2016.

India, China hold inaugural dialogue on maritime cooperation

Amid enduring tensions over the South China Sea, India and China today held inaugural round of talks on maritime cooperation.

The dialogue here covered a range of issues of mutual interest, including exchange of perspectives on maritime security and prospects for maritime cooperation between the two countries, the External Affairs Ministry said.

It said developments in international regimes such as UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea) and IMO (International Maritime Organisation) also figured in the discussions.

The Indian delegation was led by Amandeep Singh Gill, Joint Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs) in the Ministry of External Affairs, while the Chinese delegation was led by Kong Xuanyou, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.

The next round will be held in Beijing on a mutually convenient date, the MEA said.

The dialogue assumes significance as China has been critical of oil and gas exploration projects by Indian companies in the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons.

China has acrimonious relationship with a number of countries including Vietnam over the South China Sea.

India has been supporting freedom of navigation and access to resources in the South China Sea in accordance with principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

However, China has been insisting on outstanding issues being resolved bilaterally.

India has been concerned over Chinese forays into the Indian Ocean and docking of its nuclear submarines in Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Source: [India Today](#), February 4, 2016.

China warns on South China Sea as U.S., India consider patrols

China on Thursday responded to a Reuters report that the U.S. and India are discussing joint naval patrols in the disputed South China Sea, warning that interference from countries outside the region threatens peace and stability.

"No cooperation between any countries should be directed at a third party," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said in an emailed statement to Reuters, in response to a request for comment on the report published on Wednesday.

"Countries from outside the area must stop pushing forward the militarization of the South China Sea, cease endangering the sovereignty and national security of littoral countries in the name of 'freedom of navigation' and harming the peace and stability of the region."

The United States wants its regional allies and other Asian nations to adopt a more united stance against China over the South China Sea, where tension has spiked since China's construction of seven islands in the Spratly archipelago.

China lays claim to most of the South China Sea, while Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have rival claims.

A U.S. defence official told Reuters this week the United States and India had held talks about joint naval patrols that could include the South China Sea.

The Indian navy has never carried out joint patrols with another country and a navy spokesman told Reuters there was no change in the government's policy of only joining an international military effort under the U.N. flag.

Neither the United States nor India have claims to the area, but the United States says it is concerned about shipping lanes running through the South China Sea, which carry an estimated \$5 trillion of trade every year.

Hong urged caution.

"We hope that the relevant parties speak and act with caution, refrain from intervening in the South China Sea issue, and especially avoid being manipulated by certain countries and ultimately harming their own interests."

China illustrates its claim to almost the entire South China Sea with a "nine-dashed line" on maps, that loops far to the south, with sections far closer to the coasts of countries like the Philippines and Vietnam than to its shores.

China's more assertive claim has included dredging to build up islands and the construction of air fields and shipping facilities on some reefs. It recently launched flights to one artificial island.

The United States has responded by sending navy ships close to the islands China claims. China has condemned that as provocative.

India has a long-running land border dispute with China, and has stepped up its naval presence far beyond the Indian Ocean in recent years, deploying a ship to the South China Sea almost constantly, an Indian navy commander said.

Source: [Reuters](#), February 11, 2016.

With China's Naval Base, Djibouti Could Become 'Africa's Singapore'

Some 4,800 miles from Beijing, China is expected soon to start construction of its newest naval base in Djibouti, a tiny African nation where the mouth of the Red Sea

meets the vast Indian Ocean. The permanent facility will be China's first overseas military outpost, granting Beijing access to the Arabian Peninsula and projecting force near its investments in sub-Saharan Africa.

But China won't be the only one benefiting from this arrangement. For Djibouti, the Chinese naval base will raise its calibre as a global player in shipping and will secure its lucrative relationship with the world's second-largest economy. It may also spur infrastructure development and create jobs for impoverished locals.

"The opening up of a Chinese naval facility further burnishes the credentials of Djibouti as a regional logistics hub for foreign military," said Alex Vines, Africa program head at Chatham House, a London policy institute. "Djibouti is cleverly positing its location, and the establishment of a Chinese naval facility is an endorsement of how successful it has been."

Djibouti, the former colony of French Somaliland, is strategically located at the Bab el Mandeb Strait, connecting the Suez Canal and the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. The small country, which has a population of less than 900,000 people, has long been considered an example of stability in a restive region. With its proximity to volatile areas in Africa and the Middle East, Djibouti is a prime location for the world's military superpowers and plays a critical role in international efforts to fight piracy in the region. It's already home to U.S., French and Japanese military bases.

In November, China unveiled plans for its own naval base in Djibouti in the small northern port town of Obock. Both countries have said the project will be a logistics and resupply center for Chinese ships fighting piracy in the region.

"The Chinese government has decided to move to this area," Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guellah told Reuters over the weekend. "They are now studying and they will, I guess, start soon."

China will save money by building a base versus its current, temporary arrangements, which allow for docking ships at ports in the East African nation. But most importantly, the naval base will enhance Chinese influence over global trade, while shielding crucial routes between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Beijing is thirsty for crude oil

and it disproportionately relies on imports from the Middle East. About 39 percent of Chinese oil imports pass through the Indian Ocean on their way from the Middle East.

Through Djibouti, China will also increase its economic foothold in sub-Saharan Africa. Since announcing its plans for the naval base in Obock, Beijing has signed other agreements with Djibouti to build a free trade zone and to establish a legal framework to allow Chinese banks to operate in the Horn of Africa country. The first phase is set to open before the end of the year.

“The Chinese investment is not just in the naval base,” said Jennifer Brass, an assistant professor of public and environmental affairs at Indiana University in Bloomington who has conducted extensive research in Djibouti. “China is trying to protect all of its investments in sub-Saharan Africa and to be closer to the region.”

Beijing has quickly climbed to the top of Djibouti’s trading roster in recent years, and the East African nation, which is scarce in natural resources, increasingly relies on China for many of its imports. Djibouti has also received at least \$16.6 million in development finance from Beijing since the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000. This has included food aid, as well as funding to build hospitals and government buildings, according to a report from the Center for Global Development, a Washington think tank.

Djibouti is aiming for investments worth \$12.4 billion between 2015 and 2020, with its sights set on expanding its port facilities and building new airports to handle more cargo and tourists. China is providing the bulk of the financing with non-concessional or "hard" loans, and the investment has helped push Djibouti’s economic growth to 6 percent or more a year. But the International Monetary Fund has warned that high non-concessional borrowing, which provides financial assistance on a market-based interest rate, is also driving Djibouti’s public and publicly guaranteed debt to a peak of 80 percent of gross domestic product in 2017, up from 60.5 percent in 2014.

The Chinese naval base might provide Djibouti with an opportunity to cut debt and invest in human capital to alleviate rampant poverty, which is hindering development. The two nations have signed an initial 10-year lease for the base, with China paying

\$100 million per year in rent. Djibouti's president could earmark that money to build new roads, improve sanitation facilities and overhaul the education system, which was initially designed for elites and borrowed heavily from the country's former colonial ruler, France. Some 23 percent of Djibouti's population lives in extreme poverty, and this is exacerbated by poor education and health.

“Guellah does a very good job of bringing money into the country,” Brass said. “But the main thing the Djiboutian government needs to do is really take advantage of all this to invest in education and in infrastructure for the people.”

The new naval base could also provide hundreds of jobs if China decides to recruit locally. The facility will house some 10,000 Chinese troops and will need to hire employees for nonessential tasks. The base's construction will further support nearby communities with much-needed infrastructure development, and it could spur local businesses in country where more than half of the working-age population is unemployed.

Beijing is also building a \$4 billion railway line linking Djibouti with its landlocked neighbor Ethiopia, one of the world's fast-growing economies with almost 90 percent of its imports going through Djibouti. The project will allow Ethiopia a link to the sea and Djibouti access to the country's emerging market of 95 million people, as well as further solidify its position as a gateway to key African and Middle East markets.

“Djibouti's location could allow it to become Africa's Singapore,” said Deborah Bräutigam, director of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies' China Africa Research Initiative.

Source: [The International Business Times](#), February 4, 2016.

In the East China Sea, Beijing Tests Japan's Resolve

China's long-standing rivalry with Japan in the East China Sea is heating up once again. In addition to their standing disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and Beijing's attempts to break through the first island chain, it is looking more and more likely that

Japan will wade into the South China Sea conflict as well. In response, China is turning to new capabilities and tactics in the East China Sea in an attempt to outmaneuver its Japanese adversary – and to remind Tokyo that interfering in the South China Sea will have consequences closer to home.

In November 2015, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that his country would consider sending the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force on patrols in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, Japan has been building up its relationships with Vietnam and the Philippines, both of which contest China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. In fact, Tokyo has taken steps to explore a visiting forces agreement with Manila that would allow Japanese ships and aircraft to refuel in the Philippines and let Japanese military personnel use Philippine bases on a rotational basis.

China has been watching these developments with growing concern. Beijing has tried to persuade the United States to pressure Japan to stay out of the South China Sea, but it is simultaneously searching for alternative strategies to convince Tokyo to withdraw from the area. One of the most important components of those efforts will be to turn the tables on Japan by ramping up its own presence in the East China Sea. Over the past few months, China has kept up the pace of its incursions into the disputed waters around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and Chinese flights have penetrated Japan's East China Sea air defence identification zone in droves.

Beijing may also turn to its coast guard to make more assertive manoeuvres in the East China Sea. The tactic is commonly used among the many claimants in the East and South China seas. Coast guard vessels are different from naval vessels, often identified by their white-painted hulls, and they can declare or defend territorial rights without the involvement of warships, which can significantly raise the risk of miscalculation and escalation in contested waters. The Chinese have used their coast guard and other maritime militia vessels with success before, including against the Philippines near the Scarborough Shoal in 2012. However, given Japan's own powerful coast guard, Tokyo will likely continue to have the upper hand in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

Still, this may not be true for long. China is seeking to break Japan's dominance with several new maritime capabilities. First, Beijing is transferring frigates that formerly

belonged to the Chinese navy to its coast guard. While the bulk of these vessels' armaments have been removed, their true threat lies in their high speeds and strong hulls — virtues of setting industry specifications to a military's standards. Second, Beijing has commissioned the construction of gigantic new vessels for its coast guard. While size and hull strength are generally poor indicators of capability when it comes to modern naval warfare, they can still provide a decisive advantage in skirmishes between coast guards, where tactics like shouldering and ramming are the most common offensive manoeuvres. China's newly commissioned 10,000-ton cutters are large, powerful and nearly double the size of Japan's 6,500-ton Shikishima-class cutters (which were, until now, the largest coast guard vessels in the world). This will make it all the more difficult and dangerous for Japanese ships to try to shoulder away China's enormous vessels.

Of course, Japan is taking steps to counter China's moves. The Japanese Air Self-Defense Force is continuing to build up its presence at the Naha airfield in Okinawa, including the establishment of a new air wing. The unit has doubled the number of available F-15J air superiority fighters in Okinawa to 40, enabling the Japanese to better respond to China's growing air activity in the East China Sea. In 2015, Chinese air activity triggered 441 Japanese scrambles, twice the number in 2011. At the time, the heightened frequency of flights threatened to overwhelm Japanese forces, which had not yet received the Okinawa reinforcements.

