



# MAKING WAVES

*A maritime news brief covering:*

- **MARITIME SECURITY**
- **MARITIME FORCES**
- **SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY**
- **MARINE ENVIRONMENT**
- **GEOPOLITICS**

**EDITED BY:**

**Capt Sarabjeet S Parmar**

***execdir.nmf@gmail.com***

**Dr Oliver N Gonsalves**

***associatefellow1.nmf@gmail.com***

# CONTENTS

---

<b>MARITIME SECURITY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RUSSIA SET TO ESTABLISH NAVAL LOGISTICS BASE IN SUDAN .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHINESE RESEARCH VESSELS IN SRI LANKAN WATERS COME UNDER INDIAN NAVY LENS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHINESE, US MILITARIES DISCUSS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, DISASTER RELIEF .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WW3 FEARS AS CHINA COAST GUARD TO BE ALLOWED TO USE GUNS IN CLASHES WITH US AND JAPAN .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>‘NO ATTACKS ON FLAGGED VESSELS’ IN FIRST YEAR OF ROYAL NAVY-LED GULF SECURITY MISSION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>MARITIME FORCES.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>UNIFIED MARITIME COMMAND WILL HAVE IAF’S STRIKE ELEMENTS, ARMY’S AMPHIBIOUS UNITS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>US GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO HELPING AFRICA ENHANCE MARITIME SECURITY – COMMANDING OFFICER OF NAVY SHIP .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>JAPAN IS CONSIDERING TO EXPORT WARSHIPS TO INDONESIA .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>NAVY CHIEF REVIEWS PREPAREDNESS OF NAVAL AIR STATION IN NICOBAR .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>PN SHIP TABUK COMMISSIONING CEREMONY HELD AT ROMANIAN SEAPORT .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CHINA TO DEPLOY SUPERTANKERS TO DRAIN CRUDE PRODUCT GLUT.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>AND YET ANOTHER CASUALTY OF THE UNDERSEA CABLE FAULT DEBACLE..</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>REPORT SOUNDS AN ALARM ON ONGOING DECLINE OF US CORAL REEFS ...</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>MARINE ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>THE WORLD’S LARGEST WETLANDS ARE ON FIRE. THAT’S A DISASTER FOR ALL OF US.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>EXPLAINED: WHAT IS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN’S LARGEST PROTECTED MARINE RESERVE?.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>CHINA BREAKS NATIONAL RECORD FOR MARIANA TRENCH MANNED-DIVE AMID RACE FOR DEEP SEA RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>GEOPOLITICS .....</b>	<b>23</b>

<b>VIEW: 17TH ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT, A TURNING POINT OF ASEAN-INDIA RELATIONS IN POST-COVID WORLD.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>INDIA, PHILIPPINES TO SIGN DEAL ON BRAHMOS MISSILE DURING SUMMIT NEXT YEAR.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ASEAN SUMMIT: ASIA-PACIFIC CLOSES IN ON WORLD'S BIGGEST TRADE DEAL .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>TECHNOLOGY, TACTICS, AND TURKISH ADVICE LEAD AZERBAIJAN TO VICTORY IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>DELHI PROTESTS AS BEIJING TRIES TO TURN SOUTH CHINA SEA CODE OF CONDUCT INTO A BARRIER TO KEEP US, INDIA, OTHERS AWAY FROM DISPUTE .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>34</b>



# MARITIME SECURITY

---

## RUSSIA SET TO ESTABLISH NAVAL LOGISTICS BASE IN SUDAN

MOSCOW: Russia's Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin approved a draft agreement on establishing a naval logistics base in Sudan and gave instructions to submit a proposal to the president on signing the document, according to the information posted on the government's legal information web portal on Wednesday. The draft agreement between Russia and Sudan on the naval logistics facility was submitted by Russia's Defense Ministry, approved by the Foreign Ministry, the Supreme Court, the Prosecutor General's Office and the Investigative Committee of Russia and preliminary agreed with the Sudanese side.

As the draft agreement says, the Russian Navy's logistics facility in Sudan "meets the goals of maintaining peace and stability in the region, is defensive and is not aimed against other countries." The naval logistics base can be used for carrying out repairs and replenishing supplies and for the crewmembers of Russian naval ships to have a rest. The Russian Navy's logistics base in Sudan is expected to embrace the coastal, water and mooring areas. "The Sudanese side has the right to use the mooring area upon agreement with the authorized body of the Russian side," the document reads. The draft agreement stipulates that a maximum of four warships may stay at the naval logistics base, including "naval ships with the nuclear propulsion system on condition of observing nuclear and environmental safety norms."

During a visit by then-President of Sudan Omar al-Bashir to Moscow in November 2017, agreements were reached on Russia's assistance in modernizing the Sudanese armed forces. Khartoum also said at the time it was interested in discussing the issue of using Red Sea bases with Moscow. In May 2019, a bilateral agreement on military cooperation for a term of seven years came into force. It stipulates, in particular, "an exchange of opinions and information on military and political issues and the issues of strengthening mutual trust and international security, an exchange of the experience of peacekeeping operations under the UN aegis, interaction in the search for and rescue at sea and the development of relations in the troops' joint training."

**Source:** [tass.com](https://tass.com); 11 November 2020

## CHINESE RESEARCH VESSELS IN SRI LANKAN WATERS COME UNDER INDIAN NAVY LENS

- S A Philip

New Delhi: Two Chinese research and survey vessels in Sri Lankan waters have caught the eye of the Indian Navy, which sees them as possibly being part of a larger ploy to gather data vital for conduct of naval operations, especially that of submarines, ThePrint has learnt. The two vessels have reached the Sri Lankan waters over the last one month, sources in the defence and security establishment said. Incidentally, Chinese survey and research vessels have been regular visitors to Sri Lanka and the waters around the Island nation over the last decade.

Chinese survey and research activity picked up in 2012 and there has been continuous presence of Chinese survey and research vessels in Sri Lankan waters ever since. “These vessels are ostensibly being deployed for locating wrecks of Chinese Admiral Zheng He’s treasure fleet, which reportedly sank off Sri Lanka in early the 15th century,” a source explained. “An agreement to undertake marine surveys, including search for wreckages, was signed between the two countries during the visit of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Head Xi Jinping to Sri Lanka in September 2014.”

A note prepared by the security and defence establishment said sustained presence of Chinese survey and research vessels also begs the question whether this presence is related only to search for wrecks as claimed. 12 declared visits. There have been 12 declared visits since February 2014 and many more, which have not come to the attention of Sri Lankan authorities. “Why do these vessels not conduct their activities closer to the shore, where the likelihood of finding wrecks and artefacts will be higher, as would be the ability of Sri Lankan authorities to monitor their activities,” the source said. The note indicates that despite repeated requests from Sri Lankan authorities, these vessels do not disclose their activities or details of their movements within Sri Lanka’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). “No details of equipment being carried are provided, nor the type of data being collected during deployment of these vessels,” the note said. “Research data is also not shared with Sri Lankan authorities despite being mandatory as per the agreement. To buttress their claims of being engaged in purely historical and scientific missions, Universities at Kelaniya and Ruhunu are being engaged, albeit at a superficial level.” Sources in the know said the CCP appears to have bullied its way and swept aside all questions being raised regarding their activities in this domain.

“It would be interesting to examine on how many occasions Sri Lankan authorities were permitted to embark these vessels? What was their level of access and has there been any tangible benefit to Sri Lanka from the deployment of these vessels? The opacity with which these deployments are being undertaken and the unwillingness of CCP to share information with Sri Lankan authorities indicates motives apart from just marine archaeology,” another source said. The note said survey and research vessels primarily gather data vital for conduct of naval operations, especially that of submarines. “Such unencumbered and suspicious activity within Sri Lankan waters will surely raise the hackles of other nations in the region and also has the potential to upset the delicate maritime balance in the IOR.”

### **Project headed by professor with links to Chinese military**

The note added that the person spearheading the wreckage investigation project from the CCP’s side is Professor Hu Changling, Director of Shanghai Acoustics Laboratory at Chinese Academy of Sciences. It claims that Professor Hu has been deeply involved

with the CCP's military for projects, including for submarine sonar systems. Sources said the CCP's claims that these survey missions would be beneficial to Sri Lanka seem quite far-fetched, if not outlandish. "In what can only be described as an attempt to put a square peg in a round hole, CCP has attempted to link the discovery of Zheng He's wrecks to increased tourism from China," a second source said. "However, available data and predictions suggest that there is no such correlation. This is also despite the fact that in 2012, Sri Lanka had celebrated the 600th anniversary of Zheng He's landing on the island nation and held special tourism promotion drives in Yunnan Province, which is Zheng He's native place." While Zheng He is a revered figure back in China, he did not have a benign eye towards the island nation. This is because Zheng undertook a series of naval expeditions to waters around Sri Lanka, using his fleet of Junks. These expeditions were undertaken to collect tribute and demand obedience towards the Chinese Emperor. "This is much in the same way that modern day CCP's economic debt-diplomacy aims to subjugate Sri Lanka's interests," the source said.

