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Maritime Security Cooperation in the South China Sea: Sailing in different directions

-Mark J. Valencia

At China's eighth Xiangshan Forum in October, a major topic of discussion will be visions and the reality of multilateral maritime security cooperation. The Xiangshan Forum is China's answer to the British International Institute for Strategic Studies' Shangri-la Dialogue (SLD), held each summer in Singapore. Beijing views the SLD and its organizers as preferentially providing platforms for outside countries' perspectives and criticism of China's policies. Presumably, many of the speakers at the Forum will provide an Asian and Chinese perspective on regional maritime security cooperation and the obstacles to achieving it. Hopefully they will directly or indirectly address critical questions like: *whose* security; security of or from *what*; and realistically *how* to proceed?

The Southeast Asian claimants in the South China Sea (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam), China, and outside powers like the United States have very different answers to these questions. Indeed, they are sailing in the same waters but heading in different directions with different missions. Regarding *whose* security, security concerns of the South China Sea littoral countries – including China – are not the same as the concerns of the United States and outside powers. Moreover security concerns – and their prioritization – also differ between individual South China Sea countries, especially including China. For most South China Sea littoral countries, the prime security issue is defending their territorial and maritime claims. The South China Sea countries obtained independence (or, in China's case, a new system of government) in the wake of World War II and suffered through bitter internal and international struggles in doing so. They jealously guard their sovereignty and any perceived undermining thereof. In the short history of their modern nation-states, it is only relatively recently that they have extended their maritime jurisdiction to 200 nautical miles or more. Leadership and their populaces tend to view the areas and resources gained – and especially the land features, which are legally speaking no more than rocks – as part of their “sacred” national heritage. Indeed, their maritime claims have become symbols of national pride and governmental legitimacy that must be defended against other claimants and outside powers. This nationalist perspective

overwhelms proposals for “shared security.” Ironically this is both the main commonality and the main obstacle to the claimants’ maritime security cooperation.

Beyond this fundamental obstacle, the topic of security of, or from, *what* could mean common regional security concerns like terrorism, piracy, smuggling, illegal fishing and environmental degradation, or the more traditional security concerns of the big powers — like conforming to the “international order,” the use or threat of force, freedom of navigation for warships and warplanes, trade in weapons of mass destruction, and enhancing maritime domain awareness. These latter issues and their derivatives are mostly contentious issues between China and the outside powers, not between China and other South China Sea countries. The United States and other outside powers would presumably view multilateral Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) against China’s claims as a priority for maritime security cooperation, while joint anti-piracy and anti-terrorism patrols have more support from within the region.

In addition to the issue of what to focus on, there is also the all-important question of *how* to proceed: that is, who should take the initiative and provide the leadership and centrality for the effort? ASEAN member countries would probably prefer a focus on nontraditional issues with leadership and centrality provided by ASEAN. The United States and China would of course prefer a focus on more traditional security concerns, with each wanting to provide the initiative and leadership in a coalition tacitly aimed at the other.

Practical Issues

There are other conceptual and practical obstacles to maritime security cooperation in the South China Sea.

Lack of trust — Many Asian nations harbor deep-seated, historically based suspicions of each other, making security cooperation all the more difficult. As Lord Palmerstone and Henry Kissinger believed and practiced “there are no permanent friends or enemies — only permanent interests.” Most countries’ decisions are influenced to some degree by the thinking behind this dictum, particularly in Asia. Some view maritime security cooperation as advantaging the more powerful, who can display the superiority of their technology, assets, and weapons and thus tacitly intimidate their potential opponents while observing and detecting the their weaknesses. The same

reticence applies to information sharing. This mind-set makes maritime security cooperation all the more difficult.

Differences in scale — The scales of territory, population, military capacity, and economy among South China Sea countries are quite asymmetric. Many have limited resources and capabilities, and do not want to commit scarce resources to cooperation to meet threats that are low priority to them. These might include trade in WMDs, noncommercial freedom of navigation concerns, and maritime domain awareness, all of which are in the greater interest of outside maritime powers.

Competition between China and the U.S. — Both China and the United States (and its allies Japan, Australia, and the U.K.) are offering cooperative maritime security exercises and assistance to the Southeast Asian claimants. Maritime security cooperation with one side is often seen as taking a stand against the other. This pressure to “choose sides” is reinforced by China and the United States themselves — sometimes publicly but more often behind the scenes. Most Southeast Asian coastal nations welcome assistance in capacity building. But they may well be more reticent to sign on to any regional scheme that could be taken as “siding” with one side against the other — or as endorsing a security role for external military forces.

Practical obstacles — Practical obstacles to maritime security cooperation by Southeast Asian littoral countries include tight operating budgets; lack of common doctrine, language, and interoperability of equipment; and widely varying stages of technological development. Intelligence information sharing is particularly sensitive because it involves potentially indirectly revealing sources and methods as well.

First Steps

Some analysts hope that cooperation and regime-building in nontraditional security sectors will build trust and confidence and spill over into cooperation on “hard” security issues. This may eventually happen, but it would involve quite a leap of faith that most are not yet ready to take. It now seems obvious that multilateral maritime security cooperation in the South China Sea can be successful only if the South China Sea countries collectively perceive a high priority threat and both China and the United States are willing and able to cooperate against this threat. Perhaps combating transnational piracy and terrorism and/or insurgencies are prime candidates.

Indeed, the cooperation between the Malacca/Singapore Straits countries — Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand — in reducing piracy in the Straits shows that this is possible. However due to nationalist concerns, they insist on doing it themselves, without outside power assistance — and are careful not to overstep each other’s “red lines.” An even better example is the cooperation against piracy and terrorism in the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines *with* the assistance of the U.S., Australia, and perhaps even China. But even in these positive examples, cooperation is somewhat restricted by differences in capacity and capability, and reticence regarding transparency, sharing of information, and operations in sensitive areas. To move beyond these beginnings to a region-wide effort will take considerable time, and diplomatic effort. The diplomatic graveyard is full of failed proposals and efforts that did not take regional realities into account.

Source: thediplomat.com, 17 September 2018

Indian Naval Ships head to Yangon: India looks to strengthen its position in Bay of Bengal

With New Delhi looking to further strengthen its geo political presence in the Bay of Bengal and keeping in line with India’s “Act East Policy”, and “Neighbourhood First Policy”, two Indian Naval ships, INS Kulish and INS Battimalvalong with one Indian Navy Dornier aircraft will visit Yangon from Sept 24-26. As part of the ongoing bilateral mechanisms between India and Myanmar the Indian ships are going for Opening Ceremony of the 7 th IN-MN (Indian Navy-Myanmar Navy) Coordinated Patrol, which is to maintain maritime security within respective side of maritime boundary and enhance mutual understanding between navies through operational exchange.

According to a report by National Maritime Foundation (NMF) titled: ‘India and Myanmar: Prospects of Maritime Reciprocity’ Myanmar occupies a central position in India’s geopolitical imperatives in the Bay of Bengal. Also, with the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) between the two countries close to Andaman and Nicobar Islands necessitates an intensive maritime interface, including military ties, the NMF report states. As has been reported earlier, the two countries during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to that country in 2017, had agreed to work more

closely on maritime security and to step up economic cooperation via a port project in western Myanmar. Among the 11 MoUs inked at the time, one was on maritime security and coastal surveillance.

According to an official release from the Indian Embassy, Myanmar, Cdr Deepak Baliis in Command of INS Kulish and heads crew of over 120 personnel on board the third of indigenously manufactured Kora Class Guided Missile Corvettes, commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2001, and presently based at Port Blair. Equipped with multitude of weapons and sensors, the ship is also designed to embark indigenously manufactured Dhruv (ALH) or Chetak helicopter. Commodore Ashutosh Ridhorkar, Naval Component Commander, Port Blair, is onboard INS Kulish. Commanded by Lieutenant Commander MC Chandeeep, with a crew of over 50 personnel is on board INS Battimalvis a Fast Attack Craft with top speed of over 28 knots commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2006. The ship undertakes regular patrolling and surveillance missions in the Andaman and Nicobar group of islands.