Japan is also making preparations to ramp up support to its coast guard. In January, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga made it clear that Abe is ready to mobilize the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force in the event that a situation arises that the coast guard cannot cope with. Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani echoed the statement by broaching the possibility of allowing the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force to carry out policing activities.

As both sides ratchet up their involvement in the South and East China seas, the potential for conflict will increase. Clashes between coast guards — especially those with greater capacities for inflicting damage — could pull navies into the fray. Meanwhile, the skies above the disputed seas will be just as fraught as the rising tempo of air intercepts,

especially between Japanese and Chinese aircraft, will increase the risk of an accident or miscalculation that could ignite a wider conflict.

Source: [Stratfor](#), February 3, 2016.

Maritime dispute with China to take centre-stage in US-ASEAN summit

The US-ASEAN special summit is to take place middle of this month in California, and del Rosario said rival claimants to the sea region are planning a meeting “on the sidelines” to discuss China’s aggressive stance.

“I think on the South China Sea, clearly we want to bring to the fore the rule of law, we want to discuss freedom of navigation. We want to look at (China’s) island building,” del Rosario, who is due to step down in March, told reporters.

He said the bloc would also discuss China’s alleged plans to establish an air defense identification zone covering the disputed territories, in a bid to fortify its claims.

Beijing has of late expanded its land territory in reefs it claims in the sea region, raising alarm from rival claimants.

China claims that whole of the South China Sea, while Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines also have rival claims to parts of the sea, which is believed to have untapped gas and mineral deposits.

Del Rosario said the Philippines was endeavoring to establish “constructive relations” with China, the strongest military power in the region, without sacrificing “maritime entitlements”.

“We want to impress that the sum total of our relations does not rest on the South China Sea dispute,” del Rosario said.

The “US-ASEAN summit agenda calls for maritime security, economic integration as well as transnational concerns,” he said.

Del Rosario said all countries would also seek ways to “be able to move the strategic partnership” with the US forward and “more effectively and in a stronger manner.”

The Philippines has been the most proactive among the smaller claimants, and has taken China to UN arbitration to rule on its claims. The court is expected to decide on the merits of the case shortly.

“We hope the decision will come out before May. We don’t know what the chances of that might be, but it looks doable,” del Rosario said.

“We hope that China will adhere to the decision, we will do the same whatever the decision might be,” he said.

He said the Philippine side ended the presentation of its case last year in hearings that were snubbed by China, which prefers to solve the issue bilaterally. But the UN tribunal had countered and said China’s non-participation did not deprive it of jurisdiction to the case.

Manila contends that China’s claims of historical rights to the sea, including claims to waters in the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone, have no basis. It also argued that features used by China as basis to generate its claims “are either rocks or low-tide elevations, which at best can only generate up to 12 nautical miles of maritime entitlements.”

It also charged that China’s island-building and fishing activities have caused irreversible damage to the marine environment of the South China Sea.

Amid the dispute, ASEAN countries such as the Philippines has sought stronger military alliance with the US. In particular, Manila signed an enhanced defense cooperation alliance and is currently negotiating up to 66 million dollars in funding to rehabilitate its bases.

The pact would boost an existing mutual defence treaty, and among others, pave the way for the transfer of a third high-endurance cutter and research ship this year. A similar, former US ship now patrols Philippine territory after it was transformed as the local navy’s flagship.

US equipment are also to be transferred on Philippine soil, 25 years after congress voted to shut down two of America's largest overseas bases in Subic and Clark, north of Manila.

US ships have also sailed near the disputed waters to stress what it calls was its right under the "freedom of navigation" rules, in a move that has angered China.

Source: [Yahoo News](#), February 10, 2016.

Naval diplomacy checks Chinese tactics

With India and China competing for supremacy in the Indian Ocean region, presence of 100 warships from 49 countries in the Bay of Bengal demonstrates how India used naval diplomacy in securing international support in opposing China's muscle flexing in the Indian Ocean.

With China being one of the guests at the mega maritime show, Indian officials are not officially commenting on Chinese submarine's forays in India's neighbourhood and the South China Sea controversies.

But New Delhi's position on the high seas being global commons where everyone should have freedom of navigation, received support from other nations attending the mega maritime show.

"India led the IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium) initiative, which the UK is happy to support. We also believed in freedom of navigation and following the UN convention on the laws of the sea," said an UK official.

In the last one and half years, the Indian Navy revived its diplomatic role, making port of calls in more than 50 nations. One of the unstated objectives behind those voyages was to garner support from others in opposing China's naval overreach.

When INS Sahyadri visited Vietnam's port city Da Nang and Japan last October, Chinese expressed concerns on whether Vietnam and Japan would be joining hands with India to form diplomatic and security ties to contain China from both sides.

Asked about the India-China relation, Rear Admiral Yu Manjiang from the 21 Task Force of the People's Liberation Army Navy said, "We are neighbouring countries with common issues. We should improve our relationship."

Two PLA Navy guided-missile frigates, Liuzhou and Sanya, are participating in the international fleet review. Interestingly, Rear Admiral Yu came to Visakhapatnam within weeks of visiting Pakistan with these two ships for an exercise.

Source: Deccan Herald, February 06, 2016



Can the PLA Navy Make the Indian Ocean Chinese?

A recent Wikistrat simulation (full disclosure: I am a senior analyst with Wikistrat, although I did not work on this project) investigated the future of the People's Liberation Army-Navy. In particular, the report (written by David K. Schneider) examined China's effort to establish control over the East Asian littoral (A2/AD and amphibious capabilities) and to establish a presence in the Indian Ocean.

Readers of *The Diplomat* will recognize familiar notes in the report's discussion of the PLAN's A2/AD efforts. The more interesting question evoked by Schneider is this: Can the PLAN make the Indian Ocean Chinese? Chinese growth depends on access to the Indian Ocean, from whence the PRC gets much of its energy and a large proportion of its natural resources. China has spent much of its economic and diplomatic capital on building relationships in the region, from Pakistan to Africa. However, the Indian Navy has the capacity to pose a critical threat to Chinese access. With a large fleet and local bases, India can threaten Chinese control of the Indian Ocean at its leisure.

The report also examined China's relationship with Russia, which remains important for access to technology and expertise. Traditionally the junior partner in this relationship, the increasing size, sophistication, and range of the PLAN should tip the scales in the next few years. Schneider also emphasized the role that political coordination between Moscow and Beijing could improve the PLAN's prospects for strategic action.

Perhaps most interesting, the report identifies several key caveats that underlie China's effort to build a world-class navy. These include the health of long-term collaboration with Russia, the ability of the Chinese national innovation system to deliver advanced technology, the overall health of the Chinese economy, and the ability of the Chinese Communist Party and the PLAN to work well with one another. Of these, the first and the third pose the greatest concern; significant economic problems could severely crimp

China's effort at naval expansion, and deterioration (for whatever reason) of relations with Russia would leave China in a very, very lonely place.

To this I would add the inherent positionality of naval affairs. The power of China's navy depends directly on the strength of its competitors. If Chinese naval growth continues to inspire India, Japan, and the Southeast Asian countries to expand their own fleets, then Beijing has spent a lot of money for little relative gain. Although the comparison between the PRC and Wilhelmine Germany has been overdone, it's nevertheless worth noting that Germany built a remarkable fleet that succeeded only in creating enemies, and in spurring foreign naval construction.

Source: [The Diplomat](#), February 03, 2016

Coast Guard eyes acquisition of bigger ships for WPS patrol

While the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) expects the delivery of 10 multi-role vessels from Japan starting this year until 2018, the maritime agency is working on getting two bigger vessels that would be deployed to the West Philippine Sea (WPS) and elsewhere.

Newly appointed PCG commandant Rear Admiral William Melad confirmed on Monday that they are in communication with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on the acquisition of 92-meter vessels.

“We are currently discussing with JICA for possibility of acquiring bigger vessels for PCG as stipulated in our Capability Development Plan through Japan's ODA (Official Development Assistance),” he said.

Back in 2009, the PCG initiated efforts to acquire bigger vessels from Japan until a feasibility study was submitted three years later and was resubmitted in 2014.

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), mother agency of the PCG, has endorsed the project to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

Melad said the estimated cost per vessel is 11.7 billion yen, but he did not discount the possibility it still could go up.

The PCG is set to acquire three 40-meter vessels from Japan within the year, five more next year, and the remaining two in 2018.

It is part of an ODA project, in which a P7.37-billion loan grant was extended by JICA to purchase these vessels.

But the Coast Guard is looking at the deployment of bigger vessels than 40 meters in the West Philippine Sea to withstand the big waves and strong winds during typhoons.

“The West Philippine Sea could be a logical deployment but it can be deployed anywhere. Today, the basic justification is to improve PCG’s maritime capability,” Melad said.

Source: [Manila Bulletin](#), February 1, 2016

An insight into South Africa’s counter-piracy operation

In a candid assessment of South Africa’s commitment to a continued presence in the Mozambique Channel as a deterrent to piracy, an SA Navy Commander maintains it is not necessary for South Africa to be actively fighting the piracy threat.

Commander Dieter Jones, now Officer Commanding Naval Base Durban and formerly Officer Commanding SAS Isaac Dyobha, adds the pertinent rider that “given the transnational nature of the crime (piracy) and the non-discriminatory nature of its effect, it is of utmost importance that all States, littoral and landlocked, become involved, acknowledge a shared responsibility and tackle the crime as a collective”.

He was addressing a Military Attaches Advisory Group (MAAG) meeting in Pretoria and told those present that “combined maritime forces must continue to conduct joint counter-piracy operations, improve inter-agency efforts and foster multi-national co-operation to remove the threat of maritime insecurity and reinforce regional stability and security”.

A comprehensive approach such as this and the empowerment of Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries will prevent further piracy attacks, reduce drug and human trafficking, eradicate modern day slavery of women and children, smuggling of ivory and heroin and reduce illegal plundering of ocean resources.

At an operational level the SA Navy has benefitted from Operation Copper, as the tri-national counter-piracy tasking is called, in any number of ways.

Operation Copper

These include portraying a positive image of the Navy and the SA National Defence Force (SANDF); improving sailors' operating competencies; junior members have and are being exposed to a rigorous maritime environment and gain practical hours on running equipment, this expedites seagoing qualifications; capacity building is improved; cross-training and inter-operability is also improved as are technical and seamanship skills.

Jones also points to good Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) established for boarding operations and high aviation standards achieved. This is with regard to the utilisation of SA Air Force (SAAF) Super Lynx maritime helicopters and C-47TP maritime patrol aircraft.

He also told attaches not to forget the operational success of SAS Drakensberg. The Navy supply and replenishment vessel was involved in an anti-piracy incident in April 2012 when she was requested to take up a stopper position by the EU Naval Force to prevent a suspected pirate ship escaping EU pursuit.

“There are certainly operational benefits in executing operational deployments as indicated. These could be extended to the SADC region as soon as SADC states assumes responsibility for maritime security in the region and participate in comprehensive combined maritime security efforts,” he said.

On the other side of the ledger Jones said operational limitations included the legal implications of capturing pirates – “in most cases the catch, disarm and release policy applies”.

