



# **MAKING WAVES**

*A maritime news brief covering:*

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

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# MARITIME SECURITY

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## PREDATOR DRONES HELPING US TO KEEP WATCH ON 'VESSELS OF INTEREST': NAVY

- ANI

Amid the ongoing stand-off with China along the northern borders, the Indian Navy said that two Predator (MQ-9 Sea Guardian) drones are helping the maritime force enhance its surveillance all across the Indian Ocean region and keep a close watch on the 'vessels of interest' passing from there.

The two drones were leased by the Indian Navy from the US during the height of the clash in Ladakh's Galwan Valley to help the forces keep a close eye on the movement of the Chinese warships and other suspicious vessels. During an interview with ANI, Navy Vice Chief Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar said, "The long endurance of the MQ-9 Sea Guardian drones allows us to keep a watch on a large area and has helped us to enhance our maritime domain awareness. This also allows us to keep a close eye on any vessel of interest operating in the region." Asked if the 'vessels of interest' monitored by the predator drones included any Chinese warship or research vessels operating in the area, he said, "The drones are used to keep a watch on the potential adversaries but also the vessels of interest who are not following the rules. This may be from any country China or Japan or any country." The officer said that the drones with their long endurance help the force keep a watch all along with the Indian Ocean Region, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea region. The Indian Navy was the first force among the three services to go for the leasing option provided in the new Defence Acquisition Procedure to get the two drones from an American firm and deployed them at a Southern Navy base to keep a watch on the entire area looked after by the force.

The drones can fly for more than 35 hours at a stretch and can also hover over an area of interest or a ship for a long time to see what their activities are. The Chinese Navy-affiliated Research vessels generally operate in the Indian Ocean region for surveillance activities and their activities are of interest to the Indian forces. India is also processing the case for the acquisition of 30 more of these drones which will come armed with Hellfire missiles which will allow the taking down of any potential targets by the forces during its surveillance missions. The project is at the moment being discussed at the Defence Ministry level and will need to be cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security due to its enormous cost.

**Source:** [Business Standard](#); 19 June 2021

## **PCG STARTS 3RD PHASE OF MARITIME EXERCISES, STEPS UP ANTI-PIRACY PATROLS IN MINDANAO**

- Richa Noriega

Personnel of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) have started on Monday, June 21, the third phase of their maritime drills, which zero in on anti-piracy and anti-terrorism in Mindanao to strengthen the maritime law enforcement within the region. PCG spokesperson Commodore Armand Balilo said the third maritime exercises, led by the Task Force “Pagsasanay,” will be conducted off Basilan, Sulu, and Jolo waters. Members of the Special Operations Force of the Coast Guard were deployed in the area with four ships and three helicopters. The first leg of the drills started in April with the activation of Task Force Pagsasanay, a unit formed by the PCG to train its personnel on navigation, in restricted bodies of water.

Balilo said they will intensify maritime training at the Sibutu Passage where almost 13,000 international vessels are passing and a series of piracy and kidnapping incidents have transpired in previous years. “In 2018, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) collaborated to gradually minimize the piracy threats and now there are no pirates or piracy incidents being reported,” Balilo said in an interview over Super Radyo DZBB on Sunday night, June 20. The PCG spokesperson said that they also placed radar stations in the Sibutu Passage to monitor the ships passing in the area—the information is transmitted to the headquarters as they can easily respond in emergency situations.

“Let us show that the action will continue in the area and we should not be overtaken, this is now our purpose in the exercise of our ships the communications and the response of the air supports will be strengthened in the exercise,” Balilo said in Filipino. Apart from the maritime law enforcement exercises, the PCG personnel also focused on humanitarian activities as they distributed relief packs for the fishermen in Zamboanga City on Monday. At least 30 fishermen received relief packs such as purified drinking water, canned goods, coffee, bread, hygiene supplies, and pair of slippers. The PCG said the initiative aims to help local fishermen and their families to continue recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

**Source:** [Manila Bulletin](#); 21 June 2021

## **INDONESIA, U.S BREAK GROUND ON JOINT STRATEGIC MARITIME CENTRE**

- Agustinus Beo Da Costa

Indonesia and the United States have broken ground on a new \$3.5 million maritime training centre in the strategic area of Batam, in the Riau Islands, Indonesia's

maritime security agency said. Attending the ceremony virtually on Friday, the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia, Sung Kim, said the maritime centre would be part of ongoing efforts between the two countries to bolster security in the region.

"As a friend and partner to Indonesia, the United States remains committed to supporting Indonesia's important role in maintaining regional peace and security by fighting domestic and trans-national crimes," he said, according to a statement from Bakamla, Indonesia's maritime security agency. The training centre, located at the strategic meeting point of the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea, will be run by Bakamla and houses classrooms, barracks and a launch pad, the agency said. The U.S. collaboration with the world's largest archipelagic nation comes amid rising tensions in the South China Sea, with the Philippines protesting the presence of hundreds of Chinese vessels in the Spratly islands this May. Earlier this month the foreign ministers of Southeast Asia and China agreed during a meeting to exercise restraint in the South China Sea and avoid actions that could escalate tensions.

**Source:** [Reuters](#); 26 June 2021

## **UNSCIENTIFIC, UNREALISTIC AND IMAGINARY CLAIMS; A THREAT TO PEACE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA**

- ACN Newswire

MANILA, Jun 20, 2021 - (ACN Newswire) - Seas have acquired unparalleled importance in modern times owing to their trade routes and rich resource base. The territorial claims of sovereignty over the various unclaimed and disputed regions are thus on the rise fueling further conflict, friction and chances of the potential outbreak of violence. The South China Sea and its island chains are experiencing rising escalation and tension first-hand. The situation as it is in the South China Sea is very alarming owing to the power imbalance in the region. This shifted axis of power is concerning for the smaller states in South East Asia and a major threat to their territorial sovereignty.

China's claim to the island chains is not new and has been there for a few decades now. The history of the claim can be traced to a map published at the request of Kuomintang Govt. based on the maps drawn by some private firms and cartographic books - the Map of the South Sea Islands, issued in 1947. The 9-Dash Line used by China to claim their historical right was drawn as a part of this map to illustrate the territorial extent of China. The Chinese claim at that time was though limited to small scattered islands in the South China Sea. The position of the Kuomintang Govt. on territorial extent was adopted by the mainland Govt. in China, and not having any background information on this, it maintained the islands within the 9-Dash Line: Nansha (Spratly), Sheesha (Paracel) and Zhongsha (an imaginary island group which has no physical existence and is actually a misinterpretation of Macclesfield Bank, a submerged feature in the South China Sea). China has never been able to justify the claim to these island groups primarily as they have never exercised sovereignty over them over an extended period

of time and also due to the existence of non-factual and imaginary claims over fictitious islands.

UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) has clearly defined laws to define coastal and maritime boundaries, and per its laws, a 200 Nautical Mile Sea Floor as a part of the Continental Shelf of a State, with exclusive rights reserved for all individual states. Things began to get serious in 2009 when all of the countries in South East Asia implemented UNCLOS and align their respective claims and jurisdictions in accordance with international law. China reacted badly to UNCLOS as they knew if UNCLOS was implemented their Claim to the international China Sea would be defunct, and thereby China began the program to strengthen its presence and activity in the South China Sea, leading to more friction between China and smaller states. The situation worsened when China began to interfere in the special economic zones of smaller states and escalations were reported closer to the coasts of smaller states. The incident at Scarborough Shoal, a standoff between the Philippines and China, is one of the recent examples of the rising escalations and conflicts, and Chinese attempts to exercise jurisdictional rights as per the 9-Dash Line.

Growing Chinese interest in the sea trade routes has created friction points. China's interest in the Arctic is a major concern for many. Global warming has opened up the Arctic and is allowing ships to pass which means it is opening up new trade routes from East to West and vice versa. If the Arctic trade routes open, the South China Sea, which is the doorway for China to the Indian Ocean, Africa and Europe would have an alternative Maritime trade route via the Arctic. This has fascinated China, and China is concerning and aligning itself with the geopolitical and scientific developments related to the Arctic. However, the countries surrounding the Arctic are worried about the Chinese Navy and military build-up in the Arctic as happened in Djibouti-Africa. China will have a tough time convincing the states surrounding the Arctic about building ports even when the countries are divided over the opinion to allow China access to the Arctic. Russia and the United States are among the states who favour opening up the Arctic for naval and maritime trade activities, while states like Canada are concerned and against it as large parts of the Arctic are considered to be Canadian territory by Canada. The US is also concerned about Chinese dual use of technology for trade and military and this has made it difficult for China to establish ports with many countries in that area. Chinese Arctic policy can lead to the emergence of fresh flashpoints in the Arctic, given the divided opinion on access to the Arctic to China.

The growing conflict and escalation over marine water bodies make it imperative for the implementation of UNCLOS, especially in the South China Sea and elsewhere. The claim to the Island chains and subsequent friction between states can be reduced by not including the islands as an extension of the continental shelf of countries and thus the claim would not result in overlapping of maritime boundaries of states thus reducing the chances of a possible outbreak of violence by eliminating the zones wherein more than I state could exercise their exclusive rights. UN must involve itself and enforce the implementation of UNCLOS as abiding by International Law and give peace a sustainable chance to flourish.

*\* The Author: Professor Jay L. Batongbacal is Director, Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea (IMLOS) at the University of the Philippines (UP). IMLOS serves as the country's national centre for independent research and policy studies on*

*maritime matters of interest to the nation and collaborates with a wide network of government groups, non-government organizations, academic institutions, and private entities within and across our country borders, covering the law of the sea, maritime affairs, and even territorial issues. Professor Batongbacal was a member of the technical team that prepared and defended the Philippines' claim to a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in the Benham Rise Region, made in a Submission filed with the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) pursuant to the provisions of Article 76 of the Law of the Sea Convention. The CLCS recognized Philippine jurisdiction over the Benham Rise Region in April 2012. Batongbacal obtained his LL.B. (1991) from UP College of Law, and Masters in Marine Management (1997) and Doctorate in the Science of Law (2010) from Dalhousie University in Canada, acquired under scholarship grants from the Canadian International Development Agency and the prestigious Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation, respectively.*

**Source:** [asiaone.com](http://asiaone.com); 20 June 2021

## **NIMASA MOVES TO END WAR RISK INSURANCE LIABILITY IN GULF OF GUINEA**

- Chinweizu Amuta

Taking in 17 countries from Senegal to Angola, the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) is richly endowed with vast reserves of hydrocarbon, solid minerals (diamond, tin and cobalt), and fisheries, making it a highly strategic area. While not a major international shipping route at present, the Gulf of Guinea represents 25 per cent of African maritime traffic and has nearly 20 commercial seaports. According to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, the Gulf of Guinea is home to 4.5 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves (with 60 per cent of Africa's oil production) and 2.7 per cent of proven global natural gas reserves. Two-thirds of these reserves are concentrated within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Nigeria, the centre of gravity in the region, whose oil sector accounts for 75 per cent of the state's revenue and 90 per cent of total exports. The recently launched Deep Blue Project offers an opportunity for improved ease of doing business conditions in Nigeria, and the greater Gulf of Guinea area. It is envisaged that this concerted effort to permanently address maritime insecurity would lead to a reversal of the issuance of War Risk Insurance being charged on cargoes and vessels headed for ports in the GoG region.

### **Paying for Insurance at War Rates**

War Risk Insurance is coverage provided on losses resulting from events, such as war, invasions, insurrections, riots, strikes, and terrorism. War risk insurance is offered as a separate policy, as it is excluded from standard insurance policies due to the high risks involved. Due to the frequently reported cases of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, insurance underwriters charge more to cover vessels that travel through the region because ship-owners who are required to sail in the Gulf of Guinea will have to obtain

the approval of their insurer before they can enter these waters. The obvious consequence of this development has meant higher costs of goods to end users and reduced profit margins, which negatively affect economic development, not just in Nigeria, but in GoG countries, in general.