**Source:** [theprint.in](https://theprint.in); 14 November 2020

## CHINESE, US MILITARIES DISCUSS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, DISASTER RELIEF

- Outlook

Chinese and the US militaries on Wednesday started an online seminar to share experiences on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, China's Ministry of National Defence said, amid rising tensions between the two countries over the disputed South China Sea and Taiwan. The three-day exchange event, 16th of its kind, will cover topics including the military's participation in fighting floods and typhoons, and in COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control, as well as military-civilian cooperation. The seminar was held both in China's Nanjing and the United States's Hawaii via video link, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

On October 29, China's defence spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian told an online media briefing here that senior defence officials of China and the US held telephone talks amid deepening military tensions between the two countries and agreed to properly manage their differences. Senior officials from both militaries have had a telephonic conversation and agreed to strengthen communication, properly manage differences and disagreements, and expand cooperation in fields of common interests, Wu said. Asked whether China-US military exchanges could proceed as normal as they faced multiple challenges coupled with the severe COVID-19 pandemic, Wu said working groups from the two militaries have conducted video conferences on crisis communication. The US-China military tensions heightened in recent months over the disputed South China Sea and Taiwan.

**Source:** [defenceaviationpost.com](https://defenceaviationpost.com); 12 November 2020

## **WW<sub>3</sub> FEARS AS CHINA COAST GUARD TO BE ALLOWED TO USE GUNS IN CLASHES WITH US AND JAPAN**

- Ciaran Mcgrath

China's coast guard ships could soon be armed and authorised to launch attacks US and Japanese ships operating "illegally" in its waters, an article on the website of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has claimed. The op-ed, originally published by the Alpha Military Review, was written in response to a suggestion by senior US military analysts that Congress should authorise civilian ships to be fitted with guns as a way of countering the increasingly powerful Chinese navy. The state-endorsed article warned: "We might have to use guns when dealing with robbers, as that is the language that robbers understand. "If the US and Japan do not engage in trouble in the waters under China's jurisdiction, why should they worry?"

The op-ed added: "Allowing the coast guard to use force means that the US and Japan will assume greater security risks if they infringe upon China's maritime sovereignty. "What their media should worry about is not that China reasonably and legally safeguards its maritime rights and interests, but the dangerous provocations of their ships against China. "China is going to allow the coast guard to use force only against the criminals who would violate our maritime sovereignty." The fact that the strongly worded article is carried on the PLA's official site indicates the seriousness with which China regards the issue. Large Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) ships have been accused of multiple incursions into the waters of other countries in recent months. In July, Beijing was accused of sending a CCG ship into disputed waters in the South China Sea, coming within 30 nautical miles of a Vietnamese oil rig. The "media" referred to in the Alpha Military Review article headlined *Unleash the Privateers!*, penned by Colonel Mark Cancian, US Marine Corps (Retired) and Brandon Schwartz, and published on the website of the US Naval Institute in April.

In it, they urge Congress to issue "letters of marque", authorising civilian ships to engage in maritime warfare under a commission of war. They added: "The notion of privateering makes naval strategists uncomfortable because it is an approach to war that does not conform to the way the US Navy has fought since 1815. "There is no modern experience of their use, and there are legitimate concerns about legal foundations and international opinion. "But strategists cannot argue for out-of-the-box thinking to face the rising challenge of China and then revert to conventional solutions because out-of-the-box thinking makes them uncomfortable. "As the strategic situation is new, so must our thinking be new. "In wartime, privateers could swarm the oceans and destroy the maritime industry on which China's economy - and the stability of its regime - depend. "The mere threat of such a campaign might strengthen deterrence and thereby prevent a war from happening at all."

Speaking in July, Andrew Scobell, a senior political scientist for the US-based RAND Corporation and a professor at Marine Corps University, said: "Many Chinese Coast Guard vessels are a lot bigger than many of the ships in most Southeast Asian navies. "They're pretty damn intimidating, they do ram fishing boats, and they act like naval

vessels. "This is all about, from a Chinese perspective, promoting their interests in the South China Sea, strengthening their claims, using all instruments of national power, and at the same time avoiding escalation."

**Source:** [defenceaviationpost.com](https://defenceaviationpost.com); 12 November 2020

## **‘NO ATTACKS ON FLAGGED VESSELS’ IN FIRST YEAR OF ROYAL NAVY-LED GULF SECURITY MISSION**

- Ciaran McGrath

A Royal Navy-led Gulf security mission has ensured safe passage for more than 1,100 merchant ships, with “no attacks on flagged vessels” in its first year. Coalition Task Force Sentinel was set up last year in response to growing tensions and increased threats to shipping in Middle Eastern waters. Headed up by the Navy since the end of January, Task Force Sentinel protects the merchant vessels of the International Maritime Security Construct – made up of nine nations, including the UK, USA and the United Arab Emirates. The task force safeguards the freedom of navigation of merchant vessels carrying oil, gas and goods from the Arabian Gulf, through the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el Mandeb Strait, to the Southern Red Sea.

More than 17,000 ships a year pass through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and more than 42,000 ships a year pass through the Strait of Hormuz, and any closure of these waterways could have serious international economic consequences. The force uses ‘sentinels’ (larger warships such as HMS Montrose or destroyers working in choke points) and ‘sentries’ (patrol ships and corvettes working in waterways between the narrows). Additionally, airborne surveillance assets are employed to monitor the flow of traffic through the highest risk areas. A collective total of more than three years has been spent by the ships on station. Helicopters and long-range maritime patrol aircraft have flown the equivalent of more than 77 weeks in their efforts to provide surveillance and intelligence. Commander of Task Force Sentinel, Commodore Rob Bellfield said: “Since the inception of the International Maritime Security Concept, there have been no attacks on flagged vessels. Mission success!” He added that there is “no doubt about the credibility of deterrence our task force brings against any threat to the stability of this essential region”.

**Source:** [forces.net](https://forces.net); 14 November 2020



# MARITIME FORCES

---

## UNIFIED MARITIME COMMAND WILL HAVE IAF'S STRIKE ELEMENTS, ARMY'S AMPHIBIOUS UNITS

- A N Dutta

New Delhi: The Maritime Theatre Command — comprising all the naval assets — will come up soon after the unified Air Defence Command is set up, ThePrint has learnt. An ongoing study on the maritime command is currently at an advanced stage, top defence sources said. The Air Defence Command, responsible for guarding the Indian airspace from hostile air elements, was initially reported to be set up by October. A new date, however, is yet to be formally announced. The study on the Maritime Theatre Command has been under way for the last several months. A senior defence source told ThePrint that the command is more likely to be headquartered at Karwar in Karnataka. Hyderabad is also under consideration, though, it is learnt. It will likely be headed by an Indian Navy officer of vice-admiral or admiral rank. According to defence officials, the Maritime Theatre Command will comprise both the Eastern and Western Naval Commands, with the Andaman and Nicobar Command subsumed into the Eastern Naval Command. The Andaman and Nicobar Command, set up in October 2001, and the Strategic Forces Command, set up in 2003, are the only two unified tri-services commands. “It (maritime command) will also have shore-based maritime strike elements of the IAF and some amphibious elements of the Army,” a senior defence official said.

Amphibious elements of Army include infantry, mechanised as well as armoured regiments, which are presently capable of executing amphibious operations. Maritime strike aircraft with the IAF includes certain squadrons of Sukhoi-30 and Jaguar fighters, and their primary role is to strike enemy naval facilities on shore, naval vessels and installations in harbour and carry out anti-shipping strikes against enemy naval assets when in vicinity of India's naval forces. A senior Navy officer told ThePrint the maritime command will reduce the inter-service mobilisation time for operational events and increase cohesion in joint training. “Tri-services coordination will increase within the components placed in the theatre commands.” The officer added, “Subsuming the Andaman and Nicobar Command into the Eastern Naval Command will provide greater force levels in the Bay of Bengal, while also increasing resources available at the islands to address any threat from the east.” At present, the Indian Navy is divided into two operational fleets, with the western fleet addressing the western theatre and eastern fleet addressing the threats in the east and a training command in the south. The new theatre command aims to bring them all under one theatre command, which will address all threats emanating in the maritime domain.

### **‘Squadron of fighter-bombers, carrier task group’**

Former Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash (retd) told ThePrint that the Chiefs of Staff Committee currently has plans for a number of ‘out of area contingencies’, which require elements of all three services to form a task force for joint expeditionary operations in India’s maritime neighbourhood. “In the past, we have undertaken such operations in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Mauritius. In future, we may require such task forces for defence of our own islands or rendering assistance under ‘Mission SAGAR,’” he said.

“Given our current organisation, the task force would need contributions from any of the 17 commands scattered all over India. Once we constitute one or more maritime commands, all these elements will be brought under a single theatre commander,” he added. Talking about the possible composition of the command, he said there should be an Independent Infantry Brigade from the Army with elements of armour, artillery and supporting arms, which would be trained and dedicated to the amphibious role. “From the IAF, (there should be) a squadron of fighter-bombers dedicated to maritime strike and some transport aircraft. From the Navy, a carrier task group, along with submarines and support vessels, (should be part of the command).” In May, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat had said the Maritime Theatre Command is the next thing being looked at after the Air Defence Command and could come up by early next year. “Today, the ships are operational under different commanders, but it is being seen if the command and control of the ships can be exercised by one entity as the maritime commander,” he had said.

### **Multiple theatre commands in the offing**

Apart from the Air Defence Command and the Maritime Theatre Command, multiple theatre commands would be set up, including at the northern and western borders, although the exact number would be based on emerging threat assessments. There are also plans to set up joint commands for logistics and training of the military. A theatre command will have specific units of personnel from the three services — Army, Navy and Air Force — under a common commander so they fight as a cohesive unit. Both the US and China follow a theatre command doctrine.