Source: www.financialexpress.com, 24 September 2018

Australia further strengthens regional maritime security

Australia is continuing its commitment to regional maritime security through an upgrade of wharf and shore-based infrastructure by Fletcher Morobe Constructions Limited at Papua New Guinea's (PNG's) Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island. Minister for Defence, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, said the \$5 million contract is part of the Australian Government's Pacific Maritime Security Program. "The Lombrum upgrades will support the safe and secure berthing of PNG's four new Guardian-class Patrol Boats," Minister Pyne said. "The infrastructure works build upon existing security cooperation between Defence and the PNG Defence Force, including the recently established \$2 million communications center at Lombrum." Minister Pyne said the Australia-PNG defense relationship is an enduring testament to our shared historical and cultural ties. "Australia is proud to support the PNG Defence Force in strengthening their maritime security capability, and remains committed to our longstanding partnership."

21 Guardian-class Patrol Boats are being gifted to 12 Pacific nations and Timor-Leste from 2018-2023 under the Pacific Maritime Security Program.

“The Pacific Maritime Security Program, which is also providing a regional aerial surveillance capability, is the cornerstone of Defense’s engagement in the Pacific, and strengthens partner capacity and regional maritime security,” Minister Pyne said.

Source: seawaves.com, 22 September 2018

India, Oman agree to boost cooperation in maritime security

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr Saud Harib Al Busaidi held wide-ranging talks on Wednesday and agreed to enhance cooperation in maritime security and defence industry engagement.

The ministers undertook a comprehensive review of bilateral defence cooperation and discussed measures to further enhance bilateral exchanges, an official statement said. Sitharaman and her Omani counterpart also agreed upon a range of measures to enhance the defence relationship between the two countries.

Cooperation in maritime security and defence industry engagement were prioritised for future engagement, the statement said. India and Oman share strong and multi-faceted defence ties with the two countries' armed forces holding regular staff talks and advanced joint exercises with each other.

Source: www.mid-day.com, 27 September 2018

Maritime security: Japan ready to provide assistance

Japanese Foreign Minister Masahisa Sato said it is ready to provide assistance in technology and equipment to enhance capacity in strengthening maritime security in eastern Sabah, due to the close ties between Malaysia and Japan over the years. Masahisa and his delegation visited the Naval Base 2 HQ (Mawilla 2) here. He was welcomed by Marine Commander 2 (Pangvilla 2), Rear Admiral Dato Ganesh Navaratnam and officers. The delegation was briefed around the Sandakan Base Sandakan (TPS) jetty and visited the vessels docked at the TPS. In the session, Sato and Ganesh exchanged opinions and proposals aimed at maritime security in the Sulu and Sulawesi Sea, in the field of military and regional issues.

He noted that the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA), which worked between Malaysia-Indonesia-Philippines, has provided much good and confidence to the region, especially in maintaining maritime security in the Sulu Sea and Sulawesi. He also noted that due to the current developments in the South China Sea, they are considering alternative routes for Japanese trading vessels, especially those that carry oil from the middle east using the lateral Strait of Lombok to Sulawesi Sea, Sulu Sea and Makassar Sea before to Japan. They observed how this route was used by merchant ships carrying iron ore from Australia. This first visit by Mawilla 2 and Sandakan is also seen as opening a new chapter in international relations between Malaysia-Japan especially in Sabah.

In addition to promoting military tourism, this visit also gives Sabah the opportunity, especially Sandakan to introduce the tourism products and advantages available in this district which can be highlighted in an effort to attract tourists from Japan to travel to Sandakan. - Winnie Kasmir

Source: dailyexpress.com.my, 28 September 2018



Sixth Make in India warship meant for multi-role amphibious missions delivered to Indian Navy

- Huma Siddiqui

In record 16 months, Kolkata based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), formally hands over the 6th warship “L-55” a “Mark IV LCU Vessel, to the Indian Navy. The Mark IV LCU Vessels are a further improved version of the Mark III LCU Vessels presently being used by the Indian Navy. The First Ship of the Mark IV LCU Vessels IN LCU L-51 was commissioned into service during 2016. These ships are meant for multi-role amphibious missions including humanitarian and disaster relief operations and evacuation. These missions could also be carried out jointly by both the Indian Navy and the Indian Army. The ship was handed over by Rear Admiral V K Saxena, IN (Retd) Chairman & Managing Director, GRSE to the Commanding Officer of the Ship Lt Cdr Abhishek Kumar at the Ceremony held in GRSE.

The shipyard is also executing order for 8 Landing Craft Utility Ships for the Indian Navy and the ship delivered today, is the 5th in the series. The balance 3 ships are in advanced stages of construction and are expected to be delivered to the Indian Navy, over the next one year. These warships, developed by the in house design team are believed to be unique in their design & operations having length of 62.8 metres and achieving a speed of 15 knots with a low draught of 1.7 m. GRSE currently has a very strong order book providing the Shipyard a deep pool of Rs 20313.61 crore revenue generating projects with 12 ships currently under construction with 09 ships (01 ASW Corvette, 03 LCUs, 05 FPVs) in advanced stages of construction, expected to be delivered to Indian Navy by end 2019.

Also, 03 ships of Project P17A Advanced Stealth Frigates with an order value of 19293.46 crore are being constructed using Modular Construction Technology and various software like Aveva Marine, NAPA etc. The progress on the 1st ship is moving at a rapid pace & production is running ahead of schedule & production of 2nd Frigate, is slated to commence shortly. GRSE has been declared successful bidders in competitive bidding for another 12 ships (04 Survey Vessels (Large) & 08 ASW SWCs) for the Indian Navy.

This proves GRSE's ability to provide end-to-end solutions to their customers ranging from product conceptualization, design, system integration and project management thus increasing the capability to meet customer demands. Key areas of strength of the shipyard include a multi-disciplinary strong design team, production acumen; focused project planning & execution, traits which have helped the Shipyard create strong differentiators in its path of growth.

Source: www.financialexpress.com, 29 September 2018

PLA to train more fighter pilots for aircraft carriers

A recruitment campaign has been launched for aircraft carrier cadet pilots by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy. Cadets will learn on a new and better type of training aircraft which more closely resembles the J-15, a Chinese military insider said Tuesday. The Naval Aviation University has received a training aircraft more similar to China's only current carrier-based J-15 fighter jet, Wang Yunfei, a naval expert and retired PLA Navy officer, told the Global Times on Tuesday. The aircraft will improve training efficiency this year, Wang said. Each carrier needs dozens of fighter pilots, Wang noted. China will need hundreds of cadets, he said. Male Chinese students aged 16-19 who graduated from normal senior high school can apply to take enrollment exams, the PLA Daily reported on Tuesday. "With the *Liaoning* in service, the Type 001A undergoing sea trials, the third carrier under construction and a fourth already in planning, the PLA Navy will naturally need more carrier-based fighter jets, which means huge demand for pilots," Li Daguang, a professor at the National Defense University of the PLA in Beijing, told the Global Times on Tuesday. "Fighter pilots for carriers are extremely scarce at the moment," Li said.

After participating in exams to be held from September to April across the country, qualified students will be enrolled in June and July at the Naval Aviation University in Yantai, East China's Shandong Province. The university has 10 campuses and training facilities across the country, according to a Friday notice on chsi.com.cn, the website of the China Higher-education Student Information under the Ministry of Education. The student will become a naval officer after four years' study, the notice said. Those with excellent scores will also be referred to Peking University, Tsinghua University or Beihang University in Beijing to finish their bachelor degree studies in a dual degree program, it said. The students do not need to pay for the study and will have a stipend, the notice read.