### **How are GoG Piracy Figures Reported?**

It is important to understand how piracy and other maritime crimes are reported because this has a direct bearing on how decisions affecting the economies of GoG countries are made, including charging of War Risk Insurance on vessels plying these waters. Piracy data is often used as an indicator of general maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, but unless it is carefully interpreted, using it could lead to poor responses. Reports from the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), as well as other sources, such as the Interregional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé, greatly influence public and policy discourse on the state of maritime security in West and Central Africa. Yet, the extent of the threat is disputed and the numbers need to be carefully examined to avoid misreporting the true situation on ground.

For instance, the Nigerian Navy reported 339 incidents of piracy in 2020. But according to the definition of the crime under international law, 214 out of these would not be considered ‘piracy’ but acts of armed robbery, as they took place in Nigerian territorial waters and not on the High Seas. Incidents of armed robbery at sea are the responsibility of the coastal state if they occur fewer than 12 nautical miles from the coast. The location of attacks is therefore significant, both to interpreting the data and crafting responses. Effective law enforcement far out at sea is beyond the capacity of most regional states. This means that any solution to the problem of piracy is a collective one requiring multinational support as envisioned in the Yaoundé Agreement of 2013.

### **A Deep Blue Answer?**

In any case, the reality remains that the maritime security situation in the GoG could be much improved and to this end, the Federal Government, with the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) at the spearhead, has brought the Deep Blue Project into play. The Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure, as the Project is otherwise known, was launched by President Muhammadu Buhari on June 10 with the remit to secure Nigerian territorial waters up to the Gulf of Guinea. The land assets include the Command, Control, Communication, Computer, and Intelligence Centre (C4i) for intelligence gathering and data collection; 16 armoured vehicles for coastal patrol; and 600 specially trained troops for interdiction, known as the Maritime Security Unit.

The sea assets include two Special Mission Vessels and 17 Fast Interceptor Boats, with the air assets comprising of two Special Mission Aircraft for surveillance of the country’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); three Special Mission Helicopters for search and rescue operations; and four Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. It is important to note that the Deep Blue Project is the first integrated maritime security strategy in West and Central Africa with the aim of tackling incidents of piracy, crew kidnappings for ransom, and other maritime crimes.

### **Present Reality on Ground**

Amidst the reduced piracy incidents in Nigerian waters and the Gulf of Guinea since February, when NIMASA deployed assets under the Deep Blue Project, the Agency's Director General, Dr. Bashir Jamoh, has called for an end to the charging of War Risk Insurance to Nigeria-bound vessels.

Speaking during the recent official flag-off of the DBP, Dr Jamoh said: "Since the deployment of the Deep Blue Project assets in February, there had been a steady decline in piracy attacks in Nigerian waters on a monthly basis. "We, therefore, invite the international shipping community to rethink the issue of war risk insurance on cargo bound for our ports. Nigeria has demonstrated enough commitment towards tackling maritime insecurity to avert such premium burden." Although, according to Dr. Jamoh and Industry-watchers alike, piracy in Nigerian waters is waning, stakeholders in the industry are worried that offshore underwriting firms still insist on very high premiums be paid by companies conveying cargoes to the GoG area. While the Deep Blue Project enters implementation stage, NIMASA will not be complacent as it will continually evolve strategies, including wide consultation with stakeholders and application of cutting edge technology, in the fight against maritime insecurity.

**Source:** [thisdaylive.com](https://www.thisdaylive.com); 27 June 2021

# MARITIME FORCES

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## IAF, NAVY TO CONDUCT EXERCISE WITH US CARRIER GROUP FROM TODAY

The Indian Air Force (IAF) and Indian Navy will participate in an exercise with a US carrier strike group (CSG) in the Indian Ocean for two days starting Wednesday. As part of the exercise, Sukhoi, Jaguars, IAF refuelling aircraft and warships and maritime patrol aircraft of the Navy will participate in the exercise. The Navy said in a statement that its INS Kochi and Teg, along with P8I and MiG-29K aircraft will participate in a 'Passage Exercise' with US Navy CSG Ronald Reagan during its transit through Indian Ocean Region" on June 23 and June 24. "The Indian Naval warships along with aircraft from Indian Navy and Indian Air Force will be engaged in joint multi-domain operations with the Carrier Strike Group comprising Nimitz class aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan, Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer USS Halsey and Ticonderoga class guided missile cruiser USS Shiloh".

The US CSG, the air force said, is expected to field F-18 fighters and E-2C Hawkeye AEW&C aircraft. The exercise will be carried out south of Thiruvananthapuram, on the western seaboard. Navy said the two-day exercise "aims to strengthen the bilateral relationship and cooperation by demonstrating the ability to integrate and coordinate comprehensively in maritime operations" and "high tempo operations during the exercise include advanced air defence exercises, cross deck helicopter operations and anti-submarine exercises". The participating forces, the Navy said, "will endeavour to hone their war-fighting skills and enhance their interoperability as an integrated force to promote peace, security and stability in the maritime domain".

The Air Force also said in a statement that the exercise "as a strategic outreach exercise with the defence forces of friendly foreign countries" will "focus on multiple areas including enhancing aspects of interoperability, nuances of international integrated maritime (Search and Rescue) operations and exchange of best practices in the maritime airpower domain." The Ronald Reagan CSG is "currently deployed in the IOR", said the Air Force. The exercise, it said, is in the Southern Air Command's area of responsibility and "will see the IAF forces operate from bases under four operational commands" and will include Jaguars, Su-30 MKI fighters, Air-to-Air Refueller aircraft, Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS) and Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C). It said that the Air Force has "extensive experience in maritime operations in the IOR" which has been "consolidated over the years by conduct of exercises from the country's island territories, including participation in International exercises". "This engagement with the US CSG offers one more opportunity to undertake joint operations in the maritime domain with a friendly foreign power," said the Air Force.

**Source:** [Indian Express](#); 23 June 2021

## **WANT KARWAR NAVAL BASE TO BE ASIA'S BIGGEST, WILL TRY & RAISE BUDGET IF NECESSARY, SAYS RAJNATH**

- PTI

Karwar (Karnataka): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the naval base being developed here under “Project Seabird” should be Asia’s biggest, and he would try to get budget allocation enhanced for it, if required. He also said India should aim to be among one of the top three naval powers in the world in the next 10-12 years time. “I had a curiosity before visiting Project Seabird to see and understand it...I’m happy seeing Karwar closely and can say that my confidence level has increased towards this naval base,” Singh said. Addressing the Indian Navy officers and sailors, he said, with the completion of the project, not only India’s defence preparedness will be strengthened, but also the country’s trade, economy and the humanitarian assistance that it provides will also get more strength. “It is said that this will become India’s largest naval base, but I have said not only India’s, our wish is that this should become Asia’s biggest naval base, and I will try to get budget allocation increased if required for this,” he added. Singh, accompanied by Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Karambir Singh, undertook an aerial survey of project area and sites, prior to arriving at INS Kadamba Helipad here.

Stating that during the aerial survey of the project, he could see its future, the Defence Minister said, the future of this naval base is “very bright” and the credit for this has to go to the officers and sailors. “I have also seen the country’s first sealift facility, which will improve our maintenance compared to earlier...so I say this naval base is different from the rest,” he said. Noting that India’s strength is growing, Singh said, “..India is now among the five major naval powers in the world, we should aim to be among the top three in the next ten to twelve years.”

Indian Navy’s contribution in maritime and national security is immense, Singh said. Not only him, but those with the knowledge on security-related issues are of the view that the Navy will play the most important role in the country’s security in the future, he added. Citing the role played by the navy in the past like the liberation of Goa, and India-Pakistan wars, among others, he said there is Navy’s role in improving diplomatic relations and recalled the service rendered by it during the COVID pandemic, which has gained appreciation from other countries too. “Some countries have come close to us, it is because of you,” he said, adding, in this way not only as a defence power, the Navy has also safeguarded the country’s global interests. Highlighting the Navy’s role in improving trade and cultural ties with other countries, Singh said, “we have 7,500 km of coastline, 1,100 islands, 25 lakh sq km of exclusive economic zones that can play an important role in the development of the world with the help of our capabilities and capacity.”

“Sometimes we forget our own capability in front of other global powers.....with courage we can achieve things, victory can be achieved during a fight with courage and not only because of ammunition.” “You might have seen, we have proved it (victory with courage).. this time, I don’t want to take any names, you are aware of it, it is in our defence forces,” he said. Noting the Navy’s role in maintaining peace and development in the Indian Ocean Region, and in realising the PM’s vision of ‘SAGAR’ (Security & Growth for All in Region), Singh said, at the time when economic and political relations are fast changing, there is a need for Indian Navy to be strengthened further. “We have to be prepared for the future, we will have to improve our capacity and capability,” he said. There are no shortcomings in mutual coordination between the country’s tri-services, “but we have thought about further improving it.” Singh said that the Defence Ministry is also taking up certain reforms.

Speaking on self-reliance in the defence sector, he said 64 per cent of the capital procurement budget will only be for domestic procurement and several changes have been made in the defence acquisition procedure. As many as 46 out of 48 ships and submarines being procured are being built in Indian shipyards, Singh said, adding, Indigenous Aircraft Carrier, INS Vikrant will be completed soon and is likely to be commissioned as the country completes 75 years of Independence. The Defence Minister is also scheduled to visit Kochi to review the progress of construction of the indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) there.

**Source:** [The Print](#); 24 June 2021

## INDIAN NAVY’S INS SARVEKSHAK DEPLOYED FOR UNDERWATER SURVEY OF MV X-PRESS PEARL DISASTER

- Srishti Jha

The Indian Navy has deployed Hydrographic Survey ship INS Sarvekshak, upon request of the Government of Sri Lanka, to carry out an extensive underwater search operation around the sunken ship MV X-Press Pearl. The X-Press Pearl reported an onboard acid leak that caught fire just when it was due to enter the Colombo harbour on May 20. The fire could be put out only after 13 days of prompt and intense efforts including by the Indian Navy and Coast Guard. The massive fire at MV X-Press Pearl is perceived as the worst marine ecological disaster by Sri Lanka's top environment body in the history of ecological disasters in the country. The cargo vessel MV X-Press Pearl was carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port. The Sri Lankan Navy had sought India’s assistance for firefighting as well as pollution control in the Indian Ocean. The Government of India immediately deployed its assets.

**What is INS Sarvekshak?**

Under the Southern Naval Command, INS Sarvekshak is a hydrographic survey ship in the Indian Navy. Apart from a helicopter, the ship is equipped with four survey motor boats and two small boats. The ship was the runner-up in the 2015 Innovation Trophy given out on Navy Day as an operational unit by PM Modi. Taking to Twitter, the Indian Navy's official spokesperson account informed that considerable quantities of submerged remnants of the hull have been detected during the underwater survey.

The Navy stated that while the aquatic survey has been progressing with naval survey boats, a chopper is carrying out aerial military observation of the region in coordination with the National Aquatics Resource Research & Development Agency (NARA) and Hydrographic Office, Sri Lanka Navy. "Survey being progressed with survey boats and integral helo for aerial recce in coordination with National Aquatics Resource Research & Development Agency (NARA) and Hydrographic Office Sri Lanka Navy," the Indian Navy wrote.

### **Indian Navy to Sri Lanka's rescue**

Earlier this month, the Sri Lankan Defence Secretary acknowledged that the Indian side held productive involvement pertaining to furthering close cooperation in defence and security spheres of both countries. Sri Lankan officials in the recent past lauded rapid response plus support extended by the Indian Coast Guard vessels to douse the fire triggered onboard merchant vessel X-Press Pearl. Attention has also been drawn to aspects of the smooth functioning of a long-existing military training exchange between Sri Lanka and India.