**Source:** [theprint.in](https://theprint.in); 11 November 2020

## **US GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO HELPING AFRICA ENHANCE MARITIME SECURITY — COMMANDING OFFICER OF NAVY SHIP**

The United States government is committed to working with African countries to enhance maritime security on the continent, the Commanding Officer of the Navy ship ‘USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4), Blue Crew,’ has said. Captain David L. Gray Jr. says they are “working with like-minded partners to enhance maritime security in African coastal waters.”

“(This) is vital to ensure our partners in Africa can defend their territorial waters and cease illegal activities such as illegal, unreported, unregulated (IUU) fishing and resource exploitation,” he told Joy News in an interview. The ship recently completed a 43-day operation in the Gulf of Guinea along with maritime security operatives of six countries including Morocco, Cape Verde, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria. “We welcome the opportunity to train alongside our African partners...so our recent operations with the tracking exercises, passing exercises, fight operations, refuelling, intel collection, all have shown and point to our mutual commitment to stability and security off the coast of Africa,” Captain Gray noted. “I’m part of a team that will build, and build, and build. And I’m very confident we are going to do great work in Africa and help out with stability in the regions around here...We are here to stay; we are here to help. And we are going to bring stability and security to this area,” he explained. “We are in the first ship dedicated to AFRICOM (United States Africa Command). We are not going to leave in 6 months and get another ship later. The ship is here to stay. So this is where we are going to put skin in the game,” Captain Gray added.

Illegal activities in the waters of Africa have been identified as a key threat to the security and stability of the continent. Illegal fishing, piracy, pollution and human trafficking are some key unscrupulous activities on Africa’s waters that are causing the African economy greatly. Illegal fishing alone is estimated to cost the West African economy an annual loss of about \$2.3 billion. Captain Gray in a telephone interview commended partners in Africa for making significant gains in helping protect the ocean from illegal activities and called for more collaborations.

“Working with like-minded partners to enhance maritime security in African coastal waters is vital to ensure our partners in Africa can defend their territorial waters and cease illegal activities such as IUU fishing and resource exportation,” he noted. “We will work together to reach our mutual goals. No one nation can combat these issues alone. That’s why it’s a team effort. And this team came to support our partners,” Captain Gray added.

**Source:** [myjoyonline.com](https://myjoyonline.com); 14 November 2020

## **JAPAN IS CONSIDERING TO EXPORT WARSHIPS TO INDONESIA**

A successful destroyer deal, if struck, would provide momentum for Japan’s exports of defense equipment and help realize the country’s initiative to make the Indo-Pacific region free and open, citing Japan Times. Last month, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga agreed with Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo in Bogor, near Jakarta, to accelerate bilateral talks on defense equipment exports and technology transfers. Based on the Indonesian Navy’s strategic planning, the country aims to gradually transform its current force structure into a naval force with ‘green water’ capabilities by 2024 using a concept of minimum essential forces. The Navy aims to develop a force

structure based on Indonesia's geostrategic requirements, primarily to protect sea-lanes of communication and choke points. At the operational level, the future naval force structure will consist of 3 fleets equipped with Integrated Fleet Weapon Systems (SSAT) that encompass a strike force, a patrol force, a Marine Corps component and naval supporting elements. For the naval strike force, future acquisition plans include missile-guided destroyers, tactical submarines, fast attack missile boats, torpedo boats and minesweepers. Meanwhile, Marine Corps elements will be developed and possibly stationed in western, central, and eastern Indonesia. Over the next 20 years, it is unlikely that the Indonesian Navy will acquire significant elements for power projection beyond national borders, at least, not more than a minimum essential force.

According to Japanese sources, destroyer that could be export to Indonesia is the 30FMM, a Japanese multi-mission frigate in development for the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). The ship will have an overall length of 130 m, breadth of 16 m, a standard displacement of 3900 tons with a full load displacement of about 5500 tons, and a maximum speed of over 30 knots. Weapons will include a Mk 45 gun, two remote weapon station above the bridge, 16 Mk 41 VLS at the bow, 8 anti-ship missiles, one SeaRAM, an SH-60L helicopter, torpedoes, and decoy launchers. It can also deploy and recover UUV, USV, and sea mines from the rear ramp beneath the helideck. It is also expected to use a naval version of the Type 03 Chū-SAM. The new 30FMM is based on stealth technology using the Mitsubishi X-2 Shinshin (then ATD-X) stealth fighter technology demonstrator, as both platforms are designed by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Along with stealth capabilities, the frigate also emphasizes on having a high level of automation. This allows the frigate to possess a low crew size of only 90 personnel compared to other ships of similar size.

**Source:** [navyrecognition.com](http://navyrecognition.com); 14 November 2020

## NAVY CHIEF REVIEWS PREPAREDNESS OF NAVAL AIR STATION IN NICOBAR

- IANS

Amid the ongoing border dispute with China, Indian Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh visited INS Baaz, the Naval Air Station at Campbell Bay in Great Nicobar Island on Friday to review operational preparedness. He also expressed solidarity with the force personnel on the eve of Diwali. The geo-strategically located Air Station, INS Baaz, overlooks critical International Sea Lanes passing through the Indian Ocean Region -- one of the most militarised areas. He was briefed by Commander-in-Chief, Andaman and Nicobar Command (CINCAN), Lieutenant General Manoj Pande on the operational preparedness and infrastructure aspects of the Command, including readiness in the prevalent security scenario. During his interaction with personnel at INS Baaz, Admiral Karambir Singh acknowledged their contribution in keeping the strategically important base operational at all times. Personnel from the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, Coast Guard, DSC and GREF, as well as Defence civilians were present on the occasion.



The Airbase supports operations of a multitude of military aircraft, which enable surveillance over the Southern Bay of Bengal, South Andaman Sea, Malacca Straits and the Southern Indian Ocean. INS Baaz provides aid to civil authorities, including casualty evacuation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and search and rescue and also serves as a supporting base for operational turn-around facilities of ships deployed in the Nicobar Group of Islands. Earlier this month, Admiral Singh in his address at the National Defence College webinar in Delhi had said that India is actively engaging with nations at strategic levels in the Indian Ocean Region under the ambit of government initiatives. He had also said that the Indian Ocean Region is one of the most militarised regions, at the same time one of the less integrated regions. The Navy chief had pointed out that there are differing interpretations of international laws and there is this fear that 'Global Commons' can change to 'Contested Seas', threatening free flow of commerce and trade.

**Source:** [daijiworld.com](http://daijiworld.com); 13 November 2020

## **PN SHIP TABUK COMMISSIONING CEREMONY HELD AT ROMANIAN SEAPORT**

ISLAMABAD: Commissioning ceremony of Pakistan Navy ship Tabuk was held at Black Sea port of Constanta, Romania. The contract for two corvettes for Pakistan Navy was signed between Ministry of Defence Production Pakistan and M/s Damen, Romania. The first ship of class, PNS Yarmook was commissioned earlier this year, whereas the PNS Tabuk has also joined Pakistan Navy fleet. PNS Tabuk is a multipurpose and highly adaptive platform of medium size and tonnage. The ship is equipped with state-of-the-art electronic warfare, anti-ship and anti-air weapons/sensors along with modern self-protection and terminal defence systems. The ship is capable to perform a variety of maritime operations in a complex maritime environment and can embark multi-role helicopter and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), simultaneously.

Addressing the ceremony, Commanding Officer of PNS Tabuk stressed significance of the project and laid emphasis on additional set of capabilities added to the Pakistan Navy sphere of operations with the induction of these potent platforms. He highlighted the impact of these platforms to ensure forward presence and perpetual readiness in the area of operations while being deployed on PN's initiative of regional maritime security patrols in the Indian Ocean region. He also acknowledged the professional competence and shipbuilding acumen of Damen shipyards and showed confidence in prospects of future cooperation in delivering cutting-edge naval technologies to Pakistan Navy. The impressive ceremony was attended by Chief Naval Overseer (Romania), ship's crew and senior management of Damen shipyards, Gorinchem and Galati.

**Source:** [thenews.com.pk](http://thenews.com.pk); 14 November 2020

# SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

---

## CHINA TO DEPLOY SUPERTANKERS TO DRAIN CRUDE PRODUCT GLUT

- Bloomberg

China's biggest refiner is eyeing a creative strategy to help rid Asia of a persistent diesel glut -- brand new supertankers usually reserved for crude oil. Unipet, the trading arm of China's biggest oil refiner Sinopec Group, hired a newly-built very large crude carrier to load low-sulphur diesel in Asia for delivery to Europe. The vessel ordinarily would have sailed empty from its shipyard in Northeast Asia to the Middle East or West Africa, where it would pick up crude for the first time for delivery to customers across the globe. While supertankers are built to transport dirty fuels such as crude oil, they can carry cleaner products like gasoline and diesel on their maiden voyage. Unipet intends to charter brand new vessels on a regular basis to transport more diesel to Europe, thereby clearing out bloated fuel stockpiles in Asia, according to two traders familiar with the matter, who asked not to be identified as the information is private. Asia has traditionally been an exporter of diesel to Europe as well as Africa, with trade flows fluctuating based on relative prices. The difference now is that the new supertankers allow traders to at least double the size of their cargoes compared to long-range vessels, usually the largest reserved for refined fuels. "This is definitely good news for Asia refiners. Moving these barrels out of Asia will tighten supplies and support regional margins," said Serena Huang, senior analyst at Vortexa. "That said, traders will only move the barrels if the arbitrage is positive for them."