Source: www.ecns.cn, 19 September 2018

U.S. hands over island-class patrol boats to Naval Forces of Ukraine

The United States has handed over two Island-class patrol boats to the Naval Forces of Ukraine. The solemn ceremony took place on the territory of the U.S. Coast Guard "Baltimore" and was attended by Ukrainian President Poroshenko and his wife Maryna Poroshenko, the president's press service reports. The certificates on transfer of equipment in the presence of the president have been signed by Vice Admiral of the Coast Guard of the USA Michael Mcallister and Commander of the Naval Forces of Ukraine Ihor Voronchenko. "It is a great privilege for me to be here, in Baltimore. In a place of a century-long traditions. In a place, where the naval might of the United States is maintained. It is my honor to salute the men and women, who serve in the United States Coast Guard. You are carrying out the greatest mission – protect the borders of the Homeland," Poroshenko said.

"This day marks another milestone in developing a strategic partnership between Ukraine and the United States," the president stressed. He once again emphasized that the U.S. leadership, the president of the United States had once again proven to stand firmly on the guard of international law, to support a freedom-loving people in their quest for peace, democracy and independence. "The first two 'Island' boats will become another brick to strengthen a naval alliance between the Ukrainian and American peoples," the president said, adding that the given assistance would be supplemented by the U.S. assistance for construction of Ukraine's Navy Command Center in Ochakiv. "Today's event clearly shows that the Strategic Partnership between Ukraine and the United States is vibrant and productive," he stressed. According to the head of state, this alliance is already deeply rooted in the annual Sea Breeze exercise co-hosted by Ukraine and the U.S. in the Black Sea. This July it was held for the 18th time with the participation of 17 nations. Vice Admiral of the Coast Guard of the USA Michael Mcallister noted that over the past 20 years, the Coast Guard had provided 520 assets to 75 partners under the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program. "The program provides mutually beneficial cooperation with all partners. Our international partners can swiftly improve maritime safety and defense capability. These transfers help secure a long-term international partnership that provides global maritime security," he said. The Vice Admiral of the Coast Guard of the USA also emphasized: "I am convinced that these boats will also serve well in the hands of the Ukrainian Navy. In the hands of skilled sailors, such as U.S. Coast Guard and

Ukrainian Navy, the Island-class motor boats have proven themselves to be versatile and efficient assets. Their teams have distinguished themselves in preventing illicit trafficking, emergency response, defense operations and rescue of people in the seas." Mcallister also told that he had served as a commanding officer at one of those ships: "Coast Guard sailors love these ships." "It is bittersweet to watch these cutters leave our service, we are proud to see them continue their service lives and remain relevant instruments of global maritime safety and security. We look forward to beginning the transfer process and working with our Ukrainian partners to deliver these outstanding cutters that have served the United States so well," the Vice Admiral of the Coast Guard of the USA noted.

Source: www.unian.info, 28 September 2018

The Navy Is All In on Preparing for the Next War. This Is What They Are Doing.

- Kris Osborn

The Navy is firing weapons, engaging in combat scenarios and refining warfighting tactics through a rigorous training regiment aimed at better preparing the sea service for massive warfare on the open ocean. Described by Navy officials as "high-velocity learning," Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training (SWATT) is focused on speeding up combat decision making and responding in real time to emerging high-tech enemy weapons such as missiles, lasers, sea mines, long-range anti-ship missiles and torpedoes, among others. "We are focused on the high-end fight" Cmdr. Emily Royse, SWATT leader, told Warrior Maven in an interview.

The emphasis also has a heavy academic focus, lead by specially prepared Warfare Tactics Instructors, aimed at briefing - and then debriefing - a range of operational maritime warfare scenarios. "For each training type we focus on sea control type events. Warfare units are presented with a scenario and we are there to help them through the decision making process to help them fight that scenario. For surface warfare, for instance, they might plan how they are going to get all their ships through narrow, high-risk straights or how to respond to small boat threats," Royse added. The training crosses a wide swath of maritime combat missions, to include mine countermeasures, Amphibious Ready Groups, Carrier Strike Groups and other elements of surface warfare. The idea is to further establish and refine tactics, techniques and procedures needed for major warfare on the ocean - against high-tech enemies.

“Sea control objective is to ensure that our forces are able to move freely within the sea lanes and ensure that they are free from threats or able to counter threats,” Royse said. Some of the particular kinds of enemy weapons these courses anticipate for the future include a range of emerging new systems - to include lasers, rail-guns and long-range missiles, among other technologies.

Not surprisingly, these courses appear as somewhat of a linear outgrowth or tactical manifestation of the Navy’s 2016 Surface Force Strategy document. Titled “Return to Sea Control,” the strategy paper lists a number of specific enemy threat areas of concern focused upon by course trainers. Examples of threats cited by the strategy paper include “anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles, integrated and layered sensor systems, targeting networks, long-range bombers, advanced fighter aircraft, submarines, mines, advanced integrated air defenses, electronic warfare and cyber and space technologies.” Much like the training courses and the Surface Force Strategy, the Navy’s Distributed Maritime Operations Concept also builds upon the Navy’s much-discussed “distributed lethality” strategy, in place now for a number of years. This strategic approach emphasizes the need to more fully arm the fleet with offensive and defensive weapons and disperse forces as needed.

Having cyber, space and missile weapons - along with over-the-horizon ship and air-launched weapons - are relevant to offensive attack as well as the “distributed” portion of the strategy. Having an ability to defend against a wider range of attacks and strike from long-distances enables the fleet to spread out and conduct disaggregated operations, making US Navy forces less vulnerable to enemy firepower.

Interestingly, the pressing need to emphasize offensive attack in the Navy fleet appears to have roots in previous Navy strategic thinking. Part of the overall strategic rationale is to move the force back toward open or “blue water” combat capability against near peer competitors, such as that which was emphasized during the Cold War. While the importance of this kind of strategic and tactical thinking never disappeared, these things were emphasized less during the last 15-plus years of ground wars wherein the Navy focused on counter-terrorism, securing the international waterways, counter-piracy and things like Visit Board Search and Seizure. These missions are, of course, still important, however the Navy seeks to substantially increase its offensive “lethality” given that rivals such as Russia and China have precision-guided anti-ship missiles able to hit targets at ranges greater than 900 miles in some cases. The advent of new cyber and electronic warfare attack technologies, enemy drones and the rapid global proliferation of sea mines all

present uniquely modern nuances when compared to previous Cold-War strategic paradigms. Nevertheless, the most current Naval Surface Warfare Strategy does, by design, appear to be somewhat of a higher-tech, modern adaptation of some fundamental elements of the Navy's Cold-War-era approach - a time when major naval warfare against a Soviet force was envisioned as a realistic contingency.

Source: nationalinterest.org, 25 September 2018

Germany's Thyssenkrupp to refit Indian Navy submarine INS Shishumar

Indian ship-building company Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDL) has awarded a contract to Germany-based Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) for the overhaul and upgrade of the Indian Navy's Shishumar-class submarine INS Shishumar. Under the Medium Refit and Life Certification contract, TKMS will be responsible for delivering new equipment for the vessel.

In addition, the contract includes maintenance of systems and components, in addition to on-site technical support and logistical services in the form of documentation, training and spare parts. The agreement involves provision for a life certification that warrants the operability of the submarine's pressure hull over the next ten years. TKMS chief executive officer Dr Rolf Wirtz said: "We are looking forward to working with MDL to perform the deep modernisation work to ensure that INS Shishumar remains a very capable combat submarine for the Indian Navy over the years to come. "Our experience with the Shishumar class and the outstanding skills of MDL's employees are the basis for the return of the submarine back to the Indian Navy in great shape." The refit will be carried out at MDL's dockyard in Mumbai and is expected to be completed by 2021.

Based on HDW Class 209 design, the Indian Navy's Shishumar-class submarines are built with special features such as a larger diameter of the pressure hull, a pressure-resistant bulkhead, and a rescue sphere. Construction of the first two submarines of the class, INS Shishumar and INS Shankush, was carried out at TKMS shipyard in Kiel, Germany.

Source: www.naval-technology.com, 27 September 2018



China overtakes Japan as second largest ship owning nation

China has just become the world's second largest ship owning country and the numerous giant ore carriers, tankers and containerships scheduled for delivery to Chinese owners in the months and years ahead mean it is on course to further boost capacity. Strong and accelerating growth in the China-owned merchant ship fleet has unfolded says Richard Scott, md, Bulk Shipping Analysis and associate, China Centre (Maritime), Solent University.