He also pointed to technical logistic support as a limitation to deployments such as Operation Copper with “minimal support and general ship repair techniques primitive in our region”.

Another limitation was in port where availability of quay space, tugs and essential port facilities were all “a challenge”.

“Commercial ports generate revenue and have little interest in military operations. This could severely affect the operational cycles of vessels on patrol. Tighter national legislation and meaningful Memoranda of Understanding between states in the region must receive high priority so that traditional selfish interests are replaced with the realisation that only a collaborative approach will be beneficial to all,” he said.

Operation Copper started in 2012 and the currently deployment cycle is set to finish on March 31 this year as per President Jacob Zuma’s office.

Source: [Defence Web](#), February 02, 2016

Seychelles receives patrol vessel donated from India

The Seychelles Coast Guard has taken delivery of a 27.5 metre patrol boat from India, which will be used for coastal surveillance, anti-poaching, anti-smuggling and search and rescue activities.

The vessel was officially handed over by the Indian Coast Guard director general, Vice Admiral H C S Bisht at the Seychelles Coast Guard base on Ile Perseverance late last month and named Hermes after a fishing bank. President James Michel was also present at the handover ceremony, together with Vice-President Danny Faure and High Commissioner of India Sanjay Panda.

Seychelles chief of defence forces, Brigadier Leopold Payet, said: “The addition of this new craft to our fleet will boost our capability to undertake surveillance and safeguarding of our maritime areas and enhance our capability to deal with various maritime crimes within our region,” reports the Seychelles News Agency.

“Undertaking continuous maritime patrols and policing activities in our vast exclusive economic zone (EEZ) constitute the bulk of Seychelles Coast Guard duties,” he said. The Seychelles has a 1.3 million square kilometre maritime zone.

The transfer of the vessel was announced by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the state visit of President James Michel to India in August 2015. The vessel arrived in the Seychelles in early January. The aluminium hull vessel is powered by a twin water-jet propulsion system giving a maximum speed of 45 knots. It was manufactured by Larsen and Toubro in India.

India has previously donated other vessels to the Seychelles. The 46 metre SDB Mk 5 patrol boat PS Constant (formerly INS Tarasa) was handed over in November 2014 while the PS Topaz (formerly INS Tarmugli) was donated by India in 2005.

India has had bilateral relations with the Seychelles since it gained independence in 1976, especially in the fields of health, education and defence. In March 2015 during an official visit, Modi launched the Coastal Surveillance Radar station located on a mountainous central region of the main island of Mahé.

Modi also announced that a second Dornier surveillance aircraft would be donated to the Seychelles Coast Guard to increase maritime security – it is scheduled to be delivered at the end of the year. The first Dornier Do 228 was given to the Seychelles in early 2013.

The Seychelles Coast Guard fleet further expanded in April 2014 when China donated the 38 metre Etoile patrol boat, built specifically for the Seychelles. The new vessels join the Topaz, Andromache, La Fleche and Le Vigilant (the latter two donated by the UAE). China previously donated two Y-12 aircraft for maritime surveillance.

The Seychelles Coast Guard has now a fleet of 15 boats, including four patrol vessels over 40 metres in length, three between 20 to 30 metres and eight for fast response.

Source: [Defence Web](#), February 05, 2016

51 countries ready for fleet review in Vizag

President Pranab Mukherjee will review the fleet at the five-day event on February 6 in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. ENC's Flag Officer Commander-In-Chief Vice Admiral Satish Soni said the command is ready to host navy chiefs and officers from across the world.

He said 51 countries including US, Russia, UK, China, Australia, Brazil, Mauritius, Bangladesh and Maldives are taking part at the IFR.

Twenty of those countries are bringing their own ships. Including Indian ships, seventy ships –24 of them warships from foreign countries—and 24 naval chiefs would take part at the IFR.

Aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and INS Viraat -weighing about 40,000 tonnes and USS Antietam –the 10,000 tonne American guided missile cruiser will be part of the event, besides Corvettes, Destroyers, anti submarine warfare ships, 75 helicopters and hawk jet fighters.

President Mukherjee, the supreme commander of the armed forces, will participate in the review as per the traditions.

The ceremonial guard of honour and 21-gun salute on the wharf would precede the presidential review of the fleet. Mukherjee, onboard the presidential yacht INS Sumitra, would inspect Indian and foreign ships anchored in six columns. During the review, 150 Naval Personnel dressed in full regalia will shout “Jai”, thrice.

The review will also include a fly-past led by Flag Officer Naval Aviation Rear Admiral PK Bahl, as part of the President's inspection of the Navy's air wing.

The naval Air wing will display 45 aircrafts in 15 formations, two of them by the Indian Coast Guard. The fleet review will feature Navy's latest acquisitions including all weather fighter aircraft MIG 29K, Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft, patrol aircraft P8I and the AEW helicopter KM-31.

As a new addition, 24 skydivers from Indian Navy Marine Commandos (Marcos) will descend on the shore with colourful parachutes on February 7. The first commando to reach the ground will hand a book on Maritime Heritage to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The event would begin on Thursday with the inauguration of Maritime Exhibition at Andhra University followed by wreath laying at Maritime memorial at Ramakrishna beach, while the opening ceremony will be held in INS Satavahana Stadium on Friday.

Sunday's events would include International Maritime conference, city parade and concert by foreign bands.

Source: [Deccan Herald](#), February 04, 2016

India to soon allow women to serve on warships

After the Indian Air Force, the Indian Navy has said that it will soon allow women to serve on warships and as naval pilots.

"Women will soon be allowed to serve on warships and as pilots," Indian Navy chief Admiral R.K. Dhowan told the media in the southern port city of Visakhapatnam Wednesday.

"A proposal to induct women as pilots is already with the Indian Defense Ministry and the Navy is moving towards making warships conducive for women officers to be posted on them," he said.

The Indian Defense Ministry last year approved the induction of women into the combat stream of the Indian Air Force and that the first woman fighter pilot will be in the cockpit in June 2017.

"The Ministry of Defence has approved the induction of women into the fighter (combat) stream of the IAF," it had said in a statement.

"This progressive step is in keeping with the aspirations of Indian women and in line with contemporary trends in armed forces in developed nations," the Ministry added.

Source: [Shanghai Daily](#), February 04, 2016

China's Naval Modernization: Where Is It Headed?

The past two years have seen impressive advances in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's capabilities. In 2015, China revealed that it had begun building its second aircraft carrier and that it had begun its first submarine nuclear deterrent patrols. Breaking past convention against military bases in other countries, China last year announced that arrangements had been made for its first military support base abroad, in Djibouti.

The PLA Navy is expanding its capabilities and operations to reduce vulnerabilities in China's near seas, but also to aggressively support its expanding global ambitions and challenge U.S. leadership in Asia. As trade has powered much of the phenomenal growth that propelled China's economy to become the second largest in the world, security for maritime transit lanes has increased in importance. The number of Chinese citizens and valuable assets overseas has also expanded, with state-owned enterprises alone reported to employ 300,000 Chinese citizens abroad. Meanwhile, tensions have grown in the maritime domain over China's efforts to control the South China Sea and Senkaku Islands, which it claims as the Diaoyu. China also continues to bolster its navy's ability to support contingencies related to Taiwan and other scenarios.

Responding to these tensions and vulnerabilities, China's leaders directed the military to take on a broad array of diverse war and non-war missions and tasks. All of the services have translated the directives to focus modernization efforts and operations accordingly. The military strategy white paper published in 2015 explained that the PLA Navy will "shift its focus" from near-seas defense to a "combination of near seas defense and 'distant sea protection.'" It also explained that the military will build a "combined, multi-function, and efficient maritime combat structure."

This suggests that the PLA Navy intends to improve its defense in “near seas” within the so-called first island chain, which extends from the Kuril Islands in the north, through Japan and Taiwan, and to the northern Philippines and Borneo in the south; while also protecting interests in the “distant seas” of the so-called second island chain—which roughly corresponds to the area between the first island chain and a posited line running from Japan through Guam to Indonesia—and beyond. It will also seek to improve coordination with the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG).

Because development of the PLA Navy over the next 10 years will likely continue along the lines raised in the military strategy white paper, we can expect new platforms and capabilities to correspond with these three principal focus areas: near-seas defense, distant-sea protection, and navy-coast guard security collaboration.

For missions relating to near-seas defense, the PLA Navy will probably continue to invest in capabilities to win high-end conflict involving the most likely contingencies. Observers should expect further production of advanced frigates and destroyers, such as the type 052D guided missile destroyer; naval aviation; advanced missiles, such as the HHQ-9 SAM, range 200km; and stealthy diesel and nuclear submarines, including potentially more YUAN and next-generation Type 095 submarines. These capabilities may pose serious challenges to the ability of the United States to intervene in the near seas. In the Spratly Islands, the creation of artificial islands presents opportunities for the PLA Navy and CCG to station more ships and aircraft to patrol the region and deter rival claimants. Ballistic-missile submarine patrols will likely become a regular feature of PLA Navy operations in the South China Sea.

With regard to distant-sea protection, coming decades could see regular deployments of Chinese carrier battle groups and other task forces to the Indian Ocean. Having established precedent with the Djibouti supply base, the PLA Navy will likely seek additional arrangements in Africa and the Middle East. The PLA Navy could depend on these supply ports to sustain the deployment of patrols along vital shipping lanes and support other military operations in the region, such as noncombatant evacuation

operations, humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief missions, and deployments of special operations units ashore.

Collaboration between the PLA Navy and coast guard services will likely continue to blur the line between military and nonmilitary capabilities, as CCG vessels become larger and more heavily armed. The PLA Navy and CCG can be expected to continue improving coordination as they seek to outmuscle rival claimants in the maritime region. With an edge in numbers and capability, the Chinese may be tempted to step up harassment of rival claimants in the Senkaku and Spratly Islands. The maritime regions could become more tense and crisis-prone as a consequence.

Though the evolution mentioned above can be expected, surprise developments could shape China's naval ambitions and its future capabilities in different directions. A dramatic deterioration in security relations with any major power could drive demand for greater military preparation for combat operations. This would likely translate into a focus on building more surface ships, submarines and missiles capable of targeting adversaries operating in the near seas.

At the opposite end, severe economic difficulties could constrain available resources for the military. In the case of a China under intense economic pressure, leaders may opt to set aside expensive military programs, such as follow-on aircraft carriers and ballistic-missile submarines, in favor of cheaper options. This could result in a focus on smaller, less-capable vessels, with a reduced production of capital ships and a greater focus on more affordable systems, like missiles.

In spite of these lingering uncertainties, there are clear implications of China's expanding naval capabilities for the United States. Because of long-term economic and strategic drivers, China will likely continue to invest heavily in its naval and coast guard forces, even as the pace of its economic growth slows. Due to its determination to weaken U.S. leadership in Asia, the PLA Navy's growing capabilities in the near seas pose the most formidable challenge. To uphold U.S. credibility and ensure access, the United States may need to invest in platforms and weapons that can survive or elude China's anti-access capabilities. Submarines and long-range precision strike weapons will be essential in this regard.