### **Aftermath of the MV X-Press Pearl ecological disaster**

As MV X-Press Pearl sank on June 3, Sri Lankan authorities scrambled to lead a response on the aftermath of the worst possible maritime disaster that they feared was likely to happen close to the country's main port. According to the Sri Lankan authorities, there were about 300 tonnes of oil on board the ship as it started burning on May 20. Most fuel is speculated to have been consumed in the massive fire that broke out, the cause of which is as-yet unknown. X-Press Pearl was carrying just under 1,500 containers, with 81 of those containers described as "dangerous" goods. Other southeast Asian nations' governments announced the vessel that burnt for nearly two weeks has posed oil spill hazard risks to the fishing and oceanic ecosystem. It engulfed the coastline in tonnes of plastic pellets, and debris, prompting the Sri Lankan administration to ban fishing 50 miles along the coastline. Millions of bead-like bits of plastic washed ashore on the Pamunugama beach, north of the capital, in Colombo which is located bang opposite to the anchored and sunken X-Press Pearl.

**Source:** [republicworld.com](http://republicworld.com); 29 June 2021

**"EU, INDIA COMMITTED TO FREE, OPEN,  
INCLUSIVE AND RULES-BASED INDO-  
PACIFIC"**

- PTI

The European Union (EU) and India are committed to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, underpinned by respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and freedom of navigation and overflight, the influential grouping said on Monday.

The assertion came after the EU and India carried out a joint naval drill in the Gulf of Aden on June 18-19 to improve operational interoperability and promote peace and security in the key waterways. The EU also said the two sides are keen to enhance cooperation in the maritime security sphere in the Indo-Pacific region. In January, the 27-nation EU and India launched a dialogue on maritime security and agreed to deepen two-way cooperation in this domain. "The EU and India are committed to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region, underpinned by respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, democracy, rule of law, transparency, freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, and peaceful resolution of disputes," the bloc said in a statement.

It said both sides reaffirm the primacy of international law, including the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The grouping also said the two sides are keen to enhance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. The evolving situation in the Indo-Pacific region in the wake of China's increasing military muscle-flexing has become a major talking point among leading global powers. In April, the EU came out with a comprehensive strategy for the Indo-Pacific, listing its priorities and vision for the region that the bloc said represents the world's "economic and strategic centre of gravity". The two-day naval exercise between the Indian Navy and the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Somalia saw the participation of a total of five warships. The EUNAVFOR is the EU's counter-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia.

"The exercise was based on the scenario of an anti-piracy operation. It included cross-deck helicopter landings, complex tactical evolutions at sea, live firing, a night-time joint patrol and a naval parade in the high seas off the coast of Somalia," the EU said. The Indian Navy has been providing escort to the World Food Programme-chartered vessels, coordinated by the EUNAVFOR Somalia. "The EU and India intend to strengthen their operational cooperation at sea, including joint naval exercises and port calls, and to protect the sea-lanes of communication. They also intend to boost maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific through mutual coordination and exchanges," the EU said. "The EU and India reaffirm their interest to enhance their cooperation in the field of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region," it added.

**Source:** [Outlook India](#); 21 June 2021

## **INS TABAR DEPLOYED FOR NAVAL EXERCISES IN AFRICA, EUROPE TILL SEPTEMBER**

- Manjeet Negi

Indian Naval Ship (INS) Tabar, which commenced its prolonged deployment on June 13, will visit a number of ports in Africa and Europe till September end, 2021. The ship will transit across the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, Suez Canal, Mediterranean Sea, North Sea and Baltic Sea while making port calls at Djibouti, Egypt, Italy, France, UK, Russia, Netherlands, Morocco, and Arctic Council countries like Sweden and Norway. During port visits, the ship is scheduled to participate in bilateral exercises like Ex Konkan with UK Royal Navy, Ex Varuna with French Navy and Ex Indra with Russian Federation Navy, to strengthen military relations, develop interoperability and project long-range sustenance.

These engagements are aimed to further strengthen maritime security in the region and to consolidate combined operations against maritime threats. The deployment will also see participation by the ship in the Russian Navy Day celebrations from July 22 to 27. INS Tabar is a Talwar-class stealth Frigate built for the Indian Navy in Russia. The ship is equipped with a versatile range of weapons and sensors and is a part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet which is based in Mumbai under Western Naval Command.

**Source:** [India Today](#); 26 June 2021

## US WARSHIP SAILS THROUGH THE TAIWAN STRAIT

- Reuters

A US warship has again sailed through the sensitive waterway that separates Taiwan from mainland China, a week after the Chinese-claimed island reported the largest incursion to date of Chinese air force jets in Taiwan's air defence zone. The US Navy's 7th Fleet said the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur conducted a "routine Taiwan Strait transit" on Tuesday in accordance with international law. "The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said the ship had sailed in a northerly direction through the strait and the "situation was as normal". The same ship transited the strait a month ago, prompting China to accuse the United States of threatening peace and stability. The latest mission comes around a week after Taiwan reported 28 Chinese air force aircraft, including fighters and nuclear-capable bombers, entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ). That incident followed the Group of Seven leaders issuing a joint statement scolding China for a series of issues and underscoring the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, comments China condemned as "slander". The US Navy has been conducting such operations in the Taiwan Strait every month or so, to the anger of China which always denounces them.

The United States, like most countries, has no formal diplomatic ties with democratic Taiwan but is its most important international backer and a major seller of arms. Military tension between Taiwan and Beijing have spiked over the past year, with

Taipei complaining of China repeatedly sending its air force into Taiwan's air defence zone. China has said its activities around Taiwan are aimed at protecting China's sovereignty and deterring foreign forces. Taiwan's government has denounced it as attempts at intimidation.

**Source:** [gbcode.com](http://gbcode.com); 23 June 2021

# SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

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## TANZANIA TO REVIVE \$10BN INDIAN OCEAN PORT PROJECT WITH CHINA

- Ken Moriyasu

NEW YORK -- One week after assuming the Chinese presidency in March 2013, Xi Jinping embarked on his maiden foreign visit. After a brief stopover in Russia, the new leader arrived in Africa. The three-nation tour of the continent began in Tanzania. Beijing had high hopes for the East African nation. Facing the Indian Ocean, state planners believed that the country could serve as the main gateway to China -- where resources could be brought from across the continent and loaded onto ships headed for the mainland. But Tanzania's port of Dar es Salaam was already congested and known for the terrible traffic jams leading to it. So a plan was drawn up to build a new, \$10 billion sprawling port in Bagamoyo, about 75 km to the north. Xi and then-Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete watched over the signing of a framework agreement between China Merchants Holdings International, China's largest port operator, and the government of Tanzania to develop a road map for the port project.

The ambitious plan later stalled, reportedly due to frustration on the Tanzanian side over the conditions China had presented, including a request that Tanzania not question who invests in Bagamoyo once the port was operational. But on Saturday, Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan said the country will look to revive the port project. "Regarding the Bagamoyo Port project, let me give you the good news that we have started talks to revive the whole project," she said at a gathering of the Tanzania National Business Council. "We are going to start talks with the investors that came for the project with the aim of opening it for the benefit of our nation," she said, according to local newspaper The Citizen.

China's Xinhua News Agency also carried the president's words. Hassan's comments come five days after speaking with Xi by phone. "China is ready to work with Tanzania to consolidate political mutual trust, strengthen mutual support," Xi told Hassan according to Xinhua. Reminding Hassan that Tanzania was the first African country he visited as president, Xi stressed that "China always views and develops the China-Tanzania relations from a strategic and long-term perspective and firmly supports Tanzania in taking the development path in line with its national conditions," Xinhua said. Xi said China stands ready to synergize the joint construction of the Belt and Road with Tanzania's development strategies.

The repeated pledge to be considerate of Tanzania's national conditions is likely a reflection of the tensions that the Bagamoyo project has caused to date. The Bagamoyo project was shelved by Kikwete's successor, the late President John Magufuli, who had complained about "exploitative and awkward" terms attached to the deal. Among the conditions Magufuli disliked were requests from China that no other port be built in Tanzania, from Tanga in the north to Mtwara in the south. The Citizen also quoted Magufuli as saying Tanzania was told "we should not question whoever comes to invest there once the port is operational." The port project was planned to be a three-way collaboration between China Merchants Holdings, Oman's State General Reserve Fund and the Tanzanian government. China Merchants, said in 2019 that years of negotiations with Tanzania had failed to produce an agreement. Last year, in a series of tweets, Chinese Ministry of Commerce official Cheng Wang, who was the officer in charge of East African affairs at the ministry between 2013 and 2017, said that once Bagamoyo was complete, the new port and Dar es Salaam would have a relationship similar to Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

Cheng explained that after negotiations on Bagamoyo stalled, China Merchants focused instead on port development in Djibouti. Djibouti is where China has its sole overseas naval base. Recently China added a pier in the East African nation large enough to accommodate an aircraft carrier, which could potentially allow the country's navy to project power outside the traditional operating areas of the East and South China seas. Combined with the late Magufuli's comments on China demanding Tanzania not question who invests in Bagamoyo, one could speculate if China is looking for another East African port it can use for naval purposes.

**Source:** [Nikkei Asia](#); 27 June 2021

## CHINA MANUFACTURING SLOWS AS SUPPLY SHORTAGES ROIL ASIA INDUSTRY

- Stella Qiu and Ryan Woo

BEIJING, June 30 (Reuters) - Growth in China's June factory activity dipped to a four-month low on higher raw material costs, a shortage of semiconductors and a COVID-19 outbreak in the major export province of Guangdong, amid wider supply chain disruptions in Asia. The chip supply crunch has hammered other manufacturing powerhouses in Asia. Industrial output in Japan and South Korea slumped in May from the previous month as auto production declined due to semiconductor shortages, adding to concerns of flagging momentum in their respective economies. China's June official manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) eased slightly to 50.9 versus 51.0 in May, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Wednesday. It, however, exceeded analysts' forecast for a slowdown to 50.8. It remained above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis.

The soft factory activity data aided a rebound in Chinese stocks on Wednesday as it eased fears of policy tightening. "This was largely a result of COVID, which has affected factory output and also new export orders due to the rising waves of infections and

resultant restrictions in some neighbouring economies," said Iris Pang, Great China chief economist at ING. "Overall, (it's) not a great month but no really worrying signs ... China's growth rate is still positive, though it would be a lot lower in H2 than H1, mostly because of the change in base effects," said Pang, referring to year-ago comparisons with 2020's pandemic disruptions. The sub-index for production eased to 51.9, a four-month low, from 52.7 the previous month. Zhao Qinghe, a senior statistician at the NBS, attributed the slowdown in production to constraining factors such as a shortage of semiconductors, inadequate coal supply, a power crunch and maintenance of equipment. A shortage of coal supply in China's southern regions, which started in mid-May, hit factory operations though the government has said the power crunch should ease soon. New export orders fell for a second consecutive month in June and at a faster pace, likely due to the global resurgence of COVID-19 variants, forcing some countries to reimpose lockdowns. A sub-index for raw material costs in the official PMI stood at 61.2 in June, compared with May's 72.8, as the government cracked down on high raw material prices.

### **BRIGHT SPOTS**

Growth in new orders, however, picked up, as domestic demand improved. Economists at Nomura believe the PMI prints were still solid in the second quarter, despite recent sequential moderation, pointing to the resilience of China's economy amid the recent resurgence of infections in Guangdong province.