In 2017 an increase exceeding 9% was seen in the Chinese fleet says Scott and signs suggest this year's annual rise could be similar. "The extensive orderbook for new vessels due to be delivered through the next two to three years will add substantial tonnage, but other less predictable influences also will determine fleet growth," said Scott. He said, many new ships will be employed in long-haul international trades where China is the cargo importer or exporter.

For containerships, cargoes both to and from China are likely to provide employment while, for bulk tonnage in the biggest size categories, import trades will be most prominent. Amid vast quantities of manufactured goods and bulk commodities moving, potential for further participation of China-owned ships is clearly visible but, on some trade routes, other nationalities' ships may be displaced. Scott's analysis reveals that in the past three years and eight months, the China-owned fleet has expanded by over one-third, a higher percentage increase than seen in the Greek-owned fleet and much higher than Japan's minimal growth.

Calling on Clarksons Research, Scott noted, the China-owned fleet recorded growth rates of 6.5% in 2015, 7.5% in 2016 and 9.4% in 2017, before adding 7.1% in the January-August 2018 period. While the Greek fleet totaled 222m gt, China's fleet comprised 7,744 ships of 170m gt at the end of August, above Japan's 167.6m gt. China's fleet has expanded 34% since the end of 2014, compared with a 23% growth for Greece and just 2% for Japan. At the end of last year, orders at shipbuilding yards for new vessels to be delivered to China-based shipowners stood at 25.5m gt total, according to Clarksons, equivalent to almost 17% of the existing China-owned fleet as calculated then. Within this orderbook a large proportion was scheduled for delivery in 2018, and a striking feature was the numerous orders for the biggest bulk carriers,

tankers and containerships. Newly constructed capacity is the most visible and transparent growth element in the China-owned fleet. Other influences determining the outcome are secondhand vessel purchases on the international market, sales of vessels to that market and existing tonnage sold to shipbreakers in China or other countries within the global ship recycling market. These transactions are usually more difficult to track and monitor comprehensively, and therefore overall estimates rely to some extent on guesswork. And much of the Chinese growth has come in the s&p market, with Greeks among the main seller to Chinese interests. This year alone over 20 vessels of 1m gt have left Greek hand for Chinese.

Source: www.seatrade-maritime.com, 17 September 2018

Mystic Shipping achieves new record of loading longest Wind Mill blades

Mystic Shipping PvtLtd has achieved a new record of loading longest Wind Mill Blades of 67.2 Mtrs in length for the first time ever in the Country at Deendayal Port (Kandla). The vessel mv.DA JI arrived at Deendayal Port at 2155 Hrs on Sept 09 2018 and berthed at Berth No-13 on Sept 12 2018 to load 48 pieces of wind mill blades ODC having a length of 67.2 Mtrs and width of 22.5 Mtrs each under the agency Mystic Shipping Pvt Ltd. In fact until now, different players have loaded wind mill blades but loading of 67.2 Mtrs is in itself a new record first time from India.

The vessel was berthed under 3 days priority on Sept 12 2018 and commenced loading at 2200 Hrs on the same day, and completed loading operations at 1800 Hrs on Sept 14 2018. The overall operation lasted for 44 Hours which lead to seamless performance in loading longest wind mill blades ODC for the first time from India. This significant operation was appreciated by the Chairman and Traffic Manager (In-Charge) of Deendayal Port Trust. The Stevedores Mystic Shipping Pvt Ltd had carried the entire loading operation with utmost care and diligence. The Vessel Agent are Mystic Shipping Pvt. Ltd. The Owner was COSCO SHIPPING Specialized Carriers Co., Ltd while the Charterers was NTC Logistics India (P) Ltd, release said.

Source: www.indiaseatradenews.com, 18 September 2018

India gets nod for using Bangladesh ports in cargo transport

The Bangladesh Cabinet has approved a draft agreement, allowing India to use its Chittagong and Mongla ports to transport cargo to its northeastern states. The decision came during a Cabinet meeting at Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Office on Monday. Briefing reporters after the meeting at the Secretariat, Bangladesh Cabinet Secretary Shafiul Alam said the draft has been prepared for signing the deal with India, but Nepal and Bhutan can be added to it, if they wish to use the two ports.

India would have to follow the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and Bangladeshi regulations, pay the customs duties, and buy tax equivalent bonds to transport freight, he added. The two countries had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the use of the two ports during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka in June, 2015. Under the proposed deal titled Agreement on the Use of Chattogram and Mongla ports for Movement of Goods to and from India, a new modern tracking system would be used to track cargos, Mr Shafiul told journalists. He said India would also have to pay fees for using the infrastructure of Bangladeshi land ports. According to the Cabinet Secretary, goods will be transported as per the capacity of the two sea ports. Only Bangladeshi vehicles will be used for transportation of goods within its territory. The deal will be signed for five years, but it can be extended for another five years automatically.

However, any side can cancel the agreement after giving six month's notice and suspend the deal, if a necessity arises. Should any problem arise in implementing the agreement, several committees of both the countries would resolve it, he CS added. Mr Shafiul said the agreement was aimed at strengthening the relations between Bangladesh and India. As per the deal, Indian goods can be transported through four entry points -- Akhaura in Bangladesh and Agartala in India; Tamabil in Sylhet and Dauki in India's Meghalaya; Sheola in Sylhet and Sutarkandi in Assam; and Bibirbazar in Cumilla and Srimantapur in Tripura. Talking to The Daily Star, a top shipping ministry official said the two countries would fix a date for signing the agreement through talks. He said a Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) would have to be prepared for implementing the deal. The SOP would be prepared after consulting with various stakeholders. Chances were slim that the agreement would be implemented this year, he added.

Source: www.indiaseatradenews.com, 25 September 2018

Northeast India welcomes govt's decision to open Chittagong port

Northeast India has welcomed the Bangladeshi government's decision to enable the neighbouring country to use Chittagong's and Mongla's ports to move goods to and from India. Finance ministers of both Tripura and Assam have said that opening up the ports will strengthen the connectivity of the Northeastern states, as the ports can be used to transport goods to the states in minimal time. Previously, on September 17, the cabinet approved a proposed agreement with New Delhi—allowing India to use the Chittagong and Mongla ports.

The agreement suggested Bangladesh's tax authorities would take the bond equivalent to duties and taxes from Indian companies. Charges, fees and carrying costs will be charged according to the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (Gatt) principle—in addition to regular duty and taxes. The four suggested routes for transporting the goods are: Chittagong Port to Mongla Port-Agartala via Akhaura; Chittagong to Mongla-Daouki via Tamabil; Chittagong to Mongla-Sutarkandi via Sheola; and Chittagong/Mongla to Bibekbazar via Simantapur. Several experts have said the agreement will help reduce overall transportation costs in the region, and will also act to cement the goodwill between the two countries. They emphasized on the benefits Northeast India can reap by using the Chittagong port.