By contrast, PLA Navy operations in the distant seas and beyond will likely pursue objectives less antagonistic to, and at times supportive of, U.S. interests. PLAN forces operating outside Asia, for example, could help ensure security for major sea lines of communication and counter transnational threats like piracy. Thus, China's navy is likely to seek increased cooperation with the United States outside Asia even as it steps up efforts to compete with U.S. forces in Asia. Indeed, the two countries already cooperate on counter piracy operations near the Horn of Africa.

The United States should continue to welcome Chinese contributions to battling shared threats and building peace, even as Washington invests in capabilities to defend its interests in Asia. The world has already observed China mature into an economic global power. Coming years may see China move closer toward becoming a military power with global presence as well. The United States may need to adjust its policies accordingly to better anticipate this development.

Source: [World Politics Review](#), February 02, 2016

Naval unity gala sails into sunset

Residents of the City of Destiny returned to their normal lives on Tuesday even as the naval ships that participated in the International Fleet Review 2016 turned for their home bases.

Over the last several months, Visakhapatnam had witnessed frenetic activity as a build-up to the event that actually did the city good. Ravaged by Cyclone Hudhud in 2014, Visakhapatnam was looking for just such an opportunity to restore itself. Once in a while people would look skyward as a lone Mig-29K flew out to sea to land on INS Vikramaditya which headed back to its home base in Karwar on the western coast.

Far out at sea, nearly 100 nautical miles from the coast, the ships that participated in the biggest such event ever hosted by the Navy, bid each other adieu in a Passage exercise. It will not be known immediately if India and the Navy gained much from IFR 16 but the

men on the ships had certainly built up new friendships. A Vietnamese officer said: "India is certainly a beautiful country. I plan to return again with my family."

IFR 16 marked the start of an Indian Navy's all-women crew's effort to circumnavigate the globe on the Indian Navy Sailing Vessel Mhadei, is a 23-tonne sailboat with five sails. INVS Mhadei has circumnavigated the globe at least twice before this. In fact, it recorded sailing of 100,000 nautical miles in 2015.

In 2009-10 Commander Dilip Donde became the first Indian to accomplish solo circumnavigation in a sailboat.

The Passage exercise is a culmination to all such events involving the Navy. On paper, it looks to be a simple procedure. Ships move in columns behind one another and salute senior officers before setting off for separate destinations. On ground, it involves manoeuvring and perfect co-ordination. This isn't an easy task when 17 ships from foreign navies are also part of the whole exercise.

Passex, as the exercise is called, showcases the bonding between mariners in the high seas, an officer said. With no land for hundreds of nautical miles around, ships have to stand by each other in case of emergencies. There are no enemies in international waters till there is a war in progress, he added.

"The ships were sailing in two groups of 27 each. The first was under the command of Rear Admiral Ravneet Singh, flag-officer-commanding, Western Fleet. He was on INS Vikramaditya. The second was under Rear Admiral S V Bhokare, flag-officer-commanding, Eastern Fleet. He was on INS Viraat. There were formation manoeuvres, cross-deck landing of aircraft and a steam past. All this required great co-operation with ships — both Indian and foreign — communicating with each other," a senior Indian Navy officer said.

Source: [The Times of India](#), 11 February 2016

The PLAN commissions fourth Type 071 LPD

The People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN's) fourth Type 071/Yuzhao-class landing platform dock (LPD) vessel was commissioned at the Wusong naval base in Shanghai on 1 February. Yimengshan (pennant number 988) is the first LPD to enter service with the East Sea Fleet, the other ships of the class being allocated to the South Sea Fleet.

All four ships have been built at the Hudong Zhonghua shipyard in Shanghai, with informed sources anticipating that a total of eight ships may be built, although at present there is no evidence of further construction in progress.

To date ships of this class have been observed conducting training and operations in the South China Sea as well as undertaking counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. Changbaishan (989) visited Portsmouth and other northern European ports in early 2015.

The ships are capable of embarking an amphibious force of more than 600 troops and up to four medium-lift helicopters as well as amphibious armoured vehicles such as the ZBD-05 or four Type 726 Yuyi-class hovercraft.

Another recent addition to the East Sea Fleet is the Type 903A/Fuchi-class replenishment ship Gaoyouhu (966), which was commissioned on 29 January. The East Sea Fleet now has three Fuchi-class modern replenishment ships and also an older Type 905/Fuqing-class oiler. The Fuchi-class vessels have been used extensively in supporting PLAN ships deployed on counter-piracy operations and have also been observed with ships operating in the western Pacific.

The Type 056A/Jiangdao-class corvette Jingmen (506) entered service on 25 January with the South Sea Fleet. The Type 056A is the anti-submarine warfare variant of this 1,500-tonne ship, fitted with towed-array and variable-depth sonars. Six of this variant are now in service, equally allocated to the North, East and South Sea Fleets.

Source: [IHS Jane's Navy International](#), February 03, 2016



FM likely to announce 4 major ports in Budget

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is likely to propose four new major ports to be constructed, in the Budget for 2016-17. These ports would be at Dahanu (Maharashtra), Colachel (Tamil Nadu), Sagar (West Bengal) and Dugarajapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) at an estimated cost of Rs 32,000 crore, sources said.

Spanning 13 maritime states and Union territories, India's 7,516.6-km coastline is serviced by 12 major ports, and 200 notified minor and intermediate ports. The 12 major ports are Chennai, Cochin, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Kamarajar, Kandla, Kolkata and Haldia, Mormugao, Mumbai, New Mangalore, Paradip, V O Chidambaranar, and Vishakhapatnam. In 2014-15, these ports handled 581.33 million tonnes (mt) of traffic.

A study by Mckinsey and Aecom for the shipping ministry underlined the need of building coastal capacities to meet future cargo volume. The study notes Indian ports handled 857 mt of bulk cargo in 2013-14. It estimates that in 2025, bulk traffic will increase to 1,850 mt a year. Exim bulk will rise four per cent to reach 1,000 mt a year. The growth in export-import cargo will remain muted due to increase in production of coal and continued weak global demand for iron ore. The coastal bulk traffic, however, will grow at the rate of 22 per cent to reach 750 mt by 2025. This would require building dedicated coastal capacities at specific ports.

The study also states that Indian ports handled 10.7 million TEU (twenty foot equivalent unit) container traffic in 2013-14. Container traffic has grown at eight per cent over the past decade as the level of containerisation also increased from 60 per cent in 2004-5 to 67 per cent in 2013-14. The study estimates that container traffic will grow at 6.5 per cent rate under 'business-as-usual' and reach 21.5 million TEU by 2025. With programmes such as 'Make in India' and development of industrial corridor, the estimated traffic can grow to 24-25 million TEU.

Currently, the handling capacity of major ports in India is sufficient to match trade demand. The capacity of all the major ports as on March 31, 2015 was 871.52 mt, compared with 581.33 mt in cargo traffic handled through 2014-15. The government has taken several measures to improve operational efficiency through mechanisation, deepening the draft and speedy evacuations.

In these ports, capacity increased by 71 mt, traffic grew 4.6 per cent, average turn-around time on port account improved to 2.13 days and operating ratio to 67.2 per cent in 2014-15.

Source: [Business Standard](#), February 1, 2016

Europe's ports vulnerable as ships sail without oversight

As Europe's politicians struggle to control a deepening migrant crisis and staunch the rising threat of Islamist terrorism on their borders, little attention is being paid to the continent's biggest frontier: the sea.

New data highlight the extent to which smuggling, bogus shipping logs, unusual coastal stop-offs and inexplicable voyages are increasing across the Mediterranean and Atlantic for ships passing through Europe's ports — with little or nothing being done to combat the trend.

There is currently no comprehensive system to track shipments and cargos through EU ports and along its approximately 70,000km of coastline — a deficiency that has long been exploited by organised criminals and which could increasingly prove irresistible to terrorists too, say European security officials.

“So far, the thing about maritime security, and particularly terrorists exploiting weaknesses there, is that it's the dog that's not barked,” says former Royal Navy captain Gerry Northwood, chief operating officer of Mast, a maritime security company, and commander of the counter-piracy task force in the Indian Ocean. “But the potential is there. The world outside Europe — North Africa for example — is awash with weapons.

If you can get a bunch of AK47s into a container, embark that container from Aden then you could get them into Hamburg pretty easily. A whole armoury's worth."

Source: [Financial Times](#), February 4, 2016

McKinsey: India's Coastwise Shipping Will Grow Rapidly

Consultants McKinsey & Co. and AECOM have completed a study for the Indian Ministry of Shipping regarding the nation's maritime freight traffic, and have concluded that optimization – primarily boosting coastal shipping and speeding up container exports – could lead to cost savings in the billions.

Further, the study estimates 20 percent annual growth in coastwise bulk freight traffic through 2025 - an increase from 150-250 million tons per year today to 750 million tons per year by the end of that period. The consultants also expect container volume at Indian ports to double, to 21 million TEU by 2025. If government initiatives like the Make in India program are successful, that volume could be as much as 25 million TEU, McKinsey said.

To facilitate growth of coastwise shipping, the firms recommended consolidation in the sector, dedicated port capacity for coastal bulkers, a transshipment port at the southern tip of the subcontinent, and improved bunkering and shipyard facilities.

In related news, on Tuesday, Indian media reported that Finance Minister Arun Jaitley may propose four new major ports in the government's 2016-17 budget, at an estimated cost of \$4.7 billion.

The new major ports would be at Dahanu, Maharashtra; Colachel, Tamil Nadu; Sagar, West Bengal; and Dugarajapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, media suggest.

Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari had promised in January that tenders for a slightly different list of three ports would be issued by March. Minister Gadkari's list differed in the substitution of Wadhwan instead of Dahanu, Maharashtra, and the omission of Dugarajapatnam.

The expected budget proposal would match with McKinsey's recommendation for increased capacities in Maharashtra, Andra Pradesh, and West Bengal.

Adani Ports' Vizhinjam project, a deepwater transshipment port development located on the southwestern tip of India, is already under construction, and would be roughly 25 nm from a port in Colachel.

Much of India's container volume goes by feeder vessel to foreign deepwater ports, then to its final destination via transshipment. At present, limited capacity on the mainland prevents modern ULCVs from calling at most Indian ports.

Source: [The Maritime Executive](#), February 2, 2016

Dhaka cancels port to be built by China, India eyes another

With India's relations with Bangladesh on an upswing, New Delhi has expressed interest in developing the neighbour's newest deep sea port, Payra.

It's a big move by India and an expression of the trajectory of strategic ties between the two countries. Separately, Japan may develop another deep sea port, Matarbari, in Cox's Bazar.

As the Asian allies synergise converging interests, Bangladesh has quietly killed the Sonadia project in Cox's Bazar, which was to have been developed by China.

For India, the Sonadia port, as the Hambantota and Gwadar ports, were deemed to be part of China's much talked about "string of pearls" strategy to encircle India in its maritime neighbourhood.

The Payra seaport, which is on the south-western corner of Bangladesh, close to Chittagong, is much closer to the Indian coastline.

Dhaka has cancelled a port that China proposed to build at Sonadia, on the south-eastern corner of Bangladesh, which if completed would have brought the Chinese presence close to India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

While the official reason for cancellation of the Sonadia port was lack of commercial viability, the Japan-developed Matarbari is only 25km away. China had not only prepared a feasibility study for Sonadia, it had reportedly promised deep funding for the port. The cancellation of Sonadia is clearly a strategic decision by Bangladesh, doubtlessly helped along by India, Japan and the US.