"We expect the official manufacturing PMI to rebound slightly to 51.2 in July, thanks to the release of pent-up demand following the containment of latest wave of COVID-19, the recovery of some South China ports, and the relaxation of safety and environmental protection rules imposed before the 100th anniversary of the ruling party's foundation." The world's second-largest economy has largely recovered from disruptions caused by the pandemic, with the consumption and service sectors seen catching up to exports and manufacturing, though gross domestic product growth is set to moderate. "Much of the recovery has occurred and the momentum is slowing. Combined with a relatively higher base, this means year-on-year GDP growth is expected to slow to 7.2% in Q2 from 18.3% in Q1," said analysts at HSBC.

However, in two-year average terms, they expect growth to pick up to 5.2% from 5.0%, though this is still below pre-pandemic levels of 6.0% growth. The official non-manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 53.5 in June from 55.2 in May, a separate survey from the NBS showed, dampened by a sharp pull-back in the recovery of the services sector due to local COVID outbreaks. The construction index held steady at 60.1, although analysts expect the sector to face headwinds amid Beijing's clampdown on the property market.

**Source:** [Reuters](#); 30 June 2021

# HOW SHIPPING PORTS ARE BEING REINVENTED FOR THE GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION

- Sylvain Roche

When it comes to launching the energy transition, maritime policy is one of the key battlegrounds. But many ports, aware of their ecological and economic vulnerability, have committed to sustainable development strategies. According to the latest research, sea levels will rise considerably (from 1.1 to 2 metres, on average) by 2100, putting about 14 per cent of the world's major maritime ports at risk of coastal flooding and erosion. Ports in France, including 66 that are used for maritime trade, are also under threat, and will have to adapt their infrastructure.

Maritime transport accounts for about 80 per cent of global merchandise trade by volume. Shipping is responsible for three per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which have increased 32 per cent over the past 20 years. If nothing is done, shipping emissions could climb to 17 per cent of global emissions by 2050. Enter the “ports of the future.” Ports govern globalized economic activity and are true “energy hubs,” bringing together all kinds of transport (maritime, land-based, waterway and aeronautic). Now, they're aiming to cut back on real estate, be more respectful of the environment and better integrated into cities, particularly through the concept of “urban ports.”

## **Freedom from oil**

At least US\$1 trillion will have to be invested between 2030 and 2050 to reduce shipping's carbon footprint by 50 per cent by 2050. As of last year, oil-derived fuels accounted for 95 per cent energy consumption in transportation. Meanwhile, maritime traffic is predicted to increase by 35 to 40 per cent over the same period. This dependence on hydrocarbons also represents an economic vulnerability for the maritime shipping sector due to new environmental standards. In France, liquid bulk transport has been in decline since 2009 (decreasing three per cent on average since 2016), despite a slight uptick in 2017 (2.1 per cent). Fuel shipping (50 per cent of shipping by weight in major maritime ports) has also decreased by 25 per cent since 2008. The golden age of oil cannot will not hold for much longer, given its environmental impact and increasing scarcity. As the consumption of hydrocarbons and coal drops, we should also see a steady decrease in fuel shipping.

The French government's National Low-Carbon Strategy (“Stratégie nationale bas carbone,” or SNBC) aims to reduce emissions from the industrial sector by 35 per cent by 2030 and 81 per cent by 2050. This will mean a nearly complete decarbonization of maritime transport, creating a real technological challenge for the sector. To meet these targets, ports are working to become carbon-neutral by redesigning their logistical operations (flow management) and means of production (value creation), as part of an industrial reconversion approach. They're banking on new environmental technologies to generate a double dividend, both environmental and economic. Three approaches could be used to achieve these goals: energy efficiency, renewable energy production and industrial ecology.

## **Building the ships of tomorrow**

A 2021 study by the Getting to Zero coalition found that zero-carbon fuels had to represent at least five per cent of the fuel mix by 2030 for international shipping to comply with the Paris Agreement. Around 100,000 commercial vessels will be affected by this energy transition, according to GTT, a company specializing in the transportation and storage of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

In this vein, an ambitious environmental certification program, Green Marine Europe, launched in 2020 in order to create the European maritime industry of tomorrow. New fuels with smaller carbon footprints, such as liquefied natural gas, ammonia and ethanol, and the accelerated adoption of alternative propulsion systems will be needed for the sector to become greener. Hydrogen fuel (initially “grey,” now increasingly “green”) represents another viable alternative in the medium-term for fleets subjected to heavy rotation. Although the project is currently in its early stages (involving small vessels of 60-80 seats), more ambitious initiatives have been launched, such as the Hydrotug boat in construction for the port of Antwerp. The arrival of steam-powered engines put an end to the use of large wind-propelled clippers in the late 1800s. But technologies that harness the wind could make a major comeback, with ships using sails and kites to reduce fuel use.

## **Offshore wind turbines, a promising solution**

Developing electric facilities and technology is also essential to the energy transition, whether through electrified wharfs, turning port seawalls into energy producers, or developing electric ferries that use solar power, bioenergy or marine power. As the energy transition progresses, we will see ports go from consuming large quantities of a single energy source to using multiple energy sources and becoming electricity producers. On that note, offshore wind turbines will profoundly change French coasts over the coming years. The first sites will be near ports (with the first French offshore 80-turbine wind farm due to launch in Saint-Nazaire in 2022). In the medium term, the objective is to reach a capacity of 5.2 to 6.5 Gigawatts of offshore wind energy in France by 2028.

This technology brings a new vibrancy to port areas in search of industrial diversification, optimized real estate revenue and local expertise (construction and maintenance operations). The forthcoming offshore wind farm near Quai Hermann du Pasquier in the city of Le Havre, which will launch in 2022, is being presented as the “biggest industrial renewable energy project in France,” and symbolizes the port’s industrial and energetic transition. What’s more, after 53 years of service, the thermal power station in this area, which used 220 tonnes of coal daily, closed down on 31 March 2021. Finally, it should be noted that offshore wind farms represent an opportunity for ports to produce their own hydrogen by electrolysing seawater.

## **Bringing city and port closer together**

The energy transition forces governments to reconsider the connections between city and port. Development projects based on an entirely oil-based economy and the globalized boom in shipping container transport in the second half of the 20th century disconnected city and port at every level. Ports were removed from urban settings due to a lack of space, with huge industrial port zones created on the city’s outskirts. Now

this separation is being questioned, marking the return of the port as a space that's open to the rest of the city. For port cities, where ships coexist with residents, industry, businesses and tourism, pollution has motivated citizens into action. Local environmentalism has pushed ports to become open to cities, by promoting the development of circular economies and industrial ecology. Many ports have launched energy transition projects, aiming to transform city-port relations. The port area is turning out to be an excellent setting to try out new practices founded on greater co-operation between local players.

In La Rochelle, for example, environmental and energy-based issues provided an opportunity to start a shared, collaborative discussion about the future of the metropolitan area. The La Rochelle Zero Carbon Territory project, where the greater urban area aims to become carbon neutral by 2040, the energy transition is being undertaken through concerted planning between the city and its port. The port has committed to initiatives that limit its environmental and energy-related impact, while providing benefits to the local economy. In Le Havre, as in Bordeaux and elsewhere, this city-port interconnection is being strengthened by combining energy-related challenges and digital opportunities. In time, this should lead to the birth of “smart port cities” (connecting “smart cities” with the “ports of the future”), for a “new model for urban and industrial port areas, blended together by innovation.”

### **Making ports the site of modern energy**

Although the environmental challenge is clearly huge and complicated, this energy transition gives us the opportunity to reinterpret ports as laboratories, and to test new practices and technologies. Case in point: the Port of Rotterdam decreased its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 27 per cent between 2016 and 2020. Ports have always been showcases of industrial revolution, with the arrival of steam, propellers and then metal hulls. They often feature the most recent energy-related technology, as shown by the painting of the port of Le Havre, by Camille Pissarro. Now it's up to them to keep this legacy alive, as true gateways to a more durable and resilient economy.

*Translated from French by Rosie Marsland for Fast ForWord.*

**Source:** [theconversation.com](https://theconversation.com); 20 June 2021

## **WHY AMERICA MUST LEAD—AND FUND— THE OCEAN DATA REVOLUTION**

- Amy Trice and Joel Gurin

Last year, before the pandemic, some of the world's most dedicated data experts gathered at an Ocean Data Roundtable to improve the way we manage ocean data for the health of the planet and the millions who depend on it for food, their livelihoods, or recreation. Building on that meeting, Ocean Conservancy and the Center for Open Data Enterprise (CODE) analyzed America's ocean data revolution in a detailed report published in May 2021. And now during National Ocean Month, as attention has

turned to our oceans and the start of hurricane season, we call on ocean advocates and decision-makers to recognize that their work ultimately depends on a deeper understanding of the ocean’s complexity—and that that understanding must be supported by better data.

Integrated and accessible ocean data is critical to supporting multiple aspects of how we manage and protect our ocean. Ocean data is essential to support commerce by improving shellfish and fisheries production and managing shipping routes. Data and data-driven models also help us protect endangered species by understanding food sources and migration patterns, protect coral reefs, and identify appropriate sites for offshore wind to shift toward renewable energy sources. They are also vital to creating and implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts as we are experiencing longer and more severe hurricane seasons, rising sea levels, and ocean acidification.

While the importance of ocean data is clear, we are still working with huge data gaps. More than 80% of the ocean is still unmapped, unobserved, and unexplored. Funding this work at previous levels will not be enough to meet the growing need for integrated and accessible ocean data. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Ocean Exploration program received only \$42 million of \$5.65 billion that was allocated to the agency last year. President Biden has called for a \$1.4 billion increase for NOAA’s budget that, if enacted by Congress, could begin to close this gap. For context, the “blue economy,” which includes shipping, fishing, tourism and offshore energy development, accounts for almost \$400 billion of the U.S. gross national product—four orders of magnitude greater than the amount spent on the exploration that is essential to keep that economy growing.

Improving ocean data is no easy task. The data landscape is becoming ever more complex with the widespread use of new, inexpensive, and autonomous ocean observation technologies. A recent study found these systems “are transmitting as much data in one year as has been acquired in the past century.” The increase in real-time data will require network architecture and data management capabilities far beyond current capacity. Beyond the challenges of sheer volume, the use of ocean data is constrained by data silos, concerns around privacy and confidentiality, and lack of data standards.

We believe that the challenges facing the ocean data revolution offer significant opportunities. Congress can make the United States a leader by increasing NOAA’s budget and supporting collaborations and partnerships that advance not just data and information collection but also management, including:

- Advancing the National Strategy for Mapping, Exploring and Characterizing the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone that would fill large gaps in our knowledge about ocean ecosystems in the areas of the ocean under U.S. control;
- Modernizing and investing in ocean data management to inform our stewardship and sustainable use of marine resources during a critical time of rapid and accelerating change in our ocean; and
- Advancing regional ocean data portals and promoting collaborative data projects among Regional Ocean Partnerships and Integrated Ocean Observing System Regional Associations.

In addition to funding, NOAA and its partners can improve the management of ocean data by:

- Dedicating 5-10% of the budget for federally funded ocean research projects to data management;
- Allocating a portion of funding to support cloud computing for data generated by scientific research;
- Engaging with communities and ocean users to ensure that data is collected, managed, and made available in ways that meet their needs;
- Adopting practices used by the healthcare industry and others to protect data privacy and manage proprietary data; and
- Advancing a common framework, developed by both public and private ocean observation entities, to ensure that ocean data is open, freely available, discoverable, and comparable.

Increasing U.S. funding, partnerships, and capacity for managing ocean data could usher in bold new ocean-based solutions. New data and data systems will empower natural resource managers, federal agencies, and local communities to make informed decisions with the best available science. To reduce environmental threats to the ocean and manage the ocean's role in climate change, we need to act now. It's time for America to lead—and fund—the ocean data revolution to meet the needs of our own marine businesses, scientists, and communities.