According to Deputy Chief Minister of Tripura Jishnu Debbarman – who is also responsible for the finance portfolio – the usage of Chittagong's port will bolster Tripura's trade prospects, and those of Northeast India overall. "Strong connectivity is mandatory for removing trade barriers and flourishing trade" the chief minister said. "Earlier, the lack of connectivity was extremely disadvantageous, but the Bangladeshi government's decision to open up the Chittagong port has offered us a possibility of prosperity." The Chittagong port, providing the fastest possible access for a port in Northeast India, will help increase connectivity within that region, said Assam's Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Small and micro-medium industries will now register growth due to the increase in connectivity via the Chittagong port, Indraneel Bhowmik, associate professor of Economics at Tripura Central University opined. "There has not been a huge amount of productivity in Northeast India until now," Indraneel said. "However, small and micro industries will flourish, as strong connectivity is intrinsically required for industry growth." The associate professor said the cost of living for the citizens in Northeast India will also decrease concurrently with transportation costs. "If finished products from this region reach the open market via the Chittagong port, they will sell more due to low costs," he said. " If raw materials,

as well as finished products, reach us via port, the costs of goods will fall—allowing commoners to reap the dividends. “The Chittagong port will not only be beneficial for India, but for Bangladesh as well, Special Correspondent for the Telegraph Sekhar Datta said. “Bangladesh will earn a lot of revenue through the shipments passing to the Northeast through the Chittagong port,” he said. “This will strengthen the goodwill between Bangladesh and India.” At the same time, Datta also expressed his opinion that the issues of National Register of Citizens (NRC) and opening up the ports should not be interlinked. “Publishing the NRC is the fundamental right of a country,” Datta said. “A country has the right to identify its citizens and non-citizens. The relationship between India and Bangladesh should have no link to the issue of NRC.” With the usage of the Chittagong port, goods will be able to reach Tripura expeditiously, reducing transportation costs, opined Moti Lal Debnath, president of Tripura Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

“Previously it took 15-20 days for goods to reach Tripura from Mumbai,” said Debnath. “Now, it will only take 3-4 days for those goods to reach us via the Chittagong port. This will reduce transportation costs immensely.” The agreement will also be advantageous for Bangladesh, as the country will be able to earn revenue from shipments going through Chittagong’s port. However, Debnath dismissed the notion of opening up the Mongla part, as it has no direct connectivity to the Northeastern states. “The Mongla part is hardly of any avail to us,” he said.

Source: www.indiaseatradenews.com, 24 September 2018

Gadkari moots Vodarevu for locating port in Prakasam

Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and Shipping Nitin Gadkari has written a letter to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, suggesting him that Vodarevu in Prakasam district be developed into a world-class port.

“The Central government has been laying thrust on development of world- class port infrastructure in the country with the support of the State governments,” he said. Mr. Gadkari requested the State government to consider the proposal for joint development of the major port in the State by creating a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). “In view of locational advantage at Vodarevu, the State government can consider the proposal,” he said, adding, “I am sure that with your support all clearances would be

expedited for the proposed location.” The State government has been contemplating developing Ramayapatnam port in Prakasam district. A proposal to this effect is also being prepared.

Source: www.indiaseatradenews.com, 28 September 2018



MARINE ENVIRONMENT



Beyond Plastic Straws: Any Piece Of Plastic Can Kill A Sea Turtle

- Sam Benezra

Plastic pollution in the world's oceans poses considerable dangers for the marine life that inhabits those waters. Two recent studies suggest that ocean plastic pollution could threaten the survival of entire populations of sea turtles. The findings come in a year that saw a campaign to ban single-use plastic straws blossom into a global movement, raising widespread awareness of the threats that plastic pollution poses to marine life across the world. Connecting turtle mortality to plastic ingestion One study found that ingesting a single piece of plastic can lead to a turtle's death.

In the study, researchers from Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), tested the relationship between the amount of plastic ingested by a turtle and the likelihood of death. They looked at postmortem reports and animal stranding records relating to sea turtles in Queensland, Australia. Using turtles that died of causes unrelated to plastic ingestion as a control group, they were able to statistically illustrate how plastic ingestion threatens sea turtle survival. Turtles that consumed just one piece of plastic had a 22 percent mortality rate. The risk of death increases with every piece of plastic consumed. Sea turtles that had ingested 14 pieces of plastic died at a 50 percent rate; those that ingested more than 200 pieces of plastic died 100 percent of the time. Tiny bits of plastic can be deadly. When ingested, pieces of plastic can get caught in the digestive tract and cause lethal blockage. Harder plastics can also cause serious internal injuries, which may lead to death. "Even a single piece of plastic can kill a turtle," Kathy Townsend, a lecturer in animal ecology at the University of the Sunshine Coast, said in a statement.

"Some of the turtles we studied had eaten only one piece of plastic, which was enough to kill it. In one case, the gut was punctured, and in the other, the soft plastic clogged the gut." The research also showed that younger turtles were at a significantly higher risk than adults. This could be due both to younger turtles feeding in the water column closer to the surface as well as their physical locations, which, in some cases, could have more plastic debris than others. Of the population investigated in this study, the researchers found that 23 percent of younger turtles and 53 percent of post-hatchling turtles had ingested plastic, compared to only 15 percent of sub-adult and 16 percent

of adult turtles. Some populations also are at a much greater risk than others. Off the coast of Brazil, for example, 90 percent of juvenile sea turtles have ingested plastic; worldwide, around half of all sea turtles have ingested plastic.

As a result, plastic ingestion could seriously threaten entire sea turtle populations. While sea turtles that have consumed plastic may still live and reproduce for years, the higher rates of ingestion among juvenile turtles is concerning for future populations, as increasingly fewer will survive to the reproductive stage. The study is published in the journal *Scientific Reports*. Microscopic plastic particles found in Florida turtles

A second study from researchers at the Loggerhead Marinelife Center and the University of Georgia (UGA) highlights how plastic ingestion has affected populations of sea turtles off the coast of Florida. The study is published in *Environmental Science & Technology*. The researchers collected 96 post-hatchling sea turtles that had washed back to shore along a 118-kilometer stretch of the coastline of Florida. Of these, nearly half were recovered and released back into the oceans. All of the surviving turtles passed some amount of plastic while in rehabilitation. The remaining turtles died during their time in rehabilitation. Twenty-seven of these turtles were examined for the study, 93 percent of which had ingested some amount of plastic. The gastrointestinal tracts of most of the turtles contained plastic pieces large enough to be visible, but many also contained miniscule microparticles and nanoparticles. The most common ingested plastics were polyethylene and polypropylene, both of which are often used for food packaging. The ingested particles ranged from millimeter-sized fragments to particles as small as 5 nanometers. The researchers said that these tiny particles, which become increasingly unstable as they get smaller, likely cause nutritional deficiencies among turtles that had ingested them “We may be in the early phases of the first micronized plastic waste-associated species population decline or extinction event,” co-author Branson W. Ritchie, a veterinarian and director of technology development and implementation for the UGA New Materials Institute, said in a statement. “But, an even bigger issue is what micronizing plastic are doing to the ocean’s ecosystem.”

Plastic, now, the most common form of marine debris, is ingested not only by sea turtles, but by a wide variety of marine species, including seabirds, sea lions, whales, fish and invertebrates. Globally, members of over 690 marine species have become ill, or died, following either entanglement in or ingestion of marine plastics. “As ocean plastics continue to micronize, smaller and smaller particles are being consumed by the smallest creatures in our oceans, which compromises the entire food chain,

because the plastic in these animals inhibits their ability to uptake the nutrients they need to survive,” Ritchie continued. “If the level of mortality we have observed in post-hatchling sea turtles also occurs for zoo plankton, baby fish and crustaceans, then we will witness a complete disruption in our ocean life cycle.” The researchers expressed concern that the amount of young sea turtles dying from plastic ingestion could threaten the survival of entire species. Sea turtles, which take decades to reach maturity, are living to the reproductive state at increasingly lower rates. “Our findings suggest that far fewer post-hatchlings may be surviving long enough to reproduce. This has devastating implications for the seven species of sea turtles struggling to survive,” co-author Charles Manire, a veterinarian and the director of research and rehabilitation at Loggerhead Marinelife Center, said in a statement. “If other sea turtle populations are experiencing similar mortality rates, we predict that there will be insufficient numbers of sea turtle hatchlings reaching sexual maturity to offset natural and other human-associated losses.”

Source: www.tun.com, 26 September 2018

Distressing photographs show manta rays struggling to swim in a cloud of plastic waste dumped into the sea in Bali

Upsetting photographs show manta rays struggling to swim through a cloud of plastic waste dumped into the ocean at Manta Bay in Bali. An environmentalist has said the sea creatures have difficulty telling the difference between their food and plastic waste dumped into the ocean. The underwater footage showcases the problem of plastic pollution, the weight of which is set to exceed the total weight of fish in our oceans by 2050. 'Everything from takeaway cutlery, to tampons, nappies, laundry liquid packaging... you name it, I saw it,' environmentalist Brooke Pyke who is a research assistant intern with the Marine Megafauna Foundation told the Mirror. 'The currents gather all the ocean trash together after they flush out from the rivers,' said Ms Pyke, who is originally from Melbourne. [More](#)

Plastic Pollution Affects Sea Life Throughout the Ocean

Our ocean and the array of species that call it home are succumbing to the poison of plastic. Examples abound, from the gray whale that died after stranding near Seattle in 2010 with more than 20 plastic bags, a golf ball, and other rubbish in its stomach to

the harbor seal pup found dead on the Scottish island of Skye, its intestines fouled by a small piece of plastic wrapper.