Unipet isn't alone. At least two to four fresh supertankers, chartered by trading houses and oil majors, are expected to ship diesel west of the Suez Canal in November, according to a trader and two shipbrokers. That comes after about seven carried distillates on maiden voyages in the third quarter, compared with four in the second quarter, Braemar ACM Shipbroking data showed. In October, a total of about 2.24 million barrels of diesel were loaded onto supertankers for the east-to-west journey, increasing almost sevenfold from the start of the year, according to data from Vortexa. These maiden shipments are set to grow in the coming months with shipyards expected to deliver 20 newly-built supertankers from October 1 to March 31, said Anoop Singh, who heads East of Suez tanker research at Braemar. Unipet is sending the fully-laden VLCC Yuan Hua Yang to Rotterdam after picking up multiple cargoes via ship-to-ship transfers throughout Asia, according to traders and shipbrokers. Earlier this year, the company hired VLCC Elandra Kilimanjaro on a time-chartered

basis and sent their cargoes to Europe, West Africa and Latin America, said a trader with knowledge of the matter. In all, the company will have hired eight new supertankers since 2017 to move diesel from Asia to the west.

Apart from Yuan Hua Yang, there are at least four more VLCCs laden with middle distillate-type fuels currently on the water around West Africa and Europe. The Yuan Kun Yang is sailing to a ship-to-ship transfer site off the UK coast. The Babylon, now off the coast of the Bahamas, recently partially discharged its cargo. Asia has been chock-full of distillates this year amid an uneven recovery from the pandemic. In the Asian trading hub of Singapore, middle distillate stockpiles -- which include diesel -- climbed to the highest in more than a decade in the week ended November 11, according to government data. The east-west trade flow on VLCCs has contributed to a recovery in Asian diesel refining margins. They've risen to more than \$4 a barrel from the less than \$2 in late September, according to Bloomberg Fair Value data.

"We do expect the still-long Asian gasoil market to continue needing to push excess volumes into the European market," said Eugene Lindell, a senior research analyst at JBC Energy. Returning demand in India and China in the final two months of the year may shrink the outright flows, he said.

**Source:** [thenationalnews.com](https://thenationalnews.com); 14 November 2020

## AND YET ANOTHER CASUALTY OF THE UNDERSEA CABLE FAULT DEBACLE

- John A. MacInnes

The Hebrides Alpha Project, providing supported accommodation for individuals recovering from substance misuse, has been serving the Western Isles since 2011. The abstinence-based project has helped more than 90 individuals over this time, supporting them in recovery, and the rebuilding of their lives after having suffered serious addiction issues. Following the failure of the power cable link between Skye and the Isle of Harris, it became clear that this incident was going to have far reaching implications for the islands.

The Hebrides Alpha Project has been informed by Point and Sandwick Trust that due to the cable break, the project would not be receiving its expected funding of £30,000 due this month. A spokesman said: "The trust informed us that it may be at least a year before the cable is replaced. The board and management of the Hebrides Alpha Project, would like to thank Point and Sandwick Trust for their generous financial support over the years. "As a result of this loss, the Hebrides Alpha Project finds itself facing a serious financial shortfall in the months to come and we are exploring other funding avenues with some urgency. Due to the impact of Covid-19 we recognise that many charities cannot fundraise in traditional ways. This is an added burden on what was already a difficult year in the charitable sector. "These are uncertain times and we seek help to continue what is often life saving work. "Our hope is that external funding can be secured in order to enable us to continue to provide this essential service in our

community for years to come.” Calum Macdonald, of Point and Sandwick Trust’s wind farm at Beinn Ghrideag, said: “We haven’t been able to produce any output since the cable went down and it now looks like we won’t be able to for up to 12 months, according to SSE. “That means we will not be earning any income over these 12 months. “That obviously has serious consequences for the money we give out to the various projects that we support, so we will need to work out the best way forward during this difficult period, but there is little doubt that good causes will suffer.”

**Source:** [stornowaygazette.co.uk](http://stornowaygazette.co.uk); 14 November 2020

## REPORT SOUNDS AN ALARM ON ONGOING DECLINE OF US CORAL REEFS

- Bobby Caina Calvan

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A first of its kind assessment of coral reefs in U.S. waters is again sounding the alarm over the continued decline of these sensitive underwater ecosystems, which scientists deem essential to the health of the world's oceans amid the environmental effects posed by human activity and climate change. The report, released Tuesday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Maryland, took stock of the health of coral reefs under U.S. jurisdiction, from Guam and Hawaii in the Pacific to Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Atlantic. “Our work in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans shows a dire outlook for coral reef ecosystem health, from warming ocean waters, fishing, disease, and pollution from the land,” said Heath Kelsey, director of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. The reefs off the Florida coast are the country’s most degraded, with perhaps as little as 2% remaining, officials said. When healthy, coral constitute breathtaking underwater colonies of tiny organisms, known as polyps, whose hardened skeletons form clumps or fingerlings of underwater rock known as reefs. The profusion of life they support, including fish and other aquatic creatures, is an important component of the marine ecosystem.

The reefs are natural barriers to storm surges, particularly in regions susceptible to hurricanes. And they also are important to coastal economies that depend on tourism, marine aquaculture and commercial fishing — the so-called blue economy that depends on the conservation of ocean resources to help sustain livelihoods from the sea. “The economic impacts of coral reefs in the United States are around \$3.4 billion annually. So this is really of great importance to our nation,” said retired Navy Rear Adm. Tim Gallaudet, an assistant secretary at NOAA. Officials said it was the first time that a nationwide assessment was conducted, despite years of concern over the health of coral reefs, not just in the U.S. but around the world. Some studies say more than half of the world’s reefs have been lost, and that more are in danger. The status report used data collected between 2012 and 2018 and classified regions as “very good,” “good,” “fair,” “impaired,” and “critical.” While the report says the condition of most coral reef regions in the United States was “fair,” it added that sewage, lawn chemicals and other pollutants that flow into the oceans pose potentially catastrophic threats to their survival. That threat is most pronounced in waters off South Florida, from the



Keys to north of Palm Beach. The region is one of the country's densest population centers with a population of more than 9 million. "It shouldn't be surprising. There's an immense population of people living in close proximity to those reefs," said Jennifer Koss, the director of NOAA's coral reef conservation program.

But even in more remote oceans where human interaction is limited, coral reefs remain under threat because of climate change, which has caused oceans to warm and make some coastal areas inhospitable to delicate coral. "Climate change is the single biggest threat to shallow water coral reefs in the U.S. and worldwide," said Kelsey of the University of Maryland. The report, its authors signaled, is meant to be a call to arms. "This report represents a snapshot of reef condition and is a great resource for communities and decision-makers throughout the nation. We hope the report starts a dialogue about the various factors and potential solutions to the threats affecting coral reefs," Koss said. Most U.S. territories were designated as "fair," including those in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. Reefs were in American Samoa and the most remote areas of the Pacific were in "good condition." Florida reefs were said to be in "impaired" condition. Officials in the state of Florida have become more mindful of the streams of pollution flowing into its coastal waters and the harm they can do to coral. The pollutants also have been blamed for red tides and other ecologically devastating algae blooms. A bipartisan federal bill cosponsored by lawmakers from Hawaii and Florida — two of the states with the highest stakes on the matter — would provide federal funding to help restore and manage the nation's reefs.

**Source:** [wfmj.com](http://wfmj.com); 10 November 2020

# MARINE ENVIRONMENT

---

## THE WORLD'S LARGEST WETLANDS ARE ON FIRE. THAT'S A DISASTER FOR ALL OF US

- Ivana Kottasová, Henrik Pettersson and Krystina Shveda, CNN

(CNN)The world watched as California and the Amazon went up in flames this year, but the largest tropical wetland on earth has been ablaze for months, largely unnoticed by the outside world. South America's Pantanal region has been hit by the worst wildfires in decades. The blazes have already consumed about 28% of the vast floodplain that stretches across parts of Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay. They are still not completely under control. The fires have destroyed unique habitats and wrecked the livelihoods of many of the Pantanal's diverse indigenous communities. But their damaging impact reaches far beyond the region.

Wetlands like the Pantanal are Earth's most effective carbon sinks -- ecosystems that absorb and store more carbon than they release, keeping it away from the atmosphere. At roughly 200,000 square kilometers, the Pantanal comprises about 3% of the globe's wetlands and plays a key role in the carbon cycle. When these carbon-rich ecosystems burn, vast amounts of heat-trapping gases are released back into the atmosphere, contributing to the greenhouse effect.

"The Pantanal is very important for the planet, it has unique wild areas that are fundamental to life on Earth," said Andre Luiz Siqueira, the CEO of ECOA, an environmental NGO based in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. "It is vital that it [receives] as much attention as the Amazon." Brazil's National Institute of Space Research (INPE) has detected more than 21,200 fires in the Pantanal biome so far this year, a figure that is already 69% higher than the full-year record from 2005, when INPE recorded roughly 12,500 fires. There were 8,106 fires in September alone -- more than four times the historic average for the month. Alberto Setzer, a senior scientist at INPE, said satellite data shows the fires are the worst since records began in 2002, both in terms of the number of individual blazes and the area burnt.

The Pantanal's distinctive habitats rely on what scientists call the "flood pulse." During the wet season between November and March, three quarters of the plain gets flooded, only for much of the water to drain away during the dry months, from April to September. This seasonal flooding makes the Pantanal a unique biome where large swaths of land regularly turn from terrestrial into aquatic habitats and back again. The area is home to thousands of endangered or unusual species, including jaguars, capybaras, black caimans, giant otters and hyacinth macaws. It's also an important stop on the routes of around 180 species of migratory birds. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (known as the World Wildlife Fund in the US and Canada), the Pantanal boasts the greatest concentration of wildlife in South America -- higher than that of its more famous northern neighbor, the Amazon.