*Amy Trice (atrace@oceanconservancy.org) is director of ocean planning at ocean conservancy the Center for Open Data Enterprise. Joel Gurin (joel@odenterprise.org) is president of the Center for Open Data Enterprise. They thank NOAA, Esri, Amazon, and Microsoft for partnering on the 2020 roundtable that led to their May 2021 report.*

**Source:** [govexec.com](https://govexec.com); 28 June 2021

## PACIFIC ISLAND TURNS TO AUSTRALIA FOR UNDERSEA CABLE AFTER SPURNING CHINA

- Reuters

SYDNEY: The Pacific island of Nauru is negotiating for the construction of an undersea communications cable that would connect to an Australian network, two sources with knowledge of the talks told Reuters, after the earlier rejection of a Chinese proposal. The United States and its Pacific allies have concerns that cables laid by China could compromise regional security. Beijing has denied any intent to use commercial optic fibre cables, which have far greater data capacity than satellites, for spying.

Nauru, which has strong ties to U.S. ally Australia, helped scupper a World Bank-led cable tender earlier this year over concerns the contract would be awarded to the former Huawei Marine, now called HMN Tech, after the Chinese firm lodged a bid priced at more than 20% below rivals. The tiny Pacific nation of just over 12,000

people has now approached the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to help fund an alternative, the development agency told Reuters.

"ADB is involved in very early discussions with the government of Nauru to explore possible options to help fund an undersea cable to deliver low-cost, high quality internet service," the ADB said in a statement to Reuters. "The details of the connection arrangement and funding sources will be determined in due course." The two sources said the new plan would involve laying a cable from Nauru to the Solomon Islands capital of Honiara, located about 1,250 kilometres (776.7 miles) apart. The new line would then tap into the Coral Sea Cable system, a 4,700km network that connects Australia to the Solomons and Papua New Guinea. That line, majority funded by Australia and built by Sydney-headquartered Vocus Group, was completed in 2019 to shut out a competing offer from Huawei Marine, then owned by Huawei Technologies. The former Huawei Marine is now majority owned by Shanghai-listed Hengtong Optic-Electric Co Ltd after Huawei Technologies sold the submarine cable business last year.

Nauru's plan needs Australia and the Solomons to be on board, the sources said. It is unclear if Nauru has requested financial assistance from Australia or whether it only needs Canberra's permission to join the Coral Sea Cable system. One source, who has direct knowledge of the planned cable route, described the talks as "early stage negotiations". The second source provided information about discussions between Nauru officials and the ADB, Australia and the Solomons. The source said Nauru was in the process of "doing a deal". The governments of Nauru, Australia and the Solomons did not respond to requests for comment. The World Bank said it was not involved in discussions around cables connecting with Nauru.

Nauru was the first to raise concerns over a bid lodged by China's HMN Tech during the World Bank tender process last year to build subsea cables for Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia and Kiribati, sources told Reuters in December. The United States followed up by warning the Pacific island nations that the HMN Tech bid posed a regional security threat.

The project then unravelled after the island governments heeded the U.S. warnings and declined to award a contract. Australia has ramped up its presence in the Pacific through the creation of a A\$2 billion (\$1.5 billion) infrastructure financing facility and via its membership of the new "Quad" group, together with the United States, India and Japan, to counter China's expanding interests in the Indo-Pacific. Australia is also part of a trilateral partnership with the United States and Japan that was formed to finance an undersea optic fibre cable for Palau, another Pacific nation.

Washington has pressed governments around the world to squeeze Huawei and other Chinese companies out of supplying sensitive communications equipment, alleging the company could hand over data to the Chinese government for spying, a charge denied by Beijing and Chinese telcos. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said in a statement to Reuters last week that Chinese companies had an excellent record in cyber security and that they needed to be able to participate in a non-discriminatory business environment. Nauru, located in the central Pacific, has retained diplomatic ties to Taiwan, creating tension with China, which regards Taiwan as its own territory. Hosting a major Pacific forum in 2018, Nauru's then president, Baron Waqa, described

a Chinese envoy as "very insolent" and a "bully" after an angry exchange between officials.

**Source:** [Economic Times](#); 24 June 2021

# MARINE ENVIRONMENT

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## SEA LEVEL RISE COULD ENGULF UP TO 80% OF EIGHT LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS BY 2035: STUDY

- IANS

A study conducted by ocean engineering scientists at IIT Kharagpur shows that 10 islands among the 36 islands of Lakshadweep archipelago might lose a significant amount of land in the next 15 years because of the continuous and extreme rise of seawater level. Lakshadweep, a group of 36 islands, is known for its exotic and sun-kissed beaches and lush green landscape. The name Lakshadweep in Malayalam and Sanskrit means 'a hundred thousand islands'. India's smallest Union Territory, Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq km. It is a Uni-district Union Territory and comprises 12 atolls, three reefs, five submerged banks and 10 inhabited islands. The capital is Kavaratti and it is also the principal town. The study published in the current issue of international magazine Elsevier (Regional Studies in Marine Science), has been posted by the Department of Science and Technology on its website. It was conducted on the ten most vulnerable islands of the archipelago and shows that there will be 70 per cent to 80 per cent land loss in eight of the ten islands by 2035. The other two islands will also have a land loss of close to 40 per cent.

"The main problem in conducting the study was that there was neither any 'Tide-Gauge' or eWater level monitoring system' in Lakshadweep and so we had to depend on the satellite data which was only available from 1993. We also used two best performing climate models - the GFDL Model of USA and Miroc - a Japanese model. With these two models and with the available data we were able to determine the rise of the seawater level in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal," Prasad K. Bhaskaran, a faculty member of IIT-KGP's Department of Ocean Engineering and Naval Architecture and the principal investigator of the project, told IANS. "While doing our research we realised that while it had been indicated that the sea level at the 36 islands would rise between 0.8 mm to 2 m by the end of the century, in most islands it had already reached the 0.78 mm mark. We have projected 70 per cent to 80 per cent land loss in many islands by 2035. There are many small islands in the archipelago that will be reduced to a strip almost. The worst affected will be Chatlat island, where the land loss will be over 82 per cent," Bhaskaran said. The study mentions that the rise is much higher in the Arabian Sea than in the Bay of Bengal because of the latter's lower salinity and a higher influx of freshwater into it. Hence, the Lakshadweep islands are at great risk compared to India's other archipelago, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

It also found that capital Kavaratti will be 70 per cent affected. Deep signs of damage have also been noticed at the islands' lone airport in the southernmost tip of Agatti, which has started getting dangerously inundated. "We have suggested that the government take up immediate coastline protection measures by creating artificial barriers and embankments, especially in the Bipra, Minicoy, Kalpeni, Kavaratti, Agatti, Kiltan, Chatlat, Kadmat and Amini islands, to save them from extinction. Since Androth has been projected to be the safest with only a 30 per cent loss to its landmass, the population can be moved there," Bhaskaran said. "But this is temporary because the structure can control the erosion of the coastline but it cannot control the rise of the sea level. Naturally, the central government will have to think of a new coastal defensive system -- an innovative way to protect the islands from going under the sea," he said, adding that many European countries and some places in the US have developed innovative coastline protection mechanisms and we can also take ideas from them.

The study has been conducted with support from the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India under the Climate Change Programme (CCP).

**Source:** [weather.com](http://weather.com); 27 June 2021

## **EXPLAINED: IMPACT OF TURKEY SEA SNOT ON GLOBAL CLIMATE AND MARINE LIFE**

For over a month, Turkey has been facing an unusual yet serious issue — sea snot. A layer of thick and slimy mucus covered the surface of the Turkish Marmara Sea, reducing oxygen levels, killing fish, and disrupting the ecological balance. The deceptive name doesn't entirely convey the potentially catastrophic harm that the environmental hazard poses for Turkey and the world.

Here is all you need to know about sea snot and its potential effects on global climate and marine life

### **What is sea snot?**

Sea snot or marine mucilage is a slimy, mucus-like substance that is produced by aquatic microorganisms due to the excessive presence of elements like phosphorus and nitrogen in water bodies. The microorganisms, phytoplankton, use these elements for their nutrition, which are deposited through untreated wastewater, and produce sea snot, which is made out of carbohydrate residue. Sea snot has been observed in the Mediterranean Sea since the 18th century when factories would pump their runoff directly into the sea. The presence of mucilage has increased since 2007, due to exacerbating conditions caused by global warming.

Higher temperatures increased water pollution, and calmer seas, all lead to a significantly higher presence of mucilage in water bodies. Overfishing of filter-feeder fishes, that eat this phytoplankton, also contributes to the rising presence and subsequent sea snot production.

## **Why is it harmful?**

Sea snot in itself is not dangerous. While the mucilage is in essence, just microorganic residue clumped together, it also attracts dangerous microorganisms like viruses and bacteria like *E. coli*, which can cause a host of diseases. Sea snot in large quantities is also deadly to the marine biome. The mucilage quickly starts blocking out the surface of the water, which leads to a drastic reduction in oxygen levels. In the Sea of Marmara, the sea snot expanded to such a large extent that large sections of water were completely covered.

The declining oxygen levels then cause other aquatic life like fishes, coral, shellfish to die out as they are not able to get enough oxygen. The sea snot also then starts to settle under its own weight and starts expanding towards the sea bed, engulfing and essentially strangling anything that gets caught within it. Once it reaches the sea bed, it can wreak ecological havoc on coral, bottom feeders, and other parts of the ecology. “They’re literally smothered,” said Alice Alldredge, University of California Santa Barbara oceanographer to the Atlantic. “Sure, it’s uncomfortable for us as human beings to have all this gunk at the surface. But the bottom-dwelling organisms are going to die.”

## **The situation in Turkey**

The Sea of Marmara is an inland sea that connects to the Aegean Sea in the South and the Black Sea in the North. It is much smaller in expanse than its neighbouring seas and is only connected to them through two narrow straits, the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. The sea has been fished for millennia, but in recent years has come under intense pressure from overfishing, being used to feed the bustling Turkish cities, including Istanbul, on the coast. The industrial runoff from nearby factories and other industries has also resulted in dangerously high levels of phosphorus and nitrogen in the sea which has very little mixing with other seas.

The Sea of Marmara has also been particularly affected by global warming. Baris Salihoglu, head of Middle East Technical University's Institute of Maritime Sciences, told DW, “We know that the water temperature in Marmara has increased by 2 to 2.5 degrees Celsius over the past 20 years, above the global average.” All of these factors contributed to the largest sea snot event as of yet. Not only does the sea snot affect the local marine life, but it has also brought the shipping industry to a standstill in the region. Fishermen are no longer able to catch fish, as the heavy mucilage snaps their nets. Turkish tourism is also threatened as the mucilage spreads to beaches, which need to be closed as a result.

The sea snot has already spread below the surface level up to 100 ft deep, choking out all the life within its vicinity. More dangerously, it is also starting to spread to the Black Sea and the Aegean through its narrow straits. Both the Aegean and the Black Sea can face a similar outbreak of mucilage if the undercurrents from the Marmara continue to bring the ‘sea snot’ to them. The mucilage would not only cause economic harm through disruption of fishing, tourism, and trade, but the ecological damage could be devastating. “My fear is, if this expands to the Black Sea... the trouble will be enormous.

We need to take this step without delay," said Turkish President Recep Erdogan, per BBC News. "Hopefully, we will save our seas from this mucilage calamity.

### **What is Turkey's response?**

While Turkey cannot alone control global warming and the rising temperatures of the Marmara Sea, the country has proposed steps to tackle the problem. Turkey, which is one of the few countries that has not ratified the 2015 Paris Climate deal, vowed to tackle the problem. Erdogan's government outlined a 22-point action plan to deal with the current sea-snot problem. As part of the plan, the entire Marmara Sea is going to be designated as protected.