According to the United Nations, at least 800 species worldwide are affected by marine debris, and as much as 80 percent of that litter is plastic. It is estimated that up to 13 million metric tons of plastic ends up in the ocean each year—the equivalent of a rubbish or garbage truck load’s worth every minute. Fish, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals can become entangled in or ingest plastic debris, causing suffocation, starvation, and drowning. Humans are not immune to this threat: While plastics are estimated to take up to hundreds of years to fully decompose, some of them break down much quicker into tiny particles, which in turn end up in the seafood we eat. [More](#)

Why climate change is making it harder to monitor marine pollution

Despite the dramatic news coverage of oil spills and other big pollution disasters in our seas and oceans, most environmental pollution is caused by much smaller incidents that are often invisible, persistent, and far more difficult to track. While animals and plants caught up in these disasters are easily identified as stressed or physically affected by the pollution, with smaller incidents, organisms might look and behave perfectly normal. Only over time does the chronic exposure to low-level pollution take its toll.

By the time this becomes obvious, often it is too late to do anything to save a particular population, whose decline might have knock-on effects on the surrounding environment, often with socio-economic consequences. So there is not only a moral responsibility to look after the environment, but also a strong financial incentive, because many jobs and livelihoods depend on a healthy environment and its ecosystems. [More](#)

'We are taking our oceans for granted,' says Europe's environment commissioner

-Carl Meyer

If you follow environmental issues, you might think that the Earth's great forests are the main climate regulators on our planet, but you'd be wrong. The oceans, which cover three-quarters of the Earth's surface, have absorbed almost all of the excess heat generated from carbon pollution over the last half-century. They also suck up close to a third of the planet's excess carbon, and they provide over half of Earth's oxygen.

Not only do oceans stabilize the climate, they also provide food security for about a billion of us, support biodiversity, enable trade, tourism and transport and hold great potential for clean energy from waves, tides and currents. [More](#)

Dan Haifley, Our Ocean Backyard: Marine life and pollution above an ocean mountain

About 80 miles southwest of Monterey sits a nearly 7,500 foot high mountain under the sea but whose summit is still 4,100 feet below the surface. Ocean currents turn upward as they confront its mass during their lateral movement, sending nutrients from colder waters below up toward the surface, where sunlight illuminates a world with marine mammals, fish and seabirds. This supports an abundance of life above the mountain, whose surface hosts a coral garden that supports its own matrix of life.

That mountain is Davidson Seamount, which at 26 miles long and 8 miles wide, is one of the largest known subsea formations in the world. In 2009, it was made part of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary by executive action after work by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and participants in a public process that built a case for its inclusion.

In 2017, President Donald Trump ordered a critical review of new marine sanctuaries and new areas added to existing sanctuaries since 2007, including Davidson Seamount. The results of that review are not public, but could include a recommendation to remove protections for the mountain. Nonetheless, staff from Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and partners continue to fulfill the research mission of the national marine sanctuary program by conducting investigative expeditions to the site. Expeditions have

focused on the mountain's surface and other phenomena, such as environmental DNA that consists of particles of biological matter left behind by marine life. A research cruise on the NOAA ship Fisheries Survey Vessel Bell M Shimada in July focused on tracking mammals and birds above it, as well as on threats to those waters including pollutants that come from land. According to a description posted Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's website, "Data will be used to relate the spatial patterns of bird and mammal distribution with prey and oceanographic patterns, and identify resources at risk from human threats. Projects include marine mammal and seabird observations, plankton tows, midwater (middle range of the water column) fish trawls, CTD, echo-sounder data collection, sea surface collection of microplastics, (and) water sampling for persistent organic pollutants and harmful algal blooms."

A CTD consists of a frame that holds water sampling bottles and data-collecting sensors to measure the conductivity, temperature, and depth of ocean water. Echo-sounding uses acoustic pulses to measure water depth. Sampling plankton was done with a hoop net, and gathering microplastics was done with a manta trawl — which is pictured — along the surface. Testing for pollutants, including PCBs, was done with water samples gathered with a CTD. One day the crew attached two Styrofoam balls, emblazoned with the NOAA and national marine sanctuaries logos, to their CTD in mesh bags as it was plunged to a depth of 3,300 feet where it shriveled, due to compression.

Expedition partners included NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Point Blue Conservation Science, Applied Marine Sciences, and UC Santa Cruz. Their work, described in the cruise log at sanctuarysimon.org, will inform management decisions and reveal the impact that land-based pollution has had on waters around Davidson Seamount, miles out to sea.

Source: www.santacruzsentinel.com, 22 September 2018



Asian Basing in Africa: India's Setback in Seychelles Could Be Worse

-Nilanthi Samaranayake

During his June 2018 state visit to India, President Danny Faure of Seychelles was given the red-carpet treatment. He took home major gains in defense for the tiny Indian Ocean nation: a second Dornier aircraft, a \$100 million line of credit for maritime security cooperation, and a white shipping information-sharing agreement. However, Seychelles did not reverse its rejection of a military base sought by India despite some careful diplomatic couching about the two countries' shared interests. President Faure had announced earlier in the month that the revised deal signed in January for India to finance and build air, maritime, and communications facilities for the Seychelles People's Defence Forces in Assumption Island would not go forward due to legislative opposition.

What does this episode reveal about the latest in the fast-moving arena of Indian Ocean security? First, taking a step back, a striking development in regional military affairs has been the rising importance of Africa for first-time overseas basing by Asian powers. Japan and China have both established bases in Djibouti, along the Bab el Mandeb Strait chokepoint. India has also gotten into the game of seeking overseas basing in Seychelles' Assumption Island at the approaches of the Mozambique Channel chokepoint and to the east in the Agaléga Islands in Mauritius.

Second, the episode illustrates the discomfort by smaller Indian Ocean countries with the militarization of the Indian Ocean. As a rising major power, India and its naval planners are certainly concerned with increased People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy deployments in the Indian Ocean. But some smaller countries, which seek to remain neutral in their foreign policies due to their low capabilities, fear getting caught in the middle of an India-China rivalry in the region. Whereas Djibouti is a small-state autocracy that exercises its sovereignty through the lease of territory for basing, in Seychelles, democratic protests in the capital and the majority opposition in the National Assembly dissuaded President Faure from tabling the agreement for ratification. Lawmakers and the public steadily grew concerned about the idea of Seychelles, a historically non-aligned, small-island developing state, establishing a

military facility that would be fully funded by and jointly managed with the Indian military. Assumption Island's proximity to the Aldabra atoll, a UNESCO World Heritage site, also raised environmental concerns. Seychelles prides itself on being a pioneer of the Blue Economy concept of sustainable development of the ocean economy.

A related, but lower-profile, example of discomfort with the militarization of the region is a protest campaign in the sparsely populated Agaléga Islands in Mauritius. The Koalision Zilwa Pou Lape (Islanders Coalition for Peace) is trying to organize against the Indian proposal for constructing a military facility in these islands and has expressed solidarity with the protests in Seychelles over Assumption Island. Moreover, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has spoken about the need for a code of conduct for military ships operating in the Indian Ocean. President Maithripala Sirisena likewise called on the Indian Ocean Rim Association to develop "a stable legal order" in the region that counters transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, but also maintains freedom of navigation. Building on these concepts, the Pathfinder Foundation in Sri Lanka put forth a draft "Code of Conduct for the Indian Ocean" for discussion.