But this year's dry season has been the most severe since the 1970s. "There has been a climate emergency situation, with a great drought, never seen before," Siqueira said. Occasional wildfires are normal in the Pantanal, so much so that some plants in the region developed resistance to fires -- for example by growing thick bark or covering their seeds with hard shells. But the unusually dry conditions this year have seen the blazes spread further and faster because there were fewer natural water barriers. Even areas that normally stay wet have turned into tinderboxes.

### **It's all connected**

The fires ripping through the Pantanal are an example of a natural disaster that is exacerbated by climate change while simultaneously making the problem worse. Extreme weather events, such as drought and floods, are becoming more frequent and more severe around the world, and the Pantanal is no exception. There are indications that the region is getting drier and warmer as the global temperatures rise. This year's record dry season can be traced back to 2019, when the Upper Paraguay Basin experienced unusually low rainfall. Biologist Debora Calheiros, who has been researching ecosystems in the Pantanal for decades, said official data showed precipitation had been below the long-term average over the past decade, but in the past two years had dropped further to just 70% of the average. The region's rain patterns are also changing. While the amount of overall precipitation might not be dramatically different, the rains are becoming more extreme and concentrated over shorter periods of time.

Climate change is just one part of the problem. Large-scale deforestation in the Amazon rainforest to the north and the Cerrado savanna to the east are also having profound effects on the Pantanal. Ecology and conservation expert Leticia Larcher said deforestation was shortening rainy seasons and making droughts more severe in central and southeastern Brazil. She explained that it was impacting the "flying rivers" phenomenon, a crucial process in which a stream of moisture arising from the forest travels to other areas such as the Pantanal, where the water-filled air becomes colder and turns into rain.

"As the forest decreases and loses its ecological functions, the environmental service it provides is also being lost," Larcher said.

### **Mostly man-made**

While fires ignited by lightning sometimes occur naturally in the Pantanal, Larcher, who works for environmental NGO Instituto Homem Pantaneiro, said this year's fires have mostly been caused by people. This is despite the Brazilian government's ban on fires for 120 days in the Amazon and the Pantanal that was issued in July. But Siqueira said the ban wasn't being enforced strictly enough. "There are extensive areas (where) livestock farmers have regularly used fire as a way to clear farm fields," said Siqueira. "This year, even with the governmental ban ... these producers set fire that ended up spreading for thousands of acres due to the great drought." As the global demand for agricultural products rises, so commercial farmers clear more of the Pantanal's native vegetation for growing and grazing. Brazil is already the world's leading exporter of beef. As the demand for meat rises around the world, so does deforestation in the Amazon.

Sugarcane, cotton and soybeans are other lucrative options. When US President Donald Trump imposed punitive tariffs on Chinese exports in 2018, Beijing retaliated by placing a new 25% tariff on American soybeans, forcing Chinese buyers to look for alternative sources of the protein-rich commodity. Brazil was ready to step in. The US Department of Agriculture expects the South American country to have record soybean production this year, and the land area used keeps growing. A soy moratorium, in place since 2006, banned deforestation for the crop in the Amazon -- but those protections don't apply in the Pantanal and Cerrado. Siqueira and many others, including global environmental advocacy groups such as Greenpeace, Wetlands International and the WWF, blame the policies of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and his Environment Minister Ricardo Salles for the devastation. "It's a direct result of the dismantling of the Brazilian environmental agenda and its institutions under the current government," Siqueira said, pointing to deregulation and funding cuts for monitoring agencies. "[There are] less actions to prevent fires, dismantling of responsible federal institutions, and omission at federal and state levels," said biologist Debora Calheiros, who has been researching ecosystems in the Pantanal for decades. "Actually, it was the civil society that readily responded to rescue, save, feed and offer water to the surviving animals and help traditional riverine and indigenous people with food and mineral water," she added.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September, Bolsonaro refused to accept any blame for the fires, claiming instead that they were an "inevitable consequence of high local temperature, coupled with the accumulation of decaying organic matter." Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly rejected criticism of his government's stance on the environment and has accused foreign actors of a "brutal disinformation campaign" on the issue, told the UNGA that no other country protected as much wild territory as Brazil.

Speaking to CNN's affiliate CNN Brasil last month, Salles, the environmental minister, doubled down on Bolsonaro's message. He blamed the fires on the drought and said farmers had no interest in burning the land, because they rely on it economically. The government eventually recognized the Pantanal fires as a federal emergency and sent funding into the area, but for many, this was too little, too late. The government's policies, Siqueira says, send a "clear message of impunity of environmental crimes." Parts of the Pantanal have been designated a biosphere conservation area and recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, but overall, less than 5% of the region is under formal protection, according to the WWF. More than 90% is privately owned by ranchers, farmers and conservation groups, with 80% of that private land used for cattle farming, according to Brazil's environment ministry.

The fires burned millions of acres of flowering plants, starving pollinators and leaving no food for other animals. The blazes are hurting local people too. The Pantanal is home to a number of indigenous and traditional communities, which have settled on the banks of the rivers and make their living from fishing and small-scale agriculture. "Riverside communities, which traditionally survive on artisanal fishing, build their culture there strictly linked to the biome," Larcher said.

Fires are still raging in parts of the Pantanal, but recovery efforts are already underway. The biome has gone through periods of harsh drought in the past. However, Calheiros said the ecosystems are much more fragile than they were just a few decades



ago and their capacity to recover is uncertain. The environmental damage inflicted on the Pantanal is also much greater, she added.

Siqueira said it could take decades to restore what the blazes took. "This will only be possible if we have a normal rainfall from 2020 to 2021," he said. If there is more drought, he added, the recovery of the plants and animals living in the Pantanal will be much more difficult.

**Source:** [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com); 13 November 2020

## **EXPLAINED: WHAT IS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN'S LARGEST PROTECTED MARINE RESERVE?**

- Aryn Baker

On Friday, the isolated UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha, which is home to the world's most remote human settlement, declared the largest fully protected marine reserves in the Atlantic Ocean at 687,000 square kilometres. This will close over 90 percent of their waters to harmful activities such as bottom-trawling fishing, sand extraction and deep-sea mining. UK prime minister Boris Johnson said, "I am now calling on other nations to join us in our ambition to protect 30 per cent of the world's ocean by 2030. We need collective global action if we are to bequeath a world that is every bit as wonderful and magnificent as the one we inherited."

### **What is Tristan da Cunha?**

Tristan da Cunha, which is inhabited by less than 300 humans is a small chain of islands over 6,000 miles from London in the South Atlantic and the water around the islands are considered to be the richest in the world. The mountainous archipelago Tristan da Cunha is home to tens of millions of seabirds and several unique land birds that are comparable to the Galapagos island finches, as per the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), which has been working with the local community and government of Tristan da Cunha. However, some of its seabirds that are not found anywhere else in the world face threats including illegal and unregulated fishing activities, overfishing, plastic pollution and climate change. The National Geographic reported that invasive mice brought to the islands by passing ships kill over 2 million birds a year. As of now, there are two critically endangered species in the island group and over five endangered species. The island group is also home to the World Heritage Site of Gough and Inaccessible Islands, which is one of the most important seabird islands in the world. It is located about 2,000 km from the nearest land and as per the RSPB, it takes longer to sail to Tristan da Cunha from Cape Town than it took Apollo 11 to reach the Moon.

### **What does the announcement mean for the island group?**

After joining the UK's Blue Belt Programme, it will become the largest no-take zone in the Atlantic and the fourth largest on the planet. This means fishing, mining and any

such activities will not be allowed. The almost 700,000 square kilometres of the Marine Protection Zone (MPZ) is almost three times the size of the UK and will safeguard the future of sevengill sharks, yellow-nosed albatrosses and rockhopper penguins. Further, this development is also supported by the Blue Belt Programme, which provides over 27 million pounds over a period of five years for marine conservation around the UK Overseas Territories and international organisations. MPZs involve the management of certain natural areas for biodiversity conservation or species protection and are created by delineating zones with permitted and non-permitted areas within that zone. As per the National Geographic Society's Campaign for Nature Initiative, over 30 percent of the world's oceans need to be protected to allow ecosystems to provide benefits like ample fish stocks.

**Source:** [indianexpress.com](https://indianexpress.com); 17 November 2020

## **CHINA BREAKS NATIONAL RECORD FOR MARIANA TRENCH MANNED-DIVE AMID RACE FOR DEEP SEA RESOURCES**

- Ben Westcott

Hong Kong (CNN)China has broken its own record for deepest manned dive into the world's oceans, sinking an estimated 10,909 meters (35,790 feet) into the Mariana Trench, state-run news agency Xinhua said. The submersible, named "fendouzhe," or "striver," landed on the sea bed at the bottom of the deepest oceanic trench on Earth on Tuesday morning, Xinhua said, after setting off from China's Hainan province one month earlier. The dive beat China's previous dive into the Mariana Trench by over 800 meters (2,624 feet) but it narrowly missed out on breaking a world record for the deepest dive in the Mariana Trench. The current world record is believed to have been set by American undersea explorer Victor Vescovo, who claimed to have reached a depth of 10,927 meters (35,853 feet) in May 2019. But China's goals for the dive aren't just scientific investigation. Ye Cong, the chief designer of the submersible, told Chinese state-run media that the seabed was abundant with resources. High-tech diving equipment can help us better draw a "treasure map" of the deep sea, Ye said in an interview quoted by Xinhua. In a commentary on the dive, posted to the official WeChat account of the overseas edition of the People's Daily, the ruling Communist's Party official mouthpiece, the author said that deep-sea exploration was important to better understand the "international strategic landscape."