Environmental Minister Murat Kurum said that a thermal facility, a fertiliser factory, and three shipyards were among the industries closed on the coast after the government initiated hundreds of inspections while looking into sources of water pollution in the sea. Around 55 other facilities and 9 ships were also fined for a cumulative total of \$1.6 million. In other areas of the sea, experimental ideas like oxygen pumping are being used as well. Ideas to use the snot as fuel or to convert it into plastic have been floated for economic recovery. Cleaning boats have also been set up to clean up the snot on a 24/7 basis. The cleanup operation is expected to take anywhere from three to five years to be complete. Salihoglu highlighted that the relief measures can start improving the situation quickly. Salihoglu also stated that the ecological impact might not be fully recoverable. "(Marmara Sea) will never recover it to its original pristine state, but its resilience hopefully will increase."

**Source:** [cnbctv18.com](http://cnbctv18.com); 26 June 2021

## **WHAT IS THE GULF OF MEXICO 'DEAD ZONE' AND HOW BIG WILL IT BE THIS SUMMER**

- Nick Bannin

TEXAS (KXAN) — During the summer in the Gulf of Mexico, a 'dead zone' or hypoxic area forms where little to no oxygen in the water kills fish and other types of marine life.

What is the reason there's so little oxygen?

According to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, the annual Gulf of Mexico dead zone is primarily caused by excess nutrient pollution from human activities in urban and agricultural areas throughout the Mississippi River watershed. When the excess nutrients reach the Gulf, they stimulate an overgrowth of algae which eventually die and decompose, depleting oxygen as they sink to the bottom. The resulting low oxygen levels near the bottom of the Gulf cannot support most marine life. Some fish, shrimp and crab swim out of this area, but not all animals or fish can get away and the lack of oxygen stresses or kills them. For the last few years, NOAA has issued a forecast for the size of the hypoxic area leading into summer. Summer 2021 is expected to have a 'dead zone' of around 4,880 square miles. That's actually slightly smaller than the five-year average size of 5,400 square miles.

The largest hypoxic zone was in 2017 when 8,776-square-miles of the Gulf of Mexico had little to no oxygen. These measurements have been mapped since 1985, but this is only the fourth year NOAA has made a ‘dead zone’ forecast. “Understanding the effects of hypoxia on valuable Gulf of Mexico resources has been a long-term focus of NOAA’s research,” said Nicole LeBoeuf, acting director of NOAA’s National Ocean Service. “These forecasting models inform us of the potential magnitude of the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone that might impact living marine resources and coastal economies.” According to NOAA, river discharge in May and the associated nutrient load to the Gulf of Mexico has been shown to be a major contributing factor to the size of the dead zone which forms each summer. In May 2021, discharge in the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers was about 2% below the long-term average between 1980 and 2020. The United States Geological Survey estimates that this smaller-than-average river discharge carried 90,500 metric tons of nitrate and 15,600 metric tons of phosphorus into the Gulf of Mexico in May alone. These nitrate loads were about 32% below the long-term average, and phosphorus loads were about 9% below the long-term average.

The USGS uses more than 3,000 stream gauges and sensors to measure the nutrients leading into the Gulf of Mexico to help get an idea the impact on the hypoxic zone. While agricultural sources are the largest nutrient sources to the Gulf, urban areas, waste treatment and with natural sources also contribute significant nutrients to the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricanes and tropical storms can impact the size of the hypoxic zone, as those storms mix ocean waters and add oxygen to de-oxygenated areas. Generally the improvement is just temporary as those waters start losing oxygen soon after storms move on.

NOAA will survey the Gulf of Mexico to confirm the size of this year’s dead zone and test how accurately the ‘dead zone’ forecast was. The Interagency Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force has set a goal to reduce the hypoxic zone to a five-year average measured size of 1,900 square miles. In order for this goal to be reached, nutrient reducing methods along the Mississippi River watershed need to work. “The Hypoxia Task Force plays a critical role in managing nutrient loads in the Mississippi River Basin to reduce over time the size of the hypoxic zone,” said John Goodin, director of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds. “Through state leadership in implementing nutrient reduction strategies, support from EPA and other federal agencies, and partnerships with basin organizations and research partners, we will continue to tackle the challenge of Gulf hypoxia. This annual forecast will continue to inform our collective efforts.”

**Source:** [kxan.com](https://www.kxan.com); 27 June 2021

## **INDIA’S DEEP SEABED MINING PLANS GEAR UP FOR A DIVE**

- Mayank Aggarwal

Similar to some other countries such as China, the quest for minerals in the deep sea has been on India's radar for some time now. Recently, in June 2021, it got a significant boost as the Indian government approved a 'Deep Ocean Mission' to explore the ocean for resources and develop deep-sea technologies for sustainable use of ocean resources. But the move towards deep seabed mining has also reignited concerns that many environmental organisations have been pointing out over the potential harm it could cause to marine biodiversity.

The proposal of the Indian government's Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) was cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with an estimated cost of about Rs. 40.77 billion (Rs. 4,077 crore) for a period of five years. It is scheduled to be implemented in a phase-wise manner and would focus on the development of technologies for deep-sea mining, and manned submersible which will be developed to carry three people to a depth of 6,000 metres in the ocean with a suite of scientific sensors and tools. At present, only a very few countries have acquired this capability.

The government said an integrated mining system will be also developed for "mining polymetallic nodules from 6,000-metre depth in the central Indian Ocean." India will focus on exploring and identifying potential sites of "multi-metal hydrothermal sulphides mineralisation along the Indian Ocean mid-oceanic ridges." "The exploration studies of minerals will pave way for the commercial exploitation in the near future, as and when commercial exploitation code is evolved by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), a UN organisation. This component will help the blue economy priority area of exploring and harnessing of deep-sea minerals and energy," said the government. According to the government, the mission will also focus on the development of ocean climate change advisory services to support coastal tourism, off-shore energy development, exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity, and an advanced marine station for ocean biology.

"Bio-prospecting of deep-sea flora and fauna including microbes and studies on sustainable utilisation of deep-sea bio-resources will be the main focus," said the government. The government states that about 95 percent of the deep ocean remains unexplored and thus the mission is crucial to ensuring India's mineral and energy security. The country is covered by deep sea from three sides and has a 7,517 kilometres long coastline and 1,382 islands. About 30 percent of India's population is living in coastal areas and thus the ocean is a "major economic factor supporting fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, livelihoods and blue trade." "Oceans are also a storehouse of food, energy, minerals, medicines, modulator of weather and climate and underpin life on Earth," said the government. The United Nations has already declared 2021-2030 as the decade of ocean science for sustainable development.

In March 2021, India's Minister for Earth Sciences Harsh Vardhan had told the parliament that India has been granted "exclusive rights of exploration under the contracts signed with International Seabed Authority in 2002 and 2016 for exploration of polymetallic nodules in Central Indian Ocean Basin and polymetallic sulfides in the southwest Indian Ocean respectively."

### **India started exploring deep-sea mining very early**

India has been among the pioneer countries to work on the deep sea exploration of minerals. It started at least 40 years ago, in January 1981, when the Indian Research Vessel *Gaveshani* recovered the first polymetallic nodule samples from the Indian ocean. It was followed by the formulation of a national Polymetallic Nodules (PMN) program that led to India getting the pioneer investor status with exploration rights over an area of 150,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) under the UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Subsequently, through periodic relinquishments, an area of 75,000 kilometres square has been retained by India as per the contract with the ISA.

The polymetallic nodules contain valuable minerals such as manganese, iron, nickel, copper, cobalt and others. But mining for those won't be easy because at present, according to the government, the technologies required for deep-sea mining have strategic implications and are not commercially available. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), deep-sea mining is the process of retrieving mineral deposits from the deep sea, which is at a depth of 200 metres below the ocean and covers about 65 percent of the earth's surface. The IUCN states that the interest in the mineral deposits of the deep sea is growing and is mainly because of "depleting terrestrial deposits for metals such as copper, nickel, aluminium, manganese, zinc, lithium and cobalt, coupled with rising demand for these metals to produce high-tech applications such as smartphones and green technologies such as wind turbines, solar panels and electric storage batteries."

Madhavan Rajeevan, who is the secretary of the union ministry of earth sciences, emphasised that the protection of marine biodiversity as well as ensuring the mineral security of India are two main pillars of India's deep-sea mission. "We are aware of apprehensions and fears about destruction of the marine biodiversity due to deep-sea exploration including mining activities. We want to ensure that there is a balance between the two," Rajeevan told *Mongabay-India*.

In fact, India realised the need for evaluation of environmental data for prediction of the potential impact of mining on the marine ecosystem and, in 1996, started the project on environmental impact assessment for nodule mining in the Central Indian Ocean Basin. Rajeevan said that the Indian government's National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in Goa is already conducting work to understand the impact of deep-sea exploration including mining on marine biodiversity. "At present, deep seabed mining is governed by the ISA which has not allowed commercial mining so far – only the exploration is allowed at the moment. The international authority knows about environmental concerns and is exploring ways to establish the criteria for allowing commercial mining. They are asking all stakeholders to conduct proper studies to assess the environmental impact. We have a balanced view on the issue. Even if commercial mining is allowed, it is still a few years away," he said. In fact, in 2020, the Indian government proposed to conduct technical trials in 2021, for "demonstration of its polymetallic nodule collector pre-prototype deep-sea mining machine" in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB). According to the ministry, the objective of the trial is to test the capability of the machine in terms of locomotion, crushing, pumping and discharge within a limited area on the seabed. The ministry also wants to collect "environmental data before and after the trials as well as over a

period of time to assess the extent of impact on physicochemical and biological conditions.”

However, the trial is yet to take place. According to Rajeevan, “the manned submersible is in early-stage ... but deep-sea mining system is in advanced stage” and is already being tested. The deep ocean mission announced by the government gives a new boost to the development of India’s deep-sea mining system, which has been going on since 2012.

### **Marine biodiversity concerns worries environmentalists**

As countries across the world including India gear up to mine the deep seabed for minerals, there is a growing number of organisations across the world that are seeking a moratorium or pause to such plans until marine biodiversity concerns are assessed and addressed. The IUCN stresses that the concern is that the scraping of the seafloor and pollution from mining processes can wipe out entire species – many of which are yet to be discovered. It says the environmental impact assessments, effective regulation and mitigation strategies are needed to limit the impacts of deep-sea mining.

On June 29, Jessica Battle, who is the leader of the World Wildlife Fund’s No Deep Seabed Mining Initiative, in a statement, said that “WWF urges ISA member states to show ocean leadership by putting in place a moratorium on deep seabed mining now.” “It is imperative to pause the unnecessary rush to the deep and allow science and innovation to help us switch to a truly sustainable economy. Governments will be supported by an increasing number of scientists, NGOs, civil society organizations, companies and communities to make that decision. Forcing the regulations through prematurely and without due process or enough scientific knowledge about the deep-sea is not in line with the precautionary approach and other principles of international environmental law,” she said.

WWF’s statement came in response to the small island state Nauru invoking a rule that fast tracks deep seabed mining via a request to the International Seabed Authority. WWF’s report in February 2021, “In Too Deep,” states that deep seabed mining is expected to have destructive effects on vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems, lead to loss of biodiversity and species extinction. It also talks about the impact of seabed destruction on global fisheries and says it could threaten carbon and nutrient cycles in the ocean. It warns that negative effects on global fisheries would threaten the main protein source of around one billion people and the livelihoods of around 200 million people, many in poor coastal communities. “We are also in the midst of a global pandemic, making it difficult for states to meet to properly discuss. At a time when states need to collaborate perhaps more than ever, this move is a blow to the multilateralism we need to solve the combined climate and biodiversity crises,” Battle cautioned. She alleged that the deep seabed mining lobby is “selling a story – without evidence – that seabed mining is less harmful than land mining, and that companies need deep seabed minerals in order to produce electric cars, batteries and other items that reduce carbon emissions.”