Such anxiety about major-power rivalries in the Indian Ocean has historical precedent. The concept of an Indian Ocean Zone of Peace was discussed by Asian and African stakeholders in the 1960s and 70s, culminating in a 1971 resolution by the UN General Assembly. The great-power rivalry feared then was between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the current period, resident smaller countries wish to prevent the Indian Ocean from going the way of the escalating major-power competition seen in the Pacific.

Third, India's recent setback in Seychelles may end up being strategically advantageous over the long run. Like many small states, Seychelles describes its approach to foreign policy as "friend of all and enemy of none." If India were to construct a base in Assumption Island, Seychellois leaders may feel compelled to offer such access to other countries, including China, to avoid the appearance of being engaged in an exclusive security relationship with India. Ways to demonstrate neutrality could have included sharing the Indian-built facility with visiting maritime forces (e.g., PLA Navy) or permitting a Chinese-built base in another island. Observers of Seychelles will recall its invitation in 2011 for China to build a base for counterpiracy, as well as its granting permission during the Cold War for Soviet ships

to access the port of Victoria while the United States operated a satellite tracking station.

That the construction of a base in Seychelles could have a ripple effect in the Indian Ocean order is not unimaginable. When Japan inaugurated its own military base in Djibouti in 2011, only France and the United States had existing bases there. While this initiative was part of Tokyo's broader effort to amend the country's peace constitution, Japan may have inadvertently set a precedent for another northeast Asian power to establish an overseas military base in Africa. As with the Djibouti case, whether India's effort in Assumption Island could set a precedent for China to follow with its own basing in Seychelles remains an open question.

Even without overseas bases, the Indian Navy retains extensive access arrangements in ports throughout the Indian Ocean. In the end, India may still get the access sought at Assumption Island, as Seychelles at present plans to build the base on its own. What is more important, however, is for India to develop the economic dimension of its maritime power. Observers are still waiting to see how the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor emerges under Indian-Japanese cooperation as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative. Such investment is welcomed by smaller Indian Ocean states, which seek alternatives to Chinese infrastructure projects and business practices that are seen as having clear drawbacks. Smaller states will continue to seek infrastructure options beyond China because they desire greater internal connectivity and external connectivity to regional and global trading networks. Emphasizing their comparative strengths is precisely how major powers concerned about China's expansion—United States, Japan, France, as well as India—can deepen strategic relationships with eager smaller partners in the Indian Ocean region.

Source: casi.sas.upenn.edu, 24 September 2018

China reportedly says it won't just play defense in a trade war with the US

China will not be content to only play defense in an escalating trade war with the United States, a widely read Chinese tabloid warned, as U.S. President Donald Trump was expected to announce new tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods as early as Monday. The United States and China have already levied duties on \$50 billion worth of each other's goods in an intensifying row that has jolted global financial

markets in the past few months. Last week, the U.S. Treasury Department invited senior Chinese officials, including Vice Premier Liu He, to more talks on the tariff dispute, though skepticism remained high among trade observers on both sides over the prospects of a breakthrough. China's Foreign Ministry reiterated that the escalation of the trade conflict was not in anyone's interest. "We have always maintained that the only correct means to resolve the trade dispute is through dialogue and consultation on an equal basis with mutual trust and respect," ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a regular news briefing... [More](#)

Engagement in Indo-Pacific not directed at any country: India to Russia

Ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to the city next month, India has conveyed to Russia that its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region is not directed against any country and it was keen on having a broad framework to ensure peace and stability in the strategically key area, government sources said. The US has been pushing for a greater role for India in the Indo-Pacific which is seen by many countries as an effort to contain China's growing clout in the region.

The issue of India's involvement in the Indo-Pacific figured prominently during talks between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. The sources said while acknowledging Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "inclusive vision" for the Indo-Pacific as outlined during the Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore in June, the Russian side felt that there may be countries which could be trying to "manipulate" the Indo-Pacific concept to serve their own interests.

However, Ms Swaraj categorically conveyed to Mr Lavrov that India has always acted responsibly and that it was trying to carry everybody along for ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. "The external affairs minister made it very clear that India's engagement is not directed at any one country," a source said. Mr Putin is scheduled to visit India early next month for the annual India-Russia summit during which both sides are likely to deliberate on security situation in the Indo-Pacific region. In November last year, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence. The four countries held a crucial meeting under the new framework in Singapore in June during which they deliberated on common concerns in the region and the way forward.

India, US and several other nations have been pressing for freedom of navigation in the disputed South China Sea. The US has been periodically sending naval ships and planes to assert freedom of navigation, much to the chagrin of China. In a symbolic move to reflect the importance it attaches to India in the region, the US renamed its Pacific Command as the Indo-Pacific Command four months back. In his address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in June, PM Modi had outlined his vision for a prosperous Indo-Pacific Asia and said the world will have a better future when India and China work together with trust and confidence while being sensitive to each other's interests.

Source: www.ndtv.com, 23 September 2018

Trade war: US is putting a knife to China's neck, says top official

The United States is putting “a knife to China’s neck” on trade issues, a senior Chinese official has said, as the two sides struggle to find a way to end a months-long standoff over trade. A day after both sides heaped fresh tariffs on each other’s goods, vice-commerce minister Wang Shouwen said the resumption of talks on the matter depended on the “will” of the US. US tariffs on \$200bn worth of Chinese goods and retaliatory taxes by Beijing on \$60bn worth of US products kicked in on Monday as the trade dispute between the world’s two biggest economies escalated, unnerving global financial markets. China also accused the United States of engaging in “trade bullying”, and said Washington was intimidating other countries to submit to its will, according to a white paper on the dispute published by China’s state council, or cabinet, on Monday.

Asian shares were broadly down on Tuesday amid nervousness on markets about the ongoing dispute. Although the Nikkei in Tokyo was up slightly, the Shanghai Composite index dropped 0.5% and shares in Sydney were down 0.3%. Analysts at Mizuho Bank in Tokyo said the criticism from Beijing suggested that China might wait until Donald Trump leaves the White House rather than embarking on negotiations. “Given these developments, it is increasingly likely that both sides will not resume negotiations for some time, at least until there is a noticeable shift in the political mood on either side,” the analysts said. Several rounds of talks in recent months have failed to produce a significant breakthrough and fresh negotiations which had been expected

in coming weeks have been cancelled after Beijing reportedly decided late last week not to send a delegation to Washington...[More](#)

India in QUAD is to position better in alternative discourse led by China in Indo-Pacific

New Delhi's alignment to the Quadrilateral consultative forum, comprising Australia, India, Japan and the US, was a measured strategic choice to position itself better in an alternative discourse led by China in the Indo-Pacific region, a visiting Indian expert told a Washington audience on Tuesday. "Alignment to the Quad proposition does not necessarily suggest that India essentially wants to engage in a China-containment strategy in the Indo-Pacific construct," Jagannath Panda of the New Delhi-based Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA) said in a presentation before the Hudson Institute, a top American think tank.

"Rather, India's alignment is a strategic arch and the act of firming New Delhi's outreach in a liberal-order framework with the Quad countries. It is a measured strategic choice to position better in an alternative discourse led by China in the Indo-Pacific region," he added. The principal intent here explained India's desire to protect its maritime interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Panda explained.

India's approach to the Quadrilateral consultative forum was a statement of New Delhi's plural foreign policy arch in an evolving Indo-Pacific construct, he said.

Balancing China's growing outreach with consultation of the Quad countries while concurrently firming bilateralism with Beijing explained India's strategic autonomy and pluralism in its foreign policy, Panda said. At the same time, he noted that for India, the relationship with China was the most imperative component of its plural and non-aligned foreign policy that promoted strategic autonomy.

"The India-China relationship is currently taking on a defining structure in the Indo-Pacific construct and New Delhi is more inclined to nurture it than repudiate it. Therefore, India's approach to the Quad would not be based on an anti-China proposition," Panda said.