"For example, Japan recently discovered rare earth resources in the Pacific Ocean, where the recoverable reserves are said to be 1,000 times more than on land. The ocean floor is a whole new world. If we don't explore this world, others will explore it," the commentary said. Rare earths, which are essential for the production of high-tech products such as smartphones, missile systems and radar, are currently controlled in a major part by China. Beijing is working hard to ensure it retains its dominance in this area. In July, the Chinese government raised its quota for rare earth mining to a

record high, as high as 140,000 tonnes (140 million kilograms). According to the state-owned China Daily newspaper, Chinese businesses have been investing in rare earth companies in Greenland as economic opportunities emerge in the Arctic region. But it is facing heavy competition from countries around the world. In 2018, Japanese researchers made what was described as a "game changing" find on its small island of Minamitori in the Pacific Ocean, where millions of tons of extremely valuable rare earths were discovered in nearby deep sea mud. That same year, Reuters reported that India was prepared to spend more than \$1 billion over a decade to search huge areas of sea floor for any sign of rare earths or minerals which could potentially be extracted. The International Seabed Authority was due to agree on a mining code in mid-2020, with China just one of many nations lining up to explore and mine the seafloor, but as of October there was no final agreement.

**Source:** [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com); 11 November 2020

# GEOPOLITICS

---

## VIEW: 17TH ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT, A TURNING POINT OF ASEAN-INDIA RELATIONS IN POST-COVID WORLD

- Prabir De

Tomorrow Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to attend the 17th ASEAN-India Summit virtually. Starting 2014, the coming one will be Prime Minister Modi's seventh ASEAN-India Summit. However, this time the Summit is going to happen in a virtual mode, first time in the history of ASEAN.

Between the Summits last year and this year, the devastation by Corona pandemic has disproportionately affected the people of ASEAN and India. There are several common challenges among the ASEAN countries and India, and the most critical challenge is job loss. Why is this year's virtual summit so special? Three major points. First, the COVID-19 is on way out but wreckages are everywhere in the economy, and restoration may take time. And, there is no assurance that another devastation may not appear in near future. Both ASEAN and India are seeking collaborative ways to deal with the challenges posed by Coronavirus. ASEAN has been looking forward to COVID-19 vaccines and related drugs and formulations being driven by India. Second, diseases are trans-boundary, effects are global but destructions are local. Long term implications are huge to wipe out an entire generation. Therefore, the need for deeper cooperation between ASEAN and India in search of collective solutions to these challenges and the collective path for a resilient recovery is the first and foremost priority. Third, QUAD is already anchored, and Indo-Pacific is gaining momentum. This is a take-off time for ASEAN-India partnership to tide over the global challenges together. India holds an edge in the Indo-Pacific.

While delivering 74th Independence Day speech on 15 August 2020, Indian Prime Minister reminded us: "Today, neighbours are not the only ones with whom we share geographical boundaries, but also those with whom we have close and harmonious relations. ASEAN countries in the east, who are our maritime neighbours, also hold special importance. India has thousands of years old religious and cultural ties with these countries. The traditions of Buddhism connect us with them. Today, India is strengthening its cooperation not only in the field of security but also in the areas of marine wealth with these countries."

India's Act East is becoming the Indo-Pacific, engaging us in maritime domain with our neighbours. The Indo-Pacific has obtained renewed vibrancy when ASEAN, in June 2019, and India, in November 2019, came out with their respective Indo-Pacific visions, namely, the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), respectively. In the same year, India's offer of 1000



scholarships to do PhD in Indian IITs was introduced, adding further momentum to the ASEAN-India relation and the Indo-Pacific. While initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic witnessed a deceleration of trade between ASEAN and India. However, the future looks promising as there is a clear sign of revival of trade in goods between ASEAN and India in later months. Since the FTA in goods came in effect between ASEAN and India, the trade between them has almost doubled to reach over US\$ 87 billion in 2019-20. India faces significant non-tariff barriers in ASEAN that also limit its export with the ASEAN. Although trade growth, both in India and ASEAN, in recent months has faltered due to Covid-19 pandemic and trade policy uncertainties, there is still untapped potential for further enhancing ASEAN-India trade.

In per capita terms, for each US\$ 100 global export by India, US\$ 10.56 came from ASEAN in 2019, increased marginally over 2004 and 2010, the period which witnessed relatively higher engagement between ASEAN and India. In the case of import, US\$ 11.89 came from ASEAN for each US\$ 100 import by India from the world. The trend reiterates India's import dependency but also shows much room to enhance trade between ASEAN and India.

The effective implementation of the Services and Investment Agreements, which were signed and ratified between India and ASEAN, is expected to raise the trade flow between the two partners where a large part of bilateral trade between them is yet to be unlocked. The pandemic has impacted the trade flows between ASEAN and India. Trade forecast indicates that the ASEAN-India trade in goods is likely to decline from US\$ 90 billion in 2019 to US\$ 84 billion in 2021. However, a sharp rise in ASEAN-India trade is possible along with a rebound of ASEAN economies and India from the current global crisis. One of the key challenges to India's export in this uncertain time is, therefore, to maintain the competitiveness in the global and regional markets by improving trade facilitation not only at home but also with the trade partners. Along with it, upgrading the ASEAN-India FTA (AIFTA) and its effective utilisation may perhaps add the required momentum to the bilateral trade flows while promoting sustainable and inclusive growth for both ASEAN and India. The policy uncertainties and negative effects arising from anti-globalisation measures have also affected bilateral FDI flows between ASEAN and India.

What follows is that India's widening deficit in current account with ASEAN but a fluctuating surplus in the capital account signal a shift is needed in India's economic policy toward ASEAN. As of 2019, the net effect of both current and capital accounts is not in favour of India. To convert the deficit into a surplus, India may strive for bigger ASEAN markets seeking greater capital and trade. Another great opportunity to scale up the ASEAN-India engagements is the development of value chains. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the supply chain networks and the supply of intermediate inputs and final goods across the world has been disrupted disproportionately. The impact of supply chain disruptions is multidimensional due to high degree of integration and interdependence of value chains across the countries.

In addition to the automobile sector, some of the sectors hold promise in value chains between ASEAN and India are electrical equipment, industrial machines, road vehicles, power generating machines and telecommunications, and the services sectors such as ICT, R&D, pharmaceuticals, etc. Innovative project like the Project Development Fund (PDF) is what ASEAN and India need more, but it is yet to be fully

utilised. Vietnam is becoming the hub in ASEAN, and it would be worth trying to build deeper integration with Vietnam. Today many businesses of the world are viewing India as the hub of the supply chain. India has moved ahead with the mantra of 'Make for World' alongside 'Make in India'. As China's economy loses momentum, investments from China are shifting abroad. India is an attractive alternative. ASEAN and India can leverage the emerging scenario and support each other to build new and resilient supply chains. To explore this opportunity, ASEAN and India must upgrade the skilling, improve logistics services and strengthen the transportation infrastructure. The Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) is a correct step forward. Bringing ASEAN in SCRI will strengthen our value chain linkages. Business and economic cooperation between India and ASEAN in areas of mutual interest such as financial technology (FinTech), connectivity, start-ups, and innovation, empowerment of youth and women and the development of MSMEs are important drivers to move up the ASEAN-India relation in higher plateau. Engaging in new areas like energy, maritime safety and security, blue economy, digital connectivity and e-commerce will effectively respond to the growing demand of new partnerships.

Investment reform is another challenge for both India and ASEAN. ASEAN and India should cooperate towards designing appropriate policies, simplifying investment regimes and streamlining investment processes to further strengthen the value chain and investment linkages. India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' or 'Self-Reliant India' Mission offers investment opportunities to ASEAN countries. ASEAN-India connectivity could serve as a basis for Indo-Pacific infrastructure cooperation. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam is pivotal to the next phase of ASEAN-India relation. In the post-COVID-19, restoring connectivity and resilience of supply chains will be key to ASEAN-India economic integration, particularly the development of India's Northeast India. The ASEAN-India Plan of Action (POA)(2021-2025) recommends for transforming Trilateral Highway into an Economic Corridor.

The ASEAN-India Plan of Action (POA)(2021-2025) recommends for transforming Trilateral Highway into an Economic Corridor. Prof. Takenori Horimoto commented: "Countries of the Indo-Pacific should strive for sharing the concept of multilateralism as the basic regional principle". This is also not to deny that a stronger ASEAN-India partnership would also strengthen multilateralism, and work towards building a common position, voice, and visibility in building Indo-Pacific. Prof. Takenori Horimoto commented: "Countries of the Indo-Pacific should strive for sharing the concept of multilateralism as the basic regional principle". This is also not to deny that a stronger ASEAN-India partnership would also strengthen multilateralism, and work towards building a common position, voice, and visibility in building Indo-Pacific.

India's engagements with ASEAN nations in coping with the COVID-19 challenges have paved the way for friendship, good neighbourliness, peaceful co-existence and prosperity in the region. Tomorrow's Summit is going to be a turning point of ASEAN-India partnership. Outcomes of the coming ASEAN-India Summit and the East Asia Summit shall guide us to cross new milestones and open new vistas for the region while helping us to adapt to the new normal.