Mary Abraham, a development economist and policy scientist, told Mongabay-India that she fears that the “impact of deep-sea mining could be unprecedented and spell huge trouble for marine ecology.” Abraham, who has carried out extensive research on

mining issues across Indian states including those in the coastal region, said that their studies had shown how mining exploited resources in states such as Goa and led to large-scale degradation of the environment. “Mining in the coastal states has been a major threat to the pristine coastal ecosystems. In several cases, the political and social pressure led to mining projects being abandoned or denied permission as the companies failed to get a social license – basically failed to find ongoing approvals and acceptance of the local communities. But in oceans, they won’t need any social license and there won’t be any stringent checks and balances,” said Abraham, who works with TERI.

“The plans for deep-sea mining – whether of India or any other country – are a cause of serious worry. The ecosystem of the oceans is very sensitive – they run the planet. I shudder at the thought of the destruction this thirst for minerals could bring. Why can’t we focus on recycling, reusing and efficiently using whatever resources we have over the surface,” she said. A recent statement, signed by 351 marine science and policy experts from 44 countries, has also called for a pause to deep seabed mining. They said deep-sea mining would result in the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functioning that would be irreversible on multi-generational timescales.

**Source:** [mongabay.com](http://mongabay.com); 02 July 2021

## **LIVING MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM TACKLES MISSION-ESSENTIAL OCEAN ACTIVITIES WHILE CARING FOR MARINE WILDLIFE**

- Sarah MacMillan

At Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center (NAVFAC EXWC), the environmental security department offers a variety services, including scientific and technology support in environmental compliance, environmental restoration, sustainability and climate change for the Department of Defense. One of the department’s most niche programs is the Living Marine Resources Program—also known as the LMR program. Sponsored by the Chief of Naval Operations, the LMR program funds research to improve the Navy’s understanding of how Navy activities may affect marine life, mainly, research focusing on potential effects from Navy activities that use sonar or explosives.

In order to defend the nation against threats and prepare Sailors for mission readiness, the Navy must conduct training and testing activities at sea. In doing so, the Navy must comply with environmental laws and be a responsible steward of the seas. To meet these multiple goals, the Navy conducts research to learn more about potential effects to marine life, and to determine the best approaches to ensure environmental compliance. A current topic of research involves studying the acoustic shock wave propagation resulting from a full ship shock trial.

On June 18, the Navy began a full ship shock trial of the new Navy aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78). For several decades the U.S. Navy has conducted shock trials (a series of underwater detonations at various distances from the ship, each that sends a shock wave through the ship's hull to simulate near misses during combat), most recently for the Littoral Combat Ships USS Jackson (LCS-6) and USS Milwaukee (LCS-5) in 2016; as well as for the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock USS Mesa Verde (LPD-19) in 2008, the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1) in 1990, and the guided-missile cruiser USS Mobile Bay (CG-53) in 1987. The last aircraft carrier to execute the test was USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) in 1987. During the shock trial, the Navy collects data on the acoustic shock wave effects on the ship and the equipment. However, data is also needed on acoustic shock wave propagation from the detonations through the surrounding marine environment. In order to collect this data, the LMR program funded a team of scientists to deploy acoustic recording equipment prior to the full ship shock trial and to retrieve the equipment a few weeks after the final detonation. This data will be used by the Navy to validate the data used within the Navy Acoustic Effects Model, with the end goal of ensuring the Navy's estimate of acoustic impacts from explosive sources are as accurate as possible.

Following the CVN 78 shock trial, the research team will review the data and document observations of acoustical behavior changes by surrounding marine mammals.

The CVN 78 shock trials are just one of several facets of research funded by the LMR program. Depending on identifiable Navy priorities, research commonly conducted by the LMR program falls within five investment areas, which include data to support risk threshold criteria, data processing and analysis tools, monitoring technology demonstrations, standard and metrics, and emergent topics. Projects funded under these five categories are all related to supporting the Navy's ability to obtain environmental compliance and conduct uninterrupted training and testing—which preserve core Navy readiness capabilities.

LMR-funded projects are conducted by experts around the world, namely at universities, non-profit organizations, private companies and government research labs. Annually, the LMR Program issues a request for proposals to address specific research needs. Following a careful review and selection process, qualified researchers receive funding to begin their work, with results made available in final technical reports and peer-review publications.

*About Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center (NAVFAC EXWC):*

*NAVFAC EXWC is a command of more than 1,300 dedicated federal employees, contractors, and military personnel who provide science, research, development, testing, evaluation, specialized engineering, and mobile logistics capabilities to deliver sustainable facility and pragmatic expeditionary solutions to the warfighter.*

**Source:** [dvidshub.net](https://dvidshub.net); 30 June 2021

# GEOPOLITICS

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## CHINA AGREES TO RESCHEDULE CONGO REPUBLIC'S \$2.4BN DEBT

- Reuters

BRAZZAVILLE -- Chinese President Xi Jinping has agreed in principle to reschedule Congo Republic's debt, Congolese Finance Minister Rigobert Roger Andely said on Monday, adding that the move would help unlock stalled International Monetary Fund lending.

The IMF approved a \$449 million, three-year lending programme in 2019 on the condition that the Central African oil producer ensured the long-term sustainability of its debt. Only \$45 million has been disbursed to date, however, as the government has struggled to secure a restructuring of its debt to oil traders. "The debt is an obstacle to the conclusion and the continuation of relations with the IMF within the framework of the extended facility which was concluded in July 2019. That's the point that sometimes hurts our country," said Andely. Congo previously reached a deal with China in 2019 to restructure a portion of its debt. That arrangement required Congo to repay a third of its debt within three years, with the remainder benefiting from a 15-year extension of the repayment schedule.

President Denis Sassou Nguesso made the request for further rescheduling during a phone call on Monday with his Chinese counterpart, Andely said. Andely said the Congolese president had told Xi that, in the two years since the restructuring was agreed, the debt had again become unsustainable due to the shock caused by the coronavirus pandemic. "President Xi Jinping approved this and thanked him for this proposition," Andely said. The two presidents agreed to refer the issue to experts from both countries to set the terms and conditions, he added. Andely said Congo's debt to China stood at 1.3 trillion CFA francs (\$2.4 billion), down from a 2019 government figure of 1.48 trillion CFA francs. Congo also owes around \$1.7 billion to Swiss energy traders Trafigura and Glencore. It reached a deal with Trafigura, which restructured its loan in March, but has so far failed to reach a similar agreement with Glencore.

**Source:** [asianikkei.com](https://www.asianikkei.com); 22 June 2021

# CHINA PASSES BROAD NEW ANTI-SANCTIONS LAW TO COUNTER FOREIGN GOVERNMENT SANCTIONS

- Sydney H. Mintzer, Tamer A. Soliman, Margaret-Rose Sales, Yoshihide Ito  
and Heng Li

On June 10, 2021, the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress ("NPC") passed the Counter Foreign Sanctions Law (the "Law"), which is effective immediately. The Law has been described by Chinese officials as a significant step forward in upgrading China's "legal toolbox" in response to sanctions, import prohibitions and export control restrictions imposed by foreign governments. The Law is drafted broadly and provides for retaliatory sanctions in response to what Chinese officials describe as "arbitrary" and "unilateral" foreign sanctions toward China, including import and other sanctions restrictions imposed recently on the basis of alleged human rights and forced labor violations in China, as well as a range of financial, export and technology transfer restrictions that have been imposed on various other foreign policy and national security grounds. The Law is the latest in a series of Chinese actions intended to establish a legal framework to counter foreign sanctions, import prohibitions and export controls targeting Chinese entities and sectors, and codifies a number of retaliatory sanctions already taken by China over the past several months.

Although important questions remain regarding the scope, manner and extent to which China will implement these measures against non-Chinese parties (particularly private-sector entities), the Law has a number of important elements, including: (i) expanding on existing authorities to provide for the creation of a "counter-sanction list" of individuals subject to a range of restrictive measures (the "Countermeasures") based on involvement in the formulation or implementation of covered foreign sanctions against China; and (ii) codifying a private right of action for aggrieved parties to sue for losses incurred as a result of covered foreign sanctions. The Law has significant implications for both Chinese and non-Chinese companies and individuals, located within or outside China, and poses challenging conflict-of-laws issues and potential private litigation risks for parties who may be subject to conflicting legal obligations.

This Legal Update summarizes the key features of the Law and discusses its implications for the relevant businesses.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Law is the latest in a series of Chinese countermeasures aimed at foreign sanctions and export control laws impacting Chinese entities, individuals and interests. Prior actions taken by the Chinese authorities include the imposition of sanctions against a number of foreign individuals and entities determined to be involved in acts viewed by China as impacting its sovereignty and interests; the establishment by the Ministry of Commerce ("MOFCOM") of formal mechanisms in September 2020 to sanction foreign entities and individuals based on a determination that they are "unreliable"

under the Unreliable Entity List; and MOFCOM's establishment of a legal framework to "block" foreign extra-territorial sanctions and export controls targeting Chinese actors (the "Blocking Rules"). The Law codifies and provides a statutory basis of authority for many of these existing measures. As discussed further below, it is notably broader in certain respects. Whereas the January 2021 MOFCOM Blocking Rules target "extra-territorial" application of foreign sanctions impacting China's dealings with third countries (e.g., an EU entity's restriction of trade to comply with US sanctions measures), the Law explicitly targets "unilateral" foreign sanctions measures (such as those imposed by the United States or European Union directly against Chinese entities), and not solely "extra-territorial" application of such sanctions measures that may impact China's dealings with third countries (e.g., an EU entity's decision to restrict dealings with a Chinese party to comply with US sanctions). As such, any US or other foreign government's sanctions measures targeting China can be scrutinized by the Chinese government as a basis for a Countermeasure under the Law. As discussed further below, the Law is similar to the MOFCOM Blocking Rules, in that both allow Chinese parties to sue those that do not comply with the Law, creating a mechanism for private enforcement of the Law.

## KEY REQUIREMENTS

*What types of sanctions are targeted by the Law?*

Like both the MOFCOM Blocking Rules and the Unreliable Entity List, the Law is broadly designed to counter sanctions and export control measures that impact China's interests, but has several notable features:

- *Not limited to "extra-territorial" sanctions.* The Law explicitly targets "unilateral" foreign sanctions measures (such as those imposed by the United States or European Union directly against Chinese entities). This is a notable expansion from the MOFCOM Blocking Rules, under which the covered sanctions must have an "extra-territorial" application impacting China's dealings with third countries (e.g., an EU entity's decision to restrict dealings with a Chinese party to comply with US sanctions, or a US measure that impacts China's dealings with a third country such as Russia or Iran). Without displacing the MOFCOM Blocking Rules, the Law targets and provides a basis for action in relation to "unilateral" foreign sanctions directly targeting Chinese entities without any "extra-territorial" effect.
- *No published list of foreign sanctions laws is required.* Also in contrast to the MOFCOM Blocking Rules, the Law imposes prohibitions (described further below) regarding offending foreign sanctions generally (e.g., those that "discriminate" against China) without requiring that such offending sanctions first be identified by the Chinese government. This is also a notable departure from the existing MOFCOM Blocking Rules, under which MOFCOM must first identify the offending foreign sanctions measures (or elements thereof), which then trigger compliance prohibitions (and which MOFCOM has not to date identified). In contrast, absent clarifying guidance, the Law potentially applies to any foreign sanctions measures that Chinese authorities may determine meet broad concepts such as violating "basic principles of international relations;" "contain[ing] or suppress[ing] China by using any pretext;" imposing "discriminatory restrictive measures;" "interfere[ing]" in China's internal

affairs;" or otherwise "endanger[ing]" China's sovereignty, security and development interests. Thus, the Law is broadly worded such that it can effectively apply to any number of unilateral sanctions China determines constitute serious violations of its sovereignty and interests.