Source: www.financialexpress.com, 26 September 2018

An opening for India in the Maldives

The results of the Maldivian elections, held on 23rd September, have surprised many, particularly in India. The authoritarian tendencies of President Yameen and news emanating from Male thus far had suggested that the Maldivian strongman may not be willing to step down, the results of the elections notwithstanding. It was the general perception that Yameen would attempt to manipulate the elections to ensure his victory. The manner in which he has since conceded defeat to the joint opposition candidate, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, has, of course, come as a big relief to New Delhi. Nevertheless, it is important for India to ensure that its palpable feeling of satisfaction at the results of these elections do not lead to complacency.

For the larger part of President Abdulla Yameen's rule, Maldives maintained an uneasy relationship with India. Yameen's actions in courting China did not go down well with New Delhi. Somewhat to India's bewilderment, Yameen went a step further and even invited senior Pakistani military officials to Male. India barely tolerated his regime when he jailed members of the parliament and judges of the Supreme Court, last year. In fact, hawks in the Indian security establishment demanded that the Indian government militarily intervene in the country to effect a regime-change. Former Prime Minister Mohamed Nasheed, too, had requested India to intervene.

Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed in New Delhi and India successfully waited out the Yameen regime rather than going in for a unilateral intervention, which would certainly have attracted internationally controversy. All this notwithstanding, work for the Indian foreign office has just begun. The new government in Malé does not owe anything to India and would probably gravitate toward whichever power gives it the 'best bang for its buck'. In fact, it is fair to state that it was not Yameen who initiated his country's cosyng up to China, but erstwhile President Mohamed Nasheed. Nasheed, who was the first democratically elected president of the country, actively encouraged the opening of the Chinese embassy in Malé in 2011 itself.

One could reasonably conclude that Maldives, as a nation, will now commence afresh, the process of choosing a partner. Although, Yameen may well have made it far too obvious that he preferred China to India, the game is once again on, now that there is a new dispensation in power. China may hold an economic advantage, but India is geographically closer to this Indian Ocean archipelagic State. New Delhi will need to play its cards dexterously, if it is to recover the influence it enjoyed for many decades

in Malé, but which it lost during the years of the Yameen incumbency. This is easier said than done.

The Chinese have invested heavily in large projects in Maldives. They are currently expanding the Velana International Airport on the island of Hulhulé, and building a 25-story apartment complex and a hospital. Earlier this year, the government inaugurated the \$300 million Sinamalé Bridge (popularly known as the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge) that links the islands of Malé and Hulhulé. Chinese tourists constitute the single largest number of foreign visitors to the country. Tourism is the largest industry in Maldives and provides the country with 60% of its foreign exchange earnings. With such heavy investment and close economic linkages, it is difficult to see any easy options for Malé should it seek to extricate itself from China's grasp.

Yameen's opponents have accused him of selling out the country to Beijing. This may not be entirely incorrect. The Chinese have loaned heavy sums to many countries with no or little clarity on how the money is to be returned. This has frequently been done under the ambit of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was unveiled in 2013. Often, the recipient States have been those ruled by authoritarian strongmen in desperate need of easy funds to showcase their development credentials.

In many respects, Maldives offers an example that is eerily similar to that of another neighbour of India in the Indian Ocean, which, too, had invited Chinese investment and sought to build closer ties with Beijing. In Colombo, President Mahinda Rajapaksa had turned Sri Lankan government's policies towards China. He gave large projects to Chinese companies, only to saddle his country with a debt burden that it could not bear. The present Sirisena government, although considered close to India, has found it increasingly difficult to extricate itself from the policies of the previous government. Consequentially, it has been forced to cede control over a portion of its territory (Hambantota port) to the Chinese.

The insidious encroachment of China into what New Delhi considers to be its backyard has been worrying India for quite some time now. Chinese influence has been visibly increasing in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Pakistan. More importantly, the acquisition of strategic ports, roads and territory around India has caused some degree of alarm in South Block. At the macro level, Indian Prime Minister Modi has engaged with President Xi Jinping to ensure that the two Asian giants do not compete to each other's detriment. The Wuhan summit has enabled India and China to come to what

the MEA has termed a '*long-term and strategic understanding*'. This is also borne out by Chinese foreign policy statements whereby Beijing has advised smaller countries of South Asia to work together with India. However, India cannot count merely on the goodwill of the Chinese establishment. It also needs to work on its neighbourhood at the bilateral level to ensure it is not left out in the cold at a later date.

The transition of power in Malé has presented India with an opportunity to re-energise ties with Maldives. Many analysts contend that the election itself was fought on pro-India and pro-China planks, with Solih representing the pro-India faction. That may not be entirely accurate and Indian delight may yet be premature. Solih has stated in the past that Maldives, under his rule, will continue to maintain friendly ties with China. More importantly, the tiny nation is in debt to Beijing to the tune of \$1.3 billion, which the new government will have to pay. In all probability, therefore, China will continue to maintain a strong influence over Malé. However, that should not dissuade India from proactively, meaningfully and substantively engaging the new government.

Source: www.maritimeindia.org, 27 September 2018

India in talks to join US global development partnership countering China's Belt and Road Plan

The US government's international finance development agency is in talks with India to include the South Asian country in a partnership that Washington has formed with its allies in the region to counter China's "Belt and Road Initiative". After signing agreements with the overseas finance development arms of Japan and Australia, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) is "in discussions with India right now" to reach a memorandum of understanding with India, OPIC President and CEO Ray Washburne told the South China Morning Post on Monday.

If concluded, the agreement "will reflect very much like the ones we have with Japan and Australia", Washburne said. Those partnerships allow the three countries to streamline the process of joint investments in energy, transport, tourism and technology infrastructure. The investments are also meant to attract private capital to the projects – investments that are, in some cases, many times larger than those of the three governments. OPIC's influence in the Indo-Pacific region is set to grow after the passage of a bill that would give the agency authority to invest equity in development

projects instead of just providing loans. The “Better Utilisation of Investments Leading to Development Act of 2018” (Build Act), which was passed by the US House of Representatives in July, has been included in “must-pass” Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) legislation expected to be voted on by the Senate this week. If the bill is passed and signed into law by US President Donald Trump, OPIC would be renamed the US International Development Finance Corporation (USIDFC) and amount of money the agency could put toward infrastructure projects would more than double, with a cap of US\$60 billion.

The trilateral partnership OPIC has with Japan and Australia is part of what US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently called an “Indo-Pacific Economic Vision”, an open challenge to China’s growing influence in Asia. The Build Act’s sponsor in the House of Representatives, Florida’s Ted Yoho, said legislation was needed to counter a “predatory” China. The FAA legislation must be passed by Sunday to ensure the continued operation of the US air travel system, making it unlikely that lawmakers will vote it down. “We’re making sure shipping lanes stay open and making sure economies keep growing, and that there’s no hegemony by any certain country, ie. China, that ends up taking over and coordinating all of that,” said Yoho, a Republican who is chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. Bringing India into the partnership is “a way to work together with like-minded people versus being offered what Xi Jinping wants to offer”, Yoho said, referring to the Chinese president. China has “the predatory lending practices of the robber barons of the 1800s”, he added. “If you go back to Xi Jinping and [the Chinese government’s 19th Party Congress in October 2017], when he said it was time for China to take the centre stage – they were very provocative and threatening remarks,” Yoho said. “He doesn’t want to share the stage; he wants to take it over.”

Five years ago, Xi unveiled the Belt and Road Initiative to build economic, political and cultural ties around Asia, and connect the region to Europe and Africa with infrastructure projects that include ports, roads, railways and pipelines. The initiative began with the Chinese central government’s US\$40 billion Silk Road Fund.

Myanmar is one of the countries targeted by the competing economic development interests of the US and China. China’s state-run Citic Group is spending about US\$1.3 billion on the first phase of the Kyauk Pyu deep water port on the western tip of Myanmar’s Rakhine state, to accommodate bigger oil tankers.

Meanwhile, OPIC plans to provide US\$250 million in financing to Apollo Towers Myanmar Limited for the development of telecommunications towers throughout the country, according to the agency's website. Apollo has built 1,800 towers since the start of its operations in 2014 and plans to construct more than 2,000 others in the next phase of development.

Source: www.indiaseatradenews.com, 26 September 2018