The Payra port has gathered steam only since 2014, with a Payra Seaport Authority being setup under the Chittagong administrative authority.

The Bangladeshi government has decided the port will be built on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis and sources said a UK-based consultant is in the process of working out a feasibility study.

The port will take over seven years to build, but it's not just the port, a deep channel would have to be cut through the heavily silted port to allow big vessels to come through. The Chittagong port is so heavily silted that only small vessels, taking advantage of incoming and outgoing tides, can come in at present.

Indian companies have reportedly started taking an investment interest in the Payra project. Bangladesh has also invited Chinese companies to build the port, and reports from Dhaka say some 10 countries have expressed interest in the project. That, sources said, was very different from China designing, funding and building a port all on its own, which would have a commercial as well as a potential military role. The loss of Sonadia for China comes after it lost its competitive edge in Sri Lanka with the loss of Mahinda Rajapaksa's government.

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), February 2, 2016

Goa's offshore security better than 5 yrs ago: ICG

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has taken up the responsibility of protecting the country's interests in the maritime zones, and today, the Coast Guard can proudly say that the offshore security at Goa's coast is much better than what it was five years ago.

This was stated by ICG Deputy Inspector General Manoj Bhatkar while addressing newsmen on the sidelines of the 40th Raising Day function of the ICG at the Coast Guard headquarters on Monday.

"The coast guard is growing infrastructure-wise because the government is giving us what support we want. Today, we have a 105-metre-long offshore patrolling vessel and two fast offshore vessels, including ICG Amal and ICG Apporva, based in Goa. Similarly, we have an interceptor boat 'Chalie-410'. Soon, we will have another fast interceptor boat, which is in the final stages at Bharati Shipyard and is likely to be inducted in a couple of months. Our strength will increase to six ships based in Goa, and using these ships and manpower in hand, we are confident that offshore security at Goa's coast is much better than what it was five years back," said Bhatkar.

Commenting on the performance of security agencies in the biannual 'Sagar Kavach' exercise, Bhatkar said, "We are conducting coastal security exercise 'Sagar Kavach' twice a year. We have improved our coordination. It makes us feel that we can tackle anything during emergencies. The response timing has drastically improved, but still we should keep on practicing such exercises."

On the garbage treatment plant site identified by the Chicolna-Bogmalo panchayat beside the proposed coast guard headquarters in Santerant, Bhatkar said, "We are not aware of the identification of a garbage plant site next to our residential quarters or our new coast guard base at Santerant. We will make a request to South District Collector Sachin Shinde to reconsider the decision. How can the panchayat identify a garbage site under forest cover? We are coming up with a full-fledged coast guard base in a few years, and this will hamper our operations."

Bhatkar also encouraged women to join the ICG and informed that there are 105 female officers, including five in Goa. He added, “Around two percent of the total ICG staff comprises of female officials.”

On the ICG’s operations, he said, “The ICG operations are 24×7. The thrust in the operational tempo in the Western Region has been achieved by deploying on an average 12 ships per day, and there are five aircraft engaged in 24×7 maritime surveillance. A cumulative 3,616 days of patrolling at sea were clocked to achieve an incident-free year.”

He added, “Since ships and aircraft are workhorses for ICG, 23 ships have been commissioned in the year gone by, which includes a highly-sophisticated pollution control vessel, an offshore patrol vessel, nine fast patrol vessels and 11 interceptor boats, taking the strength to 120 ships/boats and 62 aircraft. Additionally, ICG has five regional headquarters, 14 district headquarters, 42 stations and 10 sir establishments dotting the coastline.”

Source: [Goacom](#), February 2, 2016



New solutions needed to combat growing marine plastic pollution crisis

According to a new report titled “The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the Future of Plastics” from the World Economic Forum (WEF) and Ellen MacArthur Foundation, at the current growing rate of marine plastic pollution, there will be more plastic in the world’s oceans than fish (by weight) by 2050.

Eight million tons of plastic waste presently finds its way into the sea every year.

To put that into greater perspective, this astronomical amount is equivalent to one truckload each minute. The 118-page report revealed many troubling statistics in regard to the amount of plastics polluting the world’s oceans, including how 150 million tons of plastic debris is floating in areas such as in the Pacific. For instance, one specific area of the ocean has been called the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch” because sea currents in this region cause an accumulation of floating plastic.

The report notes that, since 1964, plastic production has increased twenty times. It also points out that currently 15% of all car parts are made up of plastic materials and that about 50% of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner is plastic. Furthermore, back in 2013, over \$260 billion worth of plastic packaging (about 85 million tons) was released into the market.

This staggering amount of plastic production is not only having a harmful effect on the environment, but is also resulting in huge economic cost.

Most plastic pollution is the result of poor recycling practices.

According to the report, 95% of the plastic packaging is lost to the economy, annually, and this packaging is worth between \$80 and \$120 billion. The researchers say that an astounding 32% of plastic packaging is missed by collection systems. This generates significant economic costs by lowering the productivity of the ocean and other vital natural systems, as well as clogs urban infrastructure.

The report also claims that aside from a third of plastic waste ending up in the environment, 40% is sent to landfills and only a small 5% of plastics are properly recycled.

The economic cost of plastic pollution, including the greenhouse gas emissions that result from the production of plastic packaging, is approximated at \$40 billion a year, which is more than the plastic packaging industry's total profits combined.

The report states that in addition to their being more plastics than fish (by weight) in the oceans by 2050, the entire plastics industry will consume 15% of the annual carbon budget and 20% of total oil production. It added that "In this context, an opportunity beckons for the plastics value chain to deliver better system-wide economic and environmental outcomes, while continuing to harness the benefits of plastic packaging."

In other words, the plastics industry needs to improve its recycling and waste reduction method to help combat plastic pollution.

Source: [Hydrogen Fuel News](#), February 1, 2016

SLT introduces SEA-ME-WE 5 submarine cable system and first tier 4 ready data center

In 2014 SLT proudly announced its partnership with 15 international telecommunication operators representing 17 countries, in the formation of a consortium in order to build the South East Asia - Middle East - Western Europe 5 (SEA-ME-WE 5) state-of-the-art undersea cable system. The 1st of February 2016 marked the arrival of this multi-regional superhighway in Sri Lanka by the opening of the - cable-landing station building for the SEA-ME-WE 5 in Matara.

The SEA-ME-WE 5 submarine cable system spans approximately 24,000 km whilst offering POP-to-POP (Point of Presence) solutions from Singapore to Europe via France

and Italy. The system connects 17 countries and serves as a new platform for the future development in the ICT industry.

The conceptualization of the new submarine cable system evolved around the capacity requirements of inter-continentals to support the next generation of Internet applications, which come from every part of the world. The SEA-ME-WE 5 is designed to provide upgradeable transmission facilities by adopting the latest state-of-the-art multiple 100 GBPS technology. When fully loaded, the SEA-ME-WE 5 cable system is capable of carrying a total 24 Terabytes per second: the equivalent of transmitting around 4800 high-definition movies every second.

Aside from being the leader in ICT solutions in Sri Lanka, SLT is also globally connected with a number of other countries including the members of the consortium. As such the organization understands the importance of joining Sri Lanka to the new cable system since almost all international communications between nations are done through undersea cable networks, much like the SEA-ME-WE 5. The SEA-ME-WE 5 plays a valuable role in developing the country's ICT industry as well as helping Sri Lanka join the ranks of advanced and developed nations around the world.

Sri Lanka Telecom started the New Year with yet another bang by -laying the foundation stone to the first and only Tier 4 ready Data Centre in Sri Lanka on the 1st of February 2016.

This new move by SLT will save enterprise customers and government organizations large sums of money by eliminating the need for maintaining their own data centers. The rental payment expected from the customers will far less in comparison to the amount they will be required to spend in order to have their own data centers. SLT intends to provide expert knowledge and bear all costs associated with space, protection, disaster management etc. All data at data centre has been stored lawfully and is thus secure against any such vulnerability.

The new data Centre to be introduced by SLT will have a capacity of - 500 racks. Customers will be able to hire racks as and when they want and they need only pay for what they consume. Located in newly proposed Tech city area, the data center will be

completely dedicated towards operations as well as offering corporate customers' access to convert it into their office if needed.

The functions of SLT are based solely on the needs of the consumer and as a major part of the backbone of Sri Lanka's ICT industry SLT is dedicated to developing the country's ICT infrastructure in every way possible.

Both these events -took place at the President's Official Residence where President Maithripala Sirisena virtually opened the new building of SEA-ME-WE 5 cable landing station at Matara and laid the foundation stone to the new Internet Data Center.

Source: [The Island Online](#), February 1, 2016

U.S. hails India's role in Indian Ocean region

The U.S. has a “vested interest” in seeing a stable and secure maritime domain and as part of the shared vision welcomes India’s assistance to regional navies in capacity building, a top U.S. Navy official said on Wednesday. It is in India’s best interests to become an exporter of security “not only in this region but worldwide.”

“The encouraging development is that India building capacity around the world, a global nation enhancing security across the world. Overall, the security of the maritime region will increase as everybody contribute with their limited capabilities with India providing help, assistance and way forward for all those nations to help themselves,” said Admiral John Richardson, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations.

“Consistent with the joint strategic vision outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Barack Obama and consistent with the U.S. rebalance to the Indo-Asia-Pacific, we are looking to strengthen the partnership with India,” he said. India had been earlier termed the “lynchpin” of the U.S. rebalance to Asia.

The Modi government had been pushing military diplomacy as a tool for deepening strategic partnerships in the Indian Ocean region. These include joint exercises, hydro

graphic surveys, equipment transfer, joint training, and access to military academies in India among others.

The Indian Navy last year released an updated maritime security strategy document, which says that with growing economic and military strength of the country, the national security imperatives and political interests stretched gradually “beyond the Indian Ocean Region.” “There seems little doubt today that the 21st century will be the ‘Century of the Seas’ for India and that the seas will remain a key enabler in her global resurgence,” Navy Chief Admiral R.K. Dhowan noted in the strategy document.

Admiral Richardson said the joint working groups for cooperation on aircraft carrier technology and jet engine technology and projects under the Defence Technology Trade Initiative (DTTI) were part of the efforts to deepen the cooperation.

The Indian Navy is in the process of freezing the design for its second indigenous aircraft carrier and Indo-U.S. working group is looking at the possibility of incorporating Electro-Magnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) of the U.S. on the carrier.

On the progress in talks, Admiral Richardson said there had been regular interactions and the U.S. Navy was ready to assist India in all stages of carrier construction.

Admiral Richardson is in India to participate in the International Fleet Review being held in Visakhapatnam. The U.S. is represented by USS Antietam, a guided missile cruiser, USS McCampbell, a guided missile destroyer, and a military band from the U.S. seventh fleet.

Source: [The Hindu](#), Jan 31, 2016

A resurgent Japan can ensure lasting peace in Asia

The international spotlight on Japan’s prolonged economic woes has helped obscure one of Asia’s farthest-reaching but least-noticed developments – the political rise of the world’s third-largest economy. By initiating national-security reforms and seeking a

more active role in shaping the evolving balance of power in Asia, Japan wants to stop punching below its weight and take its rightful place in the world.