### *Who can be subject to the Countermeasures?*

A key feature of the Law is that it provides for imposition of sanctions not only against individuals and entities directly or indirectly engaged in the conduct that forms the basis for retaliatory action, but also affiliates of that party (including but not limited to owned and controlled affiliates). In particular, the Countermeasures target:

1. individuals or organizations that have been "directly or indirectly" involved in the "formulation, adoption and implementation" of "discretionary restrictive measures" against Chinese citizens and organizations (the "Listed Individuals" or "Listed Organizations");
2. the spouse and immediate family of a Listed Individual;
3. the senior executives or actual controllers of a Listed Organization;
4. the organization in which a Listed Individual serves as a senior executive; and
5. the organization which is actually controlled by, or is established by or operated with the participation of, a Listed Individual or a Listed Organization (collectively, the "Targeted Persons").

This is consistent with recent sanctions countermeasures announced by China against various US, EU, UK and Canadian entities and individuals (including, in some instances, targeting their direct family members).

### *What are the Countermeasures?*

The Targeted Persons can be subject to one or more of the following Countermeasures:

1. refusal to issue a visa, denial of entry into China, cancellation of a visa or deportation;
2. seizure or freezing of property located within China;
3. ban or restriction on any transaction or cooperation with any organization or individual that is located within China;
4. any other necessary measures.

### *Who will adopt the List and the Countermeasures? Is it possible to change or cancel the adopted List and Countermeasures?*

A "counter foreign sanctions working coordination mechanism" (the "Coordination Mechanism") will be established, under which, the relevant departments of the State Council will share information; cooperate and, within their respective areas of jurisdiction, decide on the inclusion of a person onto the List (the "Listing"); adopt and implement the Countermeasures. A decision made by such departments to include an individual or person on the list is a "final decision." However, the relevant department(s) of the State Council can suspend, amend or cancel such Countermeasures. The Listing and the adopted Countermeasures, as well as their

suspension, amendment or cancellation, will be announced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ("MFA") or the other relevant department(s) of the State Council.

*What are the consequences of non-compliance?*

The Law imposes obligations not only on businesses that are located within China, but also on those outside of China:

- Any organization or individual located within China must implement the Countermeasures, failing which, they will be restricted or prohibited from engaging in the "relevant activities."
- Any organization or individual, irrespective of its location, must not implement or assist in the implementation of the "discriminatory restrictive measures" against Chinese citizens or organizations.

Notably, like the MOFCOM Blocking Rules, the Law gives Chinese citizens or organizations the right to sue in Chinese court any individual or organization that fails to comply.

### **IMPACT ON BUSINESS GOING FORWARD**

The full scope and focus of this Law remain unclear, and it remains to be seen how China will interpret and implement it in practice. That being said, the Law further expands the risks for both Chinese and non-Chinese companies and individuals who have operations or dealings in or with China, particularly those who may be subject to conflicting legal obligations. Potentially impacted companies should carefully assess their risk of exposure to conflicting legal obligations in light of this Law.

Going forward, certain aspects of the Law (such as the process for inclusion on the List and the adoption and/or modification of the Countermeasures) are expected to be clarified by more detailed implementing rules. Companies should closely monitor these events as they develop.

**Source:** [mondaq.com](https://mondaq.com); 22 June 2021

## **SUGA: 3 MILLION VACCINE DOSES FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS**

Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide has pledged to provide 3 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine to Pacific island nations, to be supplied through the global COVAX initiative. Suga hosted the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting on Friday. Leaders of 18 island nations and territories in the South Pacific joined via video link.

Suga said Japan will provide equipment and technical support to help the region establish cold chain logistics to transport vaccines. He said this will be part of a comprehensive assistance program that will also include support for medical systems and economic recovery. Suga said the vaccine doses will be offered from around mid-

July through the COVAX initiative for fair distribution. He said he hopes the 3 million shots will be delivered by around the end of the year.

Suga also highlighted Japan's goal of realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific, and called for the island nations' cooperation on maritime security, marine resource policy and climate change. He said Japan plans to provide assistance for high-quality infrastructure with an emphasis on openness and transparency to establish a sustainable and resilient foundation for economic development in the region.

**Source:** [NHK World](#); 03 July 2021

## A HALF-CENTURY AFTER THE WAR, US TRADE WITH VIETNAM SURGES

Americans are used to seeing a “Made in China” label on goods from sneakers to electronics, with trade between the superpowers growing yearly toward volumes that are now worth around \$700 billion annually. But many may have also noticed more and more consumer goods from a source once unlikely: The Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Vietnam is now America’s sixth largest source for imports — outranked only by China, Mexico, Canada, Japan and Germany, and ahead of other historical trading behemoths like South Korea, Taiwan, India, the UK and France — according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Trade between the U.S. and Vietnam — population about 100 million — has been growing for years. Vietnam’s Ministry of Industry and Trade predicts total trade with the U.S. will surpass the \$100 billion mark this year, up from \$90.8 billion last year. That has turned the onetime foes into important economic partners — and friends. “Any Vietnamese hostility against the U.S. government or Americans arising from the Vietnam War have long receded,” said Carl Thayer, an emeritus professor at the Australian Defense Force Academy in Canberra and a noted expert on Vietnam, explaining that Vietnam has looked outward as its ties with its northern neighbor have strained.

“Public views of China are toxic, in contrast to strongly positive views of the United States in annual polls,” he said, with the positive views extending to U.S. leaders. “Donald Trump was immensely popular due to his anti-China rhetoric and punitive tariffs.” Meanwhile, as China has developed and moved up the technological ladder, Vietnamese exporters have increasingly filled the void for American consumers. Many items once typically imported from China now come from the junior revolutionary state. American imports from Vietnam include footwear, apparel, electrical machinery, furniture and agricultural products, according to the U.S. State Department. But the relationship goes both ways: U.S. exports to Vietnam total \$13.4 billion a year, according to Office of the U.S. Trade Representative figures, with the main items heading back across the Pacific to Vietnam including machinery, computers, electronics, aircraft and vehicles. “Vietnam represents the fastest growing market in Southeast Asia for American exports,” said Thayer, who noted the growing

importance of the ties. “The U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship will be an enduring part of the post-COVID-19 economic architecture.”

Relations have come a long way since the bitter conflict waged on the Indochinese peninsula from the 1960s to 1970s — known in the U.S. as the Vietnam War, and in Vietnam as the American War — with the shifting geopolitical reality in Asia amid China’s rise having given both countries reasons to ensure bygones remain bygones. For Vietnam, a big reason is to have a counterweight in the region as its traditional rival gains strength and makes aggressive claims to the South China Sea, international waters east of Vietnam through which more than \$5 trillion worth of trade passes each year.

“Vietnam is keen to keep the U.S. engaged militarily in the region, believing that this will continue to contribute to regional peace and stability, not least in the context of China’s rise and growing power,” said Collin Koh, an expert in Southeast Asian naval affairs at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. “In this respect, Vietnam’s view of the offshore stabilizing role played by the U.S. is possibly not different from that of many other regional countries, such as Singapore.” Repairs to the relationship have also been helped by American veterans of the war, who have sought to avoid political differences in their dealings with Vietnam’s communist regime in order to assist in ongoing efforts to recover the remains of fallen or missing American soldiers.

“Vietnam veterans as a group have done pretty well with the government of Vietnam, as far as going back to visit,” said John Rowan, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America, who was stationed as a soldier at the Danang Air Base in 1967. Rowan said chapters of his organization have been involved in humanitarian efforts such as helping Vietnamese children for years, while carefully avoiding any diplomatic disputes. “We’ve always had a good relationship with the Vietnamese government because we don’t get very political,” he said. “We just stick to our agenda of identifying POWs/MIAs and conducting humanitarian missions.” Improving relations between Vietnam and the U.S. in the wake of the 1970s war can be broken down into four distinct periods, from 1973 to the present, according to Thayer.

The first stage, from 1973-1975, was marked by the peace agreement signed in Paris in 1973 to end hostilities and provide a full accounting of all prisoners of war (POWs) and soldiers missing-in-action (MIAs). President Richard M. Nixon promised about \$2 billion in reconstruction aid. However, that fell apart following a 1975 North Vietnamese offensive that led to the collapse of U.S.-backed South Vietnam and ended the war. The next period, from 1975 to 1995, was marked by limited contact between the newly unified Vietnamese state and Washington, during which “bilateral relations focused almost entirely on a full accounting of POWs and MIAs,” on both sides, Thayer said. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter came close to normalizing relations but was stopped by Congress. Vietnam shortly after signed a 25-year alliance with the Soviet Union. After Vietnamese forces overthrew the Khmer Rouge and occupied Cambodia that year, the U.S. subjected Vietnam to economic sanctions until it withdrew from its neighbor in 1989.

A U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam was finally lifted in 1994, and relations between the two countries became more harmonious, with Defense Secretary William Cohen in

2000 becoming the first U.S. official to visit the country since the end of the war. A bilateral trade agreement was signed in 2001, with President Bill Clinton visiting Vietnam. The U.S. permanently “normalized” Vietnam’s trade status in 2006. President Barack Obama visited Vietnam and lifted an embargo on trading arms with the former foe in 2016, and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung became the first Southeast Asian leader to be received by President Donald J. Trump at the White House in May 2017. When Obama visited in May 2016, he acknowledged the rapidly changed relationship. “As Vietnam has transformed, so has the relationship between our two nations,” Obama said, noting that the reconciliation had required compromise. “We learned a lesson taught by the venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, who said, ‘In true dialogue, both sides are willing to change.’”

But he also spoke of a long history of trade between the two nations. “Today, we also remember the longer history between Vietnamese and Americans that is too often overlooked,” Obama said. “More than 200 years ago, when our Founding Father, Thomas Jefferson, sought rice for his farm, he looked to the rice of Vietnam, which he said had ‘the reputation of being whitest to the eye, best flavored to the taste, and most productive.’” “Soon after, American trade ships arrived in your ports seeking commerce.” For the past decade, though, relations have been marked most by security cooperation. Most analysts have viewed those warming relations through the lens of the shared rival.

While China would not be thrilled with Vietnam’s closer trade links with the U.S., Thayer noted, Beijing would ultimately be “more concerned about defense, security and political relations between Hanoi and Washington than about economic relations. China’s government accordingly continually reminds Vietnam of their shared commitment to socialism and opposition to foreign interference in their internal affairs, he said. “China is wary of any growth in U.S.-Vietnam defense-security cooperation, but this concern is mitigated by Vietnam’s long-standing defense policy which states that Vietnam consistently advocates neither joining any military alliances, siding with one country against another, giving any other country’ permission to set up military bases,” Thayer said. Moreover, in terms of trade, many raw materials that go into Vietnam’s exports ultimately come from China: “It provides the resources that fuel Vietnamese manufacturing and exports. It is in China’s material interest to see Vietnam prosper economically.”

Relations between the U.S. and Vietnam also have their own problems. Last year the U.S. designated Vietnam a “currency manipulator,” accusing it of changing the value of its currency to help gain unfair trade advantages — but no action was taken. There is also Vietnam’s human rights record and suppression of pro-democracy activists and its continued dependence on Russian arms and military technology, which has led to U.S. threats of renewed sanctions. There are also problems including threats of U.S. tariffs on Vietnamese seafood, steel and aluminum, amid claims they are sourced from China. Yet, in fundamental terms, the relationship has come a long way since 1975.

**Source:** [tntribune.com](https://www.tntribune.com); 02 July 2021

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