*(The Author is Professor, ASEAN-India Centre (AIC), Research and Information System for Developing Countries)*

**Source:** [economictimes.com](https://economictimes.com); 11 November 2020

## **INDIA, PHILIPPINES TO SIGN DEAL ON BRAHMOS MISSILE DURING SUMMIT NEXT YEAR**

- Rezaul H Laskar

India and the Philippines are looking to sign an agreement on the BrahMos cruise missile during a planned summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Rodrigo Duterte next year, making the Southeast Asian country the first customer for the weapons system developed jointly by New Delhi and Moscow. A team from BrahMos Aerospace, the New Delhi-based India-Russia joint venture that produces the weapons system, is expected to visit Manila by December to sort out a few remaining issues for the deal to supply the missiles to the Philippines Army's first Land Based Missile System Battery, people familiar with developments said on condition of anonymity on Thursday.

"The BrahMos team is expected to iron out a few kinks and address some small issues so that the deal can be signed during the upcoming summit. Everything else has been worked out," one of the people cited above said. Though dates for the summit between Modi and Duterte are yet to be finalised, the meeting is expected to be held in February. Several other agreements, including on cooperation between India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and its Philippines counterpart, ICT, and air rights, are also expected to be signed during the meeting, the people said. India and the Philippines were initially expected to sign a defence cooperation and procurement agreement, which would have covered the BrahMos deal, during the virtual meeting of the joint commission on bilateral cooperation co-chaired by external affairs minister S Jaishankar and his counterpart Teodoro Locsin Jr on November 6.

However, the signing couldn't go ahead as planned because of a formality, the people said. "One of the signing authorities wasn't available and it was only a formality," said the person cited above. Hindustan Times had first reported in December last year that the Philippines was set to become the first country to buy the BrahMos cruise missile system. Though both sides were keen on finalising a deal earlier this year, the matter was hit by developments related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Russia's deputy chief of mission Roman Babushkin also said on Thursday that India and Russia plan to gradually increase the range of the BrahMos and begin exporting the missile to "third countries, starting with the Philippines". The Philippines Army zeroed in on the BrahMos after extensive trials and much of the negotiations had revolved around the cost of the system and financing for the deal. The supersonic cruise missile with a range of about 500 km will equip the Philippines Army's first Land Based Missile System Battery, which was raised and activated in October last year.

The Philippines Army expects this battery to be fully ready and for all the equipment to be acquired by 2024. According to the plans, the battery will be fully capable of

defending the Philippines against external threats by 2028. However, some of the recent discussions have focused on the \$100-million line of credit offered by India to the Philippines for defence purchases, particularly because of Manila's perception that the amount should be increased, the people said. The Philippines side has also noted that India has offered larger lines of credit for defence equipment to other Southeast Asian countries, the people added. India has been in talks with several countries, including Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, over the past few years to sell them land and sea-based versions of the BrahMos. A BrahMos team visited a state-run shipyard in Surabaya in 2018 to assess the fitting of the missile on Indonesian warships. In recent years, the Philippines has concluded several deals with India for personal protective items or bulletproof gear and armour plating for military vehicles. During Modi's visit to the Philippines in 2017, the two sides signed an MoU on defence industry and logistics cooperation to provide a framework for the development, production and procurement of defence hardware.

**Source:** [hindustantimes.com](https://www.hindustantimes.com); 12 November 2020

## **ASEAN SUMMIT: ASIA-PACIFIC CLOSES IN ON WORLD'S BIGGEST TRADE DEAL**

- Reuters

Fifteen Asia-Pacific economies are set to conclude talks on Sunday and sign what could become the world's largest free trade agreement, covering nearly a third of the global population and about 30% of its global gross domestic product. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which could be approved at the end of a four-day ASEAN summit in Hanoi, will progressively lower tariffs and aims to counter protectionism, boost investment and allow freer movement of goods within the region.

A U.S.-China trade war and U.S. President Donald Trump's "America First" retreat from predecessor Barack Obama's "pivot" towards Asia has given impetus to complete RCEP, which is widely seen as Beijing's chance to set the regional trade agenda in Washington's absence. The U.S. election win by Democrat Joe Biden, however, could challenge that, with the former vice president signalling a return to stronger U.S. multilateralism.

### **WHAT IS RCEP ALL ABOUT?**

RCEP includes China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the 10 members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) - Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. India was involved in earlier discussions but opted out last year.

One of the deal's biggest draws is that its members already have various bilateral or multilateral agreements in place, so RCEP builds on those foundations. India was involved in earlier discussions but opted out last year. One of the deal's biggest draws

is that its members already have various bilateral or multilateral agreements in place, so RCEP builds on those foundations.

### **WHAT IS ITS GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE?**

The idea of RCEP was hatched in 2012 and was seen as a way for China, the region's biggest importer and exporter, to counter growing U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific under Obama. Negotiations for a U.S.-led "mega-regional accord" then known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) - Obama's signature trade deal - were making strong progress and China was not among its 12 members. Momentum behind RCEP grew when Trump withdrew the United States from the TPP in 2017, taking away its main architect and two-thirds of the bloc's combined \$27 trillion GDP. It was renamed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and it includes seven RCEP members. As the key source of imports and main export destination for most RCEP members, China stands to benefit and is well positioned to shape the trade rules and expand its influence in the Asia-Pacific, which Obama had openly sought to prevent.

### **HOW IS RCEP DIFFERENT TO CPTPP?**

RCEP focuses heavily on slashing tariffs and increasing market access but it does not harmonise to the same extent as CPTPP and is seen as less comprehensive. It requires fewer political or economic concessions compared with CPTPP and RCEP has less emphasis on labour rights, environmental and intellectual property protections and dispute resolution mechanisms, although it does include provisions on competition. RCEP's market size is nearly five times greater than that of the CPTPP, with almost double its annual trade value and combined GDP.

### **WILL A BIDEN PRESIDENCY CHANGE ANYTHING?**

Biden is signaling a swing back to the multilateral approach of the Obama administration, but it might be premature to talk about trade deals given the huge challenges awaiting him on the domestic front, and risk of upsetting unions that helped get him elected. His trade priorities are expected to focus on working with allies to jointly exert pressure on China over trade and to push for changes at the World Trade Organization. Rejoining the CPTPP in its current form might not be on the horizon soon. The trade unions and progressives that backed Biden's election have previously been sceptical about free trade agreements. He has included elements of those in his transition team and may be advised to maintain protections on vulnerable industries like steel and aluminium. However, indications of Biden's intent to reconnect in the Asia-Pacific would be broadly welcomed, including as a counterbalance against China.

**Source:** [economictimes.com](https://economictimes.com); 13 November 2020



# TECHNOLOGY, TACTICS, AND TURKISH ADVICE LEAD AZERBAIJAN TO VICTORY IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

- Ron Synovitz

It took Azerbaijan just 43 days to win back its territory around the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh -- seven districts of mountains and foothills that had been occupied by Armenian separatists since Baku's humiliating battlefield failures of the early 1990s. Analysts say three factors explain why Azerbaijan was so successful in the battlefield this time: technology, tactics, and Turkey. Alex Melikishvili, a research analyst at IHS Markit Country Risk, says it was Turkish support for Azerbaijan that made the war "qualitatively different from all previous conflagrations." Melikishvili says the presence of Turkish F-16 fighter jets at a military airfield in Ganca, Azerbaijan's second-largest city, was "tangible confirmation" that the geopolitical balance in the South Caucasus had shifted in Azerbaijan's favor.

## **Superior Weapons Technology**

While Azerbaijan hasn't released casualty figures for its troops, it has made no secret about its use of the latest high-tech drones it purchased from Turkey and Israel to carry out air strikes and battlefield reconnaissance.

Drone footage released by Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry after fighting broke out on September 27 revealed the havoc wreaked by Baku's UAVs -- the destruction of Armenian tanks, artillery, ground fortifications, and even a Russian-built S-300 antiaircraft missile system. Margarita Karamian, an ethnic Armenian veteran of the 1992-1994 war from the town of Hadrut, said she was shocked when she saw formations of up to 30 Azerbaijani drones "darken the sky" over Nagorno-Karabakh's southeastern flank during the first wave of the Azerbaijani military offensive. Forced to admit it was a "different war" than the early 1990s, Karamian said ethnic Armenian forces -- including her own son and husband -- had to quickly learn to seek cover underground against the pilotless aerial assaults. The Armenian forces were simply "overwhelmed by Azerbaijan's technological superiority in the battlefield," said Can Kasapoglu, director of the Security and Defense Research Program at the Istanbul-based Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM). Kasapoglu says the Armenian forces lacked "adequate sensors, electronic warfare cover, or counterdrone weaponry" to defend against Azerbaijan's Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). "The first lesson that the Azerbaijani-Armenian clashes showed is the vulnerability of traditional land units -- armored, mechanized, and motorized formations" in the face of advanced drone warfare weaponry and concepts," Kasapoglu concluded.