Japan's quiet political resurgence is reflected in various ways – from the government strengthening security arrangements with the United States and building close strategic partnerships with other major democracies in the Asia-Pacific region, to a grassroots movement at home pressing for changes in the country's U.S.-imposed pacifist constitution.

Tokyo's recent landmark deal with South Korea to settle a bitter history dispute over wartime "comfort women" promises to open up greater diplomatic space for it in East Asia.

Already, Japan's passive cheque-book diplomacy is giving way to a proactive approach focused on the Asian mainland and the oceans, including the western Pacific and Indian Ocean. Japan is shoring up ties with other major Asia-Pacific democracies, from Canada and Australia to India and Indonesia.

The single biggest factor driving Japan's political rise is the ascent of a muscular China.

Japan is the world's first constitutionally pacifist nation. The constitution's Article 9 says, "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained." No other national constitution in the world goes so far as to bar acquisition of the means of war or to renounce "the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes."

The American postwar success in disarming Japan by disbanding its military, imposing a 1946-drafted constitution and overhauling its education system, however, engendered its own challenges. It did not take long for the United States to realize that it had gone too far in creating a demilitarized Japan.

In 1953, then-U.S. vice-president Richard Nixon called the constitution "a mistake." That reflected a changing U.S. approach toward Japan, owing to America's Cold War with the Soviet Union, the Communist takeover in China and the protracted Korean War. Through a major reinterpretation of the very constitution it had imposed, the

United States encouraged Japan to reconstitute its military as “Self-Defence Forces” in order to make the country the linchpin of America’s Asian strategy.

Japan’s recent constitutional reinterpretation to assert its right to collective self-defence is small in comparison. Tokyo has also relaxed its long-standing, self-imposed ban on export of arms, thus opening the path to building closer security co-operation with other Asia-Pacific democracies.

With Japan’s nationalist impulse to play a bigger international role now rising, its domestic debate on national-security and constitutional reform is set to intensify. However, further national-security reform beyond what Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has carried out is linked – from a legal standpoint – to constitutional reform.

The Japanese constitution is unique in that it defines no head of state. It stripped the emperor of all but symbolic power. This was by design: The United States wanted to have the emperor as merely the symbol of Japan so that it could use him during the 1945-52 occupation years without the monarch being able to rally his people.

Likewise, the force-renouncing Article 9 was designed to keep Japan as America’s client state so that it would never pose a threat to the United States again.

But today, U.S. security interests would be better served by a more confident and secure Japan that assumes greater responsibility for its own defence and for regional security.

The Japanese constitution, however, is among the hardest in the world to revise. It is doubtful that any proposed constitutional change – even after winning approval with the mandated two-thirds vote in both chambers of parliament – can secure majority support in a national referendum in order to take effect.

The large protests against Mr. Abe’s 2015 security legislation permitting the Self-Defence Forces to engage in “collective defence” were a reminder that the U.S.-instilled pacifism remains deeply rooted in Japanese society. A 2014 survey revealed that just 15 per cent of Japanese (compared with almost 75 per cent of Chinese) were willing to defend their country – the lowest figure in the world.

Make no mistake: Enduring peace in Asia demands a proactive Japan. If Japan fails to carry out further reforms of its postwar institutions and policies to meet the new regional challenges, it could erode its security.

Having spawned the problem that Japan now confronts – how to cast off the constitutional albatross – the United States must be part of the solution. Its own geostrategic interests demand that Tokyo play a proactive role in regional affairs and do more for its own defence, within the framework of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. If the United States were to openly support constitutional revision in Japan, it would help blunt criticism from the country’s powerful pacifist constituency and from China.

Constitutional and national-security reform in Japan will help underpin the central goal of America’s Asia-Pacific strategy – a stable balance of power. Although rising powers tend to be revisionist powers, a politically resurgent Japan, strikingly, is seeking to uphold the present Asian political and maritime order.

Washington thus ought to aid the continued political rise of this status-quoist country, which is determined to reinvent itself as a more competitive and secure state.

Source: [The Globe And Mail](#), February 2, 2016

India’s International Fleet Review: Building Bridges on Shifting Sands

The Indian Navy is preparing to conduct its showcase event – the prestigious International Fleet Review (IFR) – at Visakhapatnam from February 4 to 8. With the first foreign ships due to make an appearance tomorrow, the excitement in India’s maritime circles is palpable. This is only the second time since 2001 that such an event has been organized in India. More significantly, it is the first international fleet review on India’s Eastern seaboard, a theater of growing interest for New Delhi.

Indian naval officers and maritime watchers, however, aren’t the only ones looking forward to the event. With an expected participation of 90 ships and 60 aircraft, and

more than 30 service chiefs in attendance, international interest in the IFR is high. With days to go to the event, the organizing team had received 52 firm confirmations – a significant increase from the first international fleet review in February 2001 at Mumbai when 29 nations participated.

The IFR, however, isn't just planned as a congregation of armed warships and aircraft. Organizers have designed the event as a multi-dimensional experience – a display of camaraderie and converging interests in a complex maritime environment. Besides the naval ships review by President Pranab Mukherjee, a nautical exhibition, a city parade, a maritime conference, an operational demonstration, and a book release function celebrating the maritime heritage of India are also planned.

The official theme of the IFR, “United through Oceans,” is also the driving inspiration for the event. By bringing a large number of warships together, the Indian Navy hopes to draw on the cooperative instinct of participants, urging them to join hands in combating common security and humanitarian threats at sea. In highlighting the utility of multilateral collaboration and interoperability, the event's organizers hope to foster greater regional solidarity, comradeship and goodwill.

Such honorable missions, however, are easier conceived than executed. Many of the event's participants still harbor deep suspicion of each other. China, which was excluded from Japan's International Fleet Review at Sagami Bay a few months ago, has disputes with many of its neighbors over control of the East Asian commons. Beijing views multilateral naval exercises by its competitors as an attempt to undermine China's maritime leverage in Asia. Its opponents, meanwhile, see Beijing's maritime posturing and large-scale reclamation in the South China Sea as an intolerable provocation. Still, the Indian Navy is urging participants to drop their reservations and collaborate in larger regional interest. As Admiral RK Dhowan, the Indian naval chief noted at a recent press conference, “While we may be divided by geography, we must be united through the oceans.”

Building “bridges of friendship,” however, isn't the Indian Navy's only objective for undertaking this onerous enterprise – replete with logistical, administrative and political challenges. Indian maritime planners hope to achieve some of the more

conventional objectives associated with fleet reviews. The exercise of assembling foreign warships is being regarded by many as an opportunity to display maritime might and battle-readiness. Despite downplaying the event's strategic dimensions in public, the Indian Navy is keen to raise its Indian Ocean profile through the display of operational capability and combat assets. New Delhi wants to burnish its credentials as a net provider of regional security, a prominent theme in the Navy's new maritime strategy released in October 2015.

The other key objective for organizing this event is to showcase indigenization. The IFR is meant to complement the "Make in India" campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship initiative for India's internal rejuvenation. The Indian navy had originally planned to field many of its domestically manufactured assets, most significantly the ballistic missile nuclear submarine, Arihant. However, IFR organizers were forced to rethink their plans when participants conveyed their hesitation to send submarines. Instead, India's main showcase platform will now be the INS Kadmat – a new ASW corvette that is almost completely indigenous in design and production.

Geopolitics, however, could still play spoilsport. A few days ago, there were reports that the Indian Navy deployed P8I maritime patrol aircraft based at the strategically located Andaman and Nicobar Command to search for a suspected Chinese submarine prowling Indian waters. The submarine was reported to be a part of the Chinese 21st anti-piracy task-force in the Gulf of Aden. Around the same time, the Indian aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya, was headed on an official visit to Colombo – the first by an Indian aircraft carrier to Sri Lanka. The ship's stay at Colombo came immediately after the visit of three Chinese vessels from the 21st taskforce that had earlier engaged in a naval exercise with the Pakistan Navy. Oddly enough, the same ships are now scheduled to attend the IFR at Vizag.

Meanwhile, Beijing has its own worries about India's maritime activities in the Western Pacific – particularly its naval deployments to Vietnam and Japan. In October last year, INS Sahyadri's participation in Japan's international fleet review at Sagami Bay, and an earlier visit to Na Trang in Vietnam created considerable unease in Beijing. The inclusion of Japan in the Indo-U.S. bilateral naval exercise Malabar and the first India-

Australia maritime exercise (AUSINDEX) in the Indian Ocean further offended Chinese sensitivities. New Delhi, however, is seized of its awkward maritime equation with China. Mindful of the mutual suspicion that exists between the two sides, the Indian Navy has invited the People's Liberation Army Navy to attend the IFR, hoping it would lead to greater confidence and goodwill.

It isn't as if India is being overly sensitive towards Chinese concerns. New Delhi's spirit of inclusion even extended to Pakistan, where subtle diplomatic overtures were made to secure the participation of the Pakistan Navy. Unfortunately, bilateral ties are at a particularly fraught juncture, with neither side willing to be seen making special concessions. Islamabad's unfavorable response then has been on expected lines.

To keep the focus away from the politics, IFR organizers are hoping to leverage a sentimental aspect of the event. The fleet review will be India's oldest aircraft carrier, INS Viraat's last operational tour of duty, as it prepares to retire after 29 years of yeomen service. With advancing age and high maintenance costs, the old warhorse has been having problems keeping up with the pace of modern operations. Despite many operational extensions, it gradually became clear the ship is approaching the end of its active service life. Viraat, however, will still go out with a bang. The Indian Navy has reportedly managed to put six Sea Harrier jump-jets on its deck, and ordered the INS Vikramaditya to be her companion at the IFR.

There is a popular saying about aircraft carriers: Even when they are gone they are never really forgotten. The International Fleet Review at Visakhapatnam should be the perfect stage for INS Viraat to take a final bow. Its presence alongside the INS Vikramaditya will also present New Delhi with the perfect opportunity to seize the strategic narrative in the Indian Ocean Region.

Source: [The Diplomat](#), February 03, 2016

Ban heavy fuels in Arctic shipping: environmental orgs to Arctic Council

More than a dozen environmental organizations from across the globe have petitioned the Arctic Council to ban the use of heavy oil in Arctic shipping.

In a letter written by 15 different groups, they ask the Arctic Council's eight member countries to enact a ban on heavy fuel oil or HFO, because of its threat to the Arctic ecosystem.

"The risks to the marine environment, the climate and public health are too great to permit the continued use of HFO in Arctic shipping," the group wrote in a letter to Ambassador David Balton, who is chair of the senior arctic officials group under the United States' chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

The risks are numerous, the letter said:

- Effectively cleaning up a spill of heavy fuel oil in ice-covered waters is "impractical, if not impossible," the groups wrote. "Coupled with its viscosity and tendencies to sink and stick to anything it comes into contact with, cleanup effort becomes insurmountable.
- Banning the use of HFO in the Arctic would reduce black carbon, a potent climate-forcing substance, the group argues. The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme estimates that Arctic warming could be cut by 0.25 C by 2025 through global reductions in black carbon.
- Banning the use of heavy oil fuels will not only help decrease global and regional warming levels, the group says, but also improve air quality and public health.
- Finally, the group argues the ban could be done easily through a minor amendment to MARPOL, the international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships.