As a result, Kasapoglu says the Armenian forces were quickly routed in an "irregular and undisciplined withdrawal" from the frontline positions they'd been fortifying along the "line of contact" since a 1994 cease-fire brought an end to the previous war. "Open-source intelligence publications documented some 175 main battle losses for the Armenian occupation forces in Nagorno-Karabakh" within a month, Kasapoglu says. Fuad Shahbazov, an analyst at the Baku-based Center For Strategic

Communications, agrees that the most significant battlefield advantage for Azerbaijan was its technological superiority. Shahbazov says that as a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Armenia was “mostly only able to get Russian-made weaponry, receiving batches of weapons from Russia.” “About 90 to 95 percent of its arsenal is Russian-made weaponry,” Shahbazov told RFE/RL. “But Azerbaijan has managed to diversify its arsenal by importing weapons from Turkey and from Israel.” Shahbazov notes that Baku also has used its income from oil and natural gas exports during the past decade to buy weapons from NATO-member countries. He says those purchases included radar-jamming systems from Spain, self-propelled DANA howitzer artillery acquired in 2018 from the Czech Republic, and the “very recently imported Turkish-made Bayraktar drones.” “The Bayraktar drones carry four missiles that are also produced by Turkey -- MAM laser-guided ‘smart micromunition’ missiles,” Shahbazov says. “These drones have been used in Libya and Syria where they’ve proved to be very effective against all Russian-made weapons.” “In Syria, these drones very easily destroyed Russian air defense systems like the S-300 and S-400” surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), he claims. In Libya, about two dozen Russian-built Pantsir-1S air defense systems also reportedly were destroyed recently by Turkish Bayraktar TB2 and Anka-S combat drones, the latter of which were developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI).

“This caused a kind of outcry in Russia because Turkey has produced drone weapons which are able to easily hit all the air-defense systems that have been advertised by Russia as one of the most effective air-defense systems in the world,” Shahbazov says. Kasapoglu says Azerbaijan’s technological advantage didn’t come only from the combat and surveillance drones it purchased. Crucially, he says, Turkey also transferred “a complete robotic warfare doctrine and concept of operations” to Azerbaijan. “Interestingly, the Azerbaijani drone campaign strongly resembled Turkey’s Operation Spring Shield against the Syrian Arab Army back in early 2020,” Kasapoglu wrote in an analysis published by the Washington-based Jamestown Foundation. Kasapoglu says Azerbaijan’s military planning and operations “mimicked the Turkish Armed Forces’ way of warfighting during Operation Spring Shield.” He says that was demonstrated by the way Azerbaijan’s land-based artillery and multiple-rocket launchers worked “in close coordination with unmanned aerial systems tasked with intelligence, target accusation, and battle damage assessment.” “The second major similarity was the systematic hunt for the enemy’s mobile air defenses,” Kasapoglu says.

Shahbazov adds that Azerbaijan managed to draw out and expose the Armenian air defenses by sacrificing an air fleet of Soviet-designed Antonov AN-2 biplanes that it “probably purchased from Ukraine.” Designed in the late 1940s, those Soviet-era biplanes are now mostly used as crop dusters or to fight forest fires. They are widely considered as “unusable” in modern combat. But Shahbazov says Baku fitted its Antonov AN-2s out so they could be piloted by remote control at low altitudes over the Armenian air defenses. “They prepared camouflage to make them look like drones,” Shahbazov explains. “The Armenians posted videos of what they thought were drones being shot down by their air defenses.” “What was really happening is that whenever the Armenians hit an AN-2 with its air defenses, the real Azerbaijani surveillance drones at higher altitudes were able to identify their positions precisely and easily destroy all of these air defenses.”

## **NATO Commando Tactics**

But it wasn't just a high-tech, robotic warfare doctrine that NATO-member Turkey has shared with Azerbaijan. Combat footage on social-media platforms like Telegram -- apparently shared by Azerbaijani soldiers -- hint at how Baku also took lessons from the tactics of U.S.-led coalition forces against the Taliban in the mountains of Afghanistan since late 2001. In those operations, NATO troops did not mass together in the thousands according to the methods of 20th-century conventional warfare -- a strategy that requires the logistical complications of supply lines vulnerable to guerrilla counterattacks. Across the Afghan interior and along the 3,300 kilometers of border with Pakistan, small specialized U.S. commando teams were sent into Taliban territory to carry out "search and destroy" missions. Each U.S. commando team was a mix of about a dozen soldiers -- bringing together U.S. Special Forces, light mountain infantry, Marines, Navy SEAL fighters, and CIA paramilitary officers. Working together with soldiers from the fledgling Afghan National Army, those commando teams use a device known as SOFLAM -- a Special Operations Forces Laser Acquisition Marker -- to target nearby Taliban positions they spotted in the mountainous terrain. When a commando team would "paint" a target with SOFLAM, coalition aircraft circling over the battlefield could lock in on the signal and drop laser-guided JDAM bombs -- joint-attack direct munitions -- onto the targets. In Azerbaijan's offensive to the southeast of Nagorno-Karabakh, once gaps were opened in the Armenian defensive lines by the initial drone strikes, Baku's commando teams infiltrated the forests and seized the high ground around towns and villages along the path of the advance. In Hadrut, just days before the two sides engaged in combat there, ethnic Armenian residents spoke of seeing "strange men, not Armenians" who'd infiltrated vacated houses to establish a presence in the town. Described as "saboteur groups" by both Baku and Yerevan, the Azerbaijani commando teams could provide target coordinates from their positions on the ground -- directing fire from Azerbaijan's nearby rocket launchers and howitzer artillery or from the air. Mustafa Hajibeyli, an Azerbaijani veteran of the war in the early 1990s, told RFE/RL that the tactic appears to have been repeated throughout the war as Baku's forces took back towns and villages along the southern flank of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Iranian border -- "forcing the enemy to surrender cities without major clashes." "They did that in Fuzuli (Varanda) and Caybrayil (Jrakan), taking control of the surrounding mountains and trying to cut all the roads to the cities -- forcing the enemy to leave their heavy fortifications and flee," Hajibeyli says. Shahbazov agrees that the commando tactics used by the United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan were adopted by Azerbaijan for the latest fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh -- likely bolstered by Turkey's armed forces, which played a key role in Afghanistan while heading the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

"Azerbaijani special forces mostly have been trained in Turkish military academies for many years and in Pakistani military academies," Shahbazov told RFE/RL. "We have seen this tactic used in this current war." "Azerbaijan learned good lessons from its losses in the 1990s and from its four-day war against Armenian forces in 2016," Shahbazov says. "This time, unlike those past battles, Baku has deployed small saboteur groups that have been very active along the contact line." "If you understand this tactic, you can see evidence of it in many of the videos that have been posted to social media from the combat zone," he says. "In Susa, when Azerbaijani forces took

control of the city, it was not a full-scale assault by Azerbaijan's artillery and drones," Shahbazov says. "Susa was retaken by close combat when these saboteur groups, different saboteur groups, entered the city and pushed for the Armenian forces to withdraw from the city center -- then pushed them out of the city." "It is the first time Azerbaijan has actively used so many special forces," he said. "And they have used them in these small military saboteur groups to force out the Armenians."

**Source:** [rferl.org](https://rferl.org); 13 November 2020

## **DELHI PROTESTS AS BEIJING TRIES TO TURN SOUTH CHINA SEA CODE OF CONDUCT INTO A BARRIER TO KEEP US, INDIA, OTHERS AWAY FROM DISPUTE**

- Anirban Bhaumik

India on Saturday tacitly opposed China's latest move to press the ASEAN hard to insert in the proposed Code of Conduct on the South China Sea certain clauses that would help the communist country to keep its rivals and other nations outside the region away from the disputed waters. The negotiation for the code "should not be prejudicial to the legitimate interests of the third parties and should be fully consistent with the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)", said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar while representing Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the East Asia Summit, which was held through video-links in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Without mentioning China, he expressed India's concern over the nation's aggressive moves in the region, including building military infrastructures in the disputed waters, and purported plan to create an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) covering the disputed Pratas, Paracel and Spratly Islands. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) expressed concern about "actions and incidents that erode trust in the region". Jaishankar's remarks on the South China Sea came amid the six-month-long military stand-off between the Indian Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in eastern Ladakh. Premier Li Keqiang represented China in the East Asia Summit. He also attended the ASEAN-China summit on Friday, when he nudged the leaders of the South East Asian nations to speed up negotiations for a code of conduct for the South China Sea. The conclave was attended by the leaders and representatives of the 18 nations – the 10 Southeast Asian nations and India, Russia, China, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan and the United States. President Vladimir Putin represented Russia, but the US President Donald Trump, who recently lost the election to his rival Joe Biden, skipped it. The US was represented by Trump's National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien.

India last month joined the US to stress that the proposed Code of Conduct in the South China Sea should not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of any nation

in accordance with the international law. Beijing has of late been stepping up pressure on the ASEAN to agree to insert certain clauses in the Code of Conduct in order to make it restrict Japan, India, the US and the other nations outside the region from engaging in maritime security cooperation with the South East Asian nations and exploring resources in the South China Sea. If China manages to get all the clauses proposed by it included in the Code of Conduct, the ASEAN nations may have to get prior clearance from Beijing for joint military drills in the South China Sea with the US, Japan, India or any other nations outside the region. It may also make it difficult for ONGC Videsh Limited of India and similar entities of other nations to continue exploring hydrocarbon and other resources in and around the disputed waters. China had initially been reluctant to enter into any negotiation with the ASEAN for a Code of Conduct on the South China Sea. It, however, finally agreed to start the negotiation in May 2017. China had initially been reluctant to enter into any negotiation with the ASEAN for a Code of Conduct on the South China Sea. It, however, finally agreed to start the negotiation in May 2017.

**Source:** [deccanherald.com](http://deccanherald.com); 14 November 2020



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

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

Cover Designed by Gayathri Rajesh, NMF Intern.