"With concerted action by the Arctic states, under U.S. leadership, this could be achieved at the International Maritime Organization in a relatively short amount of time," reads the letter, signed by groups such as Defenders of Wildlife, Clean Air Task Force, Earth Justice and Ocean Conservancy.

Reducing black carbon emissions has indeed been a priority for the Arctic Council in recent years, although the IMO left that out of the Polar Code when it was adopted in 2014. Some say organizations succumbed to pressure from countries who favour the use of HFO.

“Despite some positive steps taken by the IMO with the Polar Code, we believe that measures are desperately needed to reduce the environmental impacts from Arctic shipping and that a logical place to focus attention is vessel fuel quality,” read the letter.

“We ask for your leadership in bringing together Council Member States to recommend appropriate IMO action in the near term to this end.”

Source: [Nunatsiaq Online](#), February 03, 2016

US attributes rise of China and India to peace in Asia-Pacific

The US today attributed China's rise to the peace in the Asia Pacific region it ensured for the past seven decades and said India is now benefiting from it.

"Look at what the US has brought to the Asia-Pacific region over last 70 years, the most rapidly growing region economically in the world," US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter told a Washington audience.

"It's been the peace and stability there that we underwrote that's allowed first Japan to rise, then South Korea, then Taiwan, then Southeast Asia, now China and India. That's what we've stood for and they've benefited from that," he asserted.

"So to disrupt the security environment where half of humanity lives and half of humanity's economic behavior is not a good idea on their part, but certainly for our part, we intend to continue our strong role there," he said, responding to a question on the recent assertive behaviour of China in South China Sea.

The US, he argued, is going to keep doing what it has always done for 70 years.

"We're going to fly and sail and operate where international law permits, period. And we demonstrate that and that won't stop," he said.

The South China Sea is also a major shipping lane. Over half of the world's commercial shipping passes through the Indo-Pacific waterways.

China claims almost the whole of the South China Sea, resulting in overlapping claims with several other Asian nations like Vietnam and the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

They accuse China of illegally reclaiming land in contested areas to create artificial islands with facilities that could potentially be for military use.

The US has criticised Beijing for building artificial islands in the disputed sea, and has flown a B-52 bomber and sailed a guided-missile destroyer near some of the constructions China has made in recent months.

Carter said the US is also making investments in its defense budget that are specifically oriented towards the checking the development of the Chinese military.

Also the recent Chinese behavior has made other nations in the region concerned.

"All around the region, people are reacting. The Chinese are, with this kind of stuff, going to get people to react and compensate. But more importantly, it's self-isolating behavior," he said.

"I don't know when they'll realise that, whether they will realise that, but it's not the American approach to have a cold war there, to carve up the region, to divide. We're not trying to stop the Chinese from doing what they're doing," Carter said.

Source: [Economic Times](#), February 2, 2016

In the East China Sea, Beijing Tests Japan's Resolve

China's long-standing rivalry with Japan in the East China Sea is heating up once again. In addition to their standing disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and Beijing's attempts to break through the first island chain, it is looking more and more likely that

Japan will wade into the South China Sea conflict as well. In response, China is turning to new capabilities and tactics in the East China Sea in an attempt to outmaneuver its Japanese adversary – and to remind Tokyo that interfering in the South China Sea will have consequences closer to home.

Analysis

In November 2015, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that his country would consider sending the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force on patrols in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, Japan has been building up its relationships with Vietnam and the Philippines, both of which contest China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. In fact, Tokyo has taken steps to explore a visiting forces agreement with Manila that would allow Japanese ships and aircraft to refuel in the Philippines and let Japanese military personnel use Philippine bases on a rotational basis.

China has been watching these developments with growing concern. Beijing has tried to persuade the United States to pressure Japan to stay out of the South China Sea, but it is simultaneously searching for alternative strategies to convince Tokyo to withdraw from the area. One of the most important components of those efforts will be to turn the tables on Japan by ramping up its own presence in the East China Sea. Over the past few months, China has kept up the pace of its incursions into the disputed waters around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and Chinese flights have penetrated Japan's East China Sea air defense identification zone in droves.

Beijing may also turn to its coast guard to make more assertive maneuvers in the East China Sea. The tactic is commonly used among the many claimants in the East and South China seas. Coast guard vessels are different from naval vessels, often identified by their white-painted hulls, and they can declare or defend territorial rights without the involvement of warships, which can significantly raise the risk of miscalculation and escalation in contested waters. The Chinese have used their coast guard and other maritime militia vessels with success before, including against the Philippines near the Scarborough Shoal in 2012. However, given Japan's own powerful coast guard, Tokyo will likely continue to have the upper hand in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

Still, this may not be true for long. China is seeking to break Japan's dominance with several new maritime capabilities. First, Beijing is transferring frigates that formerly belonged to the Chinese navy to its coast guard. While the bulk of these vessels' armaments have been removed, their true threat lies in their high speeds and strong hulls — virtues of setting industry specifications to a military's standards. Second, Beijing has commissioned the construction of gigantic new vessels for its coast guard. While size and hull strength are generally poor indicators of capability when it comes to modern naval warfare, they can still provide a decisive advantage in skirmishes between coast guards, where tactics like shouldering and ramming are the most common offensive maneuvers. China's newly commissioned 10,000-ton cutters are large, powerful and nearly double the size of Japan's 6,500-ton Shikishima-class cutters (which were, until now, the largest coast guard vessels in the world). This will make it all the more difficult and dangerous for Japanese ships to try to shoulder away China's enormous vessels.

Of course, Japan is taking steps to counter China's moves. The Japanese Air Self-Defense Force is continuing to build up its presence at the Naha airfield in Okinawa, including the establishment of a new air wing. The unit has doubled the number of available F-15J air superiority fighters in Okinawa to 40, enabling the Japanese to better respond to China's growing air activity in the East China Sea. In 2015, Chinese air activity triggered 441 Japanese scrambles, twice the number in 2011. At the time, the heightened frequency of flights threatened to overwhelm Japanese forces, which had not yet received the Okinawa reinforcements.

Japan is also making preparations to ramp up support to its coast guard. In January, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga made it clear that Abe is ready to mobilize the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force in the event that a situation arises that the coast guard cannot cope with. Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani echoed the statement by broaching the possibility of allowing the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force to carry out policing activities.

As both sides ratchet up their involvement in the South and East China seas, the potential for conflict will increase. Clashes between coast guards — especially those with

greater capacities for inflicting damage — could pull navies into the fray. Meanwhile, the skies above the disputed seas will be just as fraught as the rising tempo of air intercepts, especially between Japanese and Chinese aircraft, will increase the risk of an accident or miscalculation that could ignite a wider conflict.

Source: [Stratfor](#), February 3, 2016

IMO to consider emissions target

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) will consider an emissions target for the shipping sector in April according to its secretary-general Kitack Lim.

He told Climate Home by email that it was “likely” the topic would be addressed at the IMO environmental committee’s next meeting in April, stating: “I think that IMO will be able to agree on the appropriate way forward.”

“Contributing to the fight against climate change is a top priority for IMO alongside maritime safety and security and the prevention of pollution into the marine environment from ships,” he added.

Lim also said that the organisation’s focus would be on transferring “know-how to those countries that need it”.

Towards the end of 2015, the COP21 climate talks in Paris failed to produce an agreement on shipping or aviation, leaving many observers to call for the IMO to orchestrate the maritime response.

At the time, Maersk Group claimed that the IMO was “best positioned” to regulate the environmental impact of shipping.

However, green NGO Transport & Environment (T&E), said in a statement that the IMO had failed over 18 years to regulate its sector.

On February 3, 2016, the UN's secretary-general Ban Ki-moon visited the IMO's headquarters in London, highlighting the "major role" for the maritime sector and IMO in meeting the UN's sustainable development goals.

He stated: "I also commend the IMO for its efforts to combat climate change, including through legally binding energy efficiency measures for ships, enhancing at least 30% of energy efficiency by 2025.

Source: [Container Management Magazine](#), February 5, 2016

Abe's Indo-Pacific "Security Diamond" Begins to Shine

Last December Prime Minister Abe Shinzō wrapped up his 2015 diplomatic agenda with two events highlighting his "diamond" strategy for regional maritime security: a state visit to India and talks with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in Tokyo.

The concept of a partnership between Japan, the United States, Australia, and India began to take on substance after Abe's visit to Washington in April 2015, which yielded a key agreement on upgrading and strengthening the Japan-US alliance. Tokyo and Washington are both looking for ways to contain China, whose expansionist activity in the South China Sea and elsewhere threatens to overturn a basic tenet of the international order: the freedom of the seas established during the golden age of Dutch maritime power in the seventeenth century.

Shared Heritage of Freedom of the Seas

The seventeenth century was a time of unprecedented growth in world trade, when advances in navigation and a spirit of exploration bore fruit in a new level of commercial and cultural exchange between East and West. During this period the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius championed the cause of free trade and freedom of the seas as Spain and Portugal, the first European powers to arrive in the Western Pacific, tried to monopolize the trade routes they had established.

Grotius argued that free trade must be the preeminent principle, and that no country had a right to interfere with navigation on the high seas. Grotius's ideas contributed to the expansion of Dutch trade throughout the Indo-Pacific region and were eventually recognized as key principles of international law—a valued component of our common global heritage.

Defending the Freedom of Asia's Seas

These laws and norms have withstood four centuries of global change and upheaval. Yet now they are in jeopardy. China is using coercive means to overturn the traditional international maritime order of the region with its aggressive naval and territorial expansion.

China has been flexing its naval muscle while building artificial islands and runways in a bid to control the waters of the South China Sea. The Chinese have either built or are currently building facilities capable of serving as naval ports in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, dramatically expanding their presence around the Indian Ocean. These ports are to serve as hubs for President Xi Jinping's ambitious One Belt, One Road initiative to link the regions of the ancient Silk Road by modern land and sea routes, but they are also seen as key components of China's alleged "string of pearls" naval strategy.

In response to such developments, Prime Minister Abe has moved rapidly in recent months to build closer ties with India, which has a long history of nonalignment and omni-directional diplomacy. Since Narendra Modi took office as prime minister in June 2014, these efforts to step up collaboration have expanded from the economic sphere into the realm of security.

Abe's push for an Indo-Pacific strategic framework has attracted growing attention since he launched his second administration in December 2012. However, his bid to forge such a partnership actually began five years earlier, when he visited India during his first tenure as prime minister. On August 22, 2007, Abe delivered a speech to the Indian Parliament titled the "Confluence of the Two Seas," inspired by the title of a seventeenth-century book by the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh. In this speech, Abe

addressed the Indian people as a whole, sharing his vision of a Japan-India “strategic global partnership” dedicated to nurturing an open and transparent Indo-Pacific maritime zone as part of a “broader Asia.”*

The “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech reflects the key contributions of two advisors whose geopolitical expertise and sweeping strategic vision have played an important role in Abe’s foreign policy behind the scenes. As the articulation of a new strategic concept, the speech was a perfect marriage of the intuitive insight of Kanehara Nobukatsu (currently deputy chief cabinet secretary) and the inspired communication skills of Taniguchi Tomohiko (currently special cabinet advisor). The Indian politicians who attended Abe’s speech in the summer in 2007 found it deeply moving and greeted it with thundering applause. Unfortunately, by this time Abe was already in the grip of the ailment that would force him to resign a month later. The “Confluence of the Two Seas” was the final foreign policy statement of the first Abe cabinet.

Abe’s Sharp-Edged Diamond

The Indo-Pacific strategy lay dormant until Abe’s miraculous political comeback more than five years later. Then it received a new lease on life as a linchpin of Japanese foreign policy under the second Abe administration, launched in December 2012.

The concept reemerged in a far more explicit and sharp-edged form in an English-language opinion piece by Abe titled “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” which appeared on the website of the nonprofit Project Syndicate. Although apparently submitted to the website in mid-November 2012, prior to Japan’s general election, it was released on December 27, 2012, the very day Abe launched his second administration.

In the essay, Abe states that “peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Pacific Ocean are inseparable from peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean.” He goes on to warn that the South China Sea is on the verge of becoming a “Lake Beijing” (China’s territorial sea) and asserts that “Japan must not yield to the Chinese government’s daily exercises in coercion around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.” Coming from the newly appointed prime minister, such blunt talk was

considered injudicious, and Abe's aides, fearful of the impact on relations with Beijing, were at great pains to downplay the piece and control the damage.

Regardless of Abe's original intent in submitting the essay, the timing of its publication was far from ideal. At that point in time, Abe's rhetoric concerning "China's naval and territorial expansion" was outrunning the reality. And given the international media's laser focus on Abe's hawkish foreign policy stance, the prime minister's advisors were understandably concerned about the impact of the piece. At the urging of his staff, Abe scrapped the term "security diamond," and his government never used it again. Nonetheless, the cabinet officially endorsed a quadrilateral framework for security cooperation between Japan, the United States, India, and Australia, which Abe broached in delicate, diplomatically correct terms in his foreign policy speech of January 2013, "The Bounty of the Open Seas: Five New Principles for Japanese Diplomacy."

Reality Catches Up with Rhetoric

Within three years of Abe's controversial "security diamond" proposal, China's aggressive territorial expansion in the South China Sea had accelerated dramatically. In the spring of 2015, the media reported that the Chinese were reclaiming land for airstrips on reefs and islets in the disputed Spratly Islands and even building up islands where no land had previously existed.

In October 2015, the United States finally took action with the deployment of a guided missile destroyer to conduct "freedom of navigation" patrols in the South China Sea. Challenging Beijing's territorial claim, the destroyer passed within 12 nautical miles of Subi Reef, one of the artificial islands China had built in the Spratlys.

Soon thereafter Abe sprang into action. During Modi's state visit in September 2014, Abe had already secured an agreement to upgrade the Japan-India relationship to a "special strategic and global partnership." But Abe's highly productive visit to India near the end of 2015 built substantially on this achievement. In addition to a memorandum of understanding on the peaceful use of nuclear energy and a plan for Japan to finance and build India's first "bullet train," the two leaders signed a number of pacts

significantly strengthening bilateral security relations, including an agreement on the transfer of defense equipment technology and another on the protection of classified military information.

“Today marks the beginning of a new Japan-India era. We were able to take [the relationship] to a new level,” Abe declared (with an understandable hint of hyperbole) at the joint press conference following his talks with Modi.

Less than a week later, Abe sat down with Australian Prime Minister Turnbull to solidify ties with the southernmost point of the Indo-Pacific “security diamond.” No doubt Australia’s foreign ministry was thinking of China when it touted the trip as the prime minister’s first stand-alone visit to any country outside of Oceania since his election the previous September. In the joint statement issued by the two leaders following their summit, they agreed on the importance of deepening the “special relationship” between their two nations, with explicit reference to Japan-Australia security cooperation in the context of Abe’s policy of “proactive contribution to peace” and the recent passage of new security legislation geared to that goal. They also agreed on the value of trilateral security cooperation between Japan, Australia, and the United States and of the new trilateral dialogue between Japan, Australia, and India—an implicit affirmation of Abe’s vision for a quadrilateral security partnership spanning the Indian and Pacific oceans.

More than eight years after Abe’s “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech in India, the concept of an Indo-Pacific strategic framework has begun to have a real impact on Japan’s intellectual community. At the political and policy level as well, the “security diamond” is gradually revealing its value as it projects its form onto the Indo-Pacific region. As China’s “string of pearls” strategy and island construction betray the aggressively expansionist impulse behind its One Belt, One Road initiative, the security diamond connecting Japan, the United States, Australia, and India is taking shape as well, though its outlines remain faint.

A Fragile Framework

But there are inherent weaknesses in this “democratic security diamond.” Although Prime Minister Modi has begun to steer Indian security policy toward closer cooperation

with Japan and the United States, his most urgent priority is the domestic economy: nurturing industry, sustaining growth, and reducing poverty. China's economic contribution is vital if Modi's government is to make satisfactory progress toward these goals. The prime minister cannot ignore the voice of the Indian people or that of his own political base. This is why, in the words of one Japanese diplomatic source, "He has set the course [for cooperation], but he's still hanging back."

Nor can we be entirely confident of Australia's commitment. Although Turnbull has thus far placed priority on relations with Japan, he does not have the close relationship with Abe that his predecessor Tony Abbot cultivated. And Turnbull's personal interest in and connection with China are well known. For this reason, some may be inclined to view his current stance as a passing phase reflecting China's economic slowdown. Moreover, the diamond is not complete without the line connecting Australia and India. Modi's visit to Australia in 2014 was the first such visit by an Indian prime minister in 28 years. This was an important step toward strengthening bilateral relations, but the two governments still have a long way to go.

Prime Minister Abe made concrete progress toward the realization of his long-cherished diamond strategy during 2015, but the initiative still faces daunting obstacles. In the meantime, Japan and its partners in the region will have their hands full coping with China's bid to overturn the traditional maritime order of the Indo-Pacific.

* "The Pacific and the Indian oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A 'broader Asia' that broke away geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct form. Our two countries have the ability—and the responsibility—to ensure that it broadens yet further and to nurture and enrich these seas to become seas of clearest transparency. . . . By Japan and India coming together in this way, this 'broader Asia' will evolve into an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the United States of America and Australia." From "Confluence of the Two Seas,"

Speech by Prime Minister Abe Shinzō to the Parliament of the Republic of India, August 22, 2007.

Source: [Nippon](#), February 8, 2016

US Naval Operations chief on 4-day visit to India to deepen maritime ties

United States' Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson will be on a four-day visit to India from February 2 to 6 to help deepen maritime partnerships between the two countries.

In his first stop to New Delhi, Richardson will meet with key national security officials from across the Government of India to discuss Navy-to-Navy relations and opportunities for further technical and security cooperation.

He will then travel to Visakhapatnam to participate in the Indian Navy-hosted International Fleet Review, which will have participation from 50 countries with visiting warships, tall-masted ships, and Heads of navies. As such, the International Fleet Review is being promoted as the Indian Navy's premier international engagement event for 2016.

While in Visakhapatnam, US CNO will meet with Sailors from USS Antietam (CG 54), a Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser, and USS McCampbell (DDG 85), an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer.

A central line of effort for Richardson is to "expand and strengthen our network of partners." The visit to India and interactions with Indian and other Navy leaders helps to deepen relationships and expand shared maritime interests. (ANI)

Source: [The Siasat Daily](#), February 3, 2016

ASEAN-India partnership to boost Asian voice: Ansari

A stronger partnership between the ASEAN countries and India will boost Asia's voice in global governance, Vice President Hamid Ansari said on Thursday.

“It is evident that a stronger Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)-India partnership would give us a stronger voice on global governance issues,” Ansari said while delivering a lecture on "India, Thailand and ASEAN: Contours of a Rejuvenated Relationship" at Chulalongkorn University.

“The time is ripe for our common engagement for bringing greater equity into the international order,” he said.

“ASEAN members and India have similar aspirations to have an open trading system through global organisations like the WTO. We have also shown a strong commitment, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, as we take up our own role to address issues related to climate change.”

Ansari arrived in Bangkok on Wednesday on a three-day visit to Thailand at the official invitation of Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha.

The second and last leg of his visit to southeast Asia which earlier took him to Brunei, Ansari's is the first visit by an Indian vice president to Thailand in 50 years.

Stating that his visit underscored the importance India attached to Thailand as part of New Delhi's increasing engagement with the region, he said that despite the large size and rapid growth of economies of the two countries, trade and investment between the two remained modest.

“There is a need to synergise our efforts in the areas of economy and business to enhance and diversify our trade. We need to encourage our private sectors to make investments in infrastructure and manufacturing sectors in the each others' country and for this the two governments are willing to provide a predictable and comprehensive legal and taxation frame-work,” the vice president said.

He also stressed on enhancing bilateral defence ties.

“Thailand has played host to ships of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard on several occasions in recent years. We hope to continue this cooperation through technical, human resource development, capacity building and contributing to the development of Thai capacities, both physical and human,” he said.

The countries of the ASEAN bloc form the core of India's Act East policy, Ansari said.

“India places ASEAN at the core of the Act East policy and at the centre of our dream of an Asian century,” he said.

“There is a special emphasis on India-ASEAN cooperation in our domestic agenda on infrastructure, manufacturing, trade, skills, urban renewal, smart cities and Make in India programmes,” he stated.

“Connectivity projects, cooperation in science and technology development and people-to-people exchanges are to be the springboard for regional integration and co-prosperity.”

The vice president said the three Cs of commerce, culture and connectivity defined the future focus areas of cooperation between ASEAN member states and India. Allow me to dwell on some aspects of it.

“The spread of Buddhism from India is attributed to Emperor Ashoka, who sent Buddhist emissaries to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Indian mythology and folklore finds reflection here. The Thai epic, Ramakien, is based on the Ramayana. The Ahoms, the Khamtis and the Khasis of India have links with Thai people,” he said.

As for commerce, he said in the year 2014-15, Asean-India trade stood at \$76.58 billion, growing at an average annual growth rate of 12 per cent, up from \$44 billion during the year 2009-10.

“In terms of two-way FDI (foreign direct investment) flows, the India-Asean region has significantly outpaced many other regions of the world,” he stated.

“With mutual trade and investment opportunities arising from the realisation of the ASEAN Economic Community and India’s emphasis on ‘Make in India’, ‘Digital India’, ‘Skill India’ and ‘Smart Cities’ initiatives, we are confident that India-Asean commercial partnership will flourish.”

Ansari said India was open to offering Asean its indigenously developed GPS Aided Geo Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) services, which provide advanced navigation and location assistance and information facilities.

Regarding connectivity, the vice president said special efforts were being made to develop a coherent strategy, particularly for linking ASEAN with northeast India.

“This is reflected in the finalisation of negotiations on the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicles Agreement and ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement. ASEAN-India Civil Aviation Task Force is expected to oversee optimisation of air connectivity. Other major projects on connectivity include the Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project and Rhi-Tiddim road,” he said.

Source: [The Statesman](#), February 4, 2016