



Government of India  
Ministry of Defence



# PROMOTING HOLISTIC MARITIME SECURITY AND GROWTH: REGIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING AND CAPABILITY-ENHANCEMENT



## CONFERENCE BOOKLET

28, 29 & 30 October 2025  
Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi



# ABOUT THE NMF

*“To be the foremost resource centre for the development and advocacy of strategies for the promotion and protection of India’s maritime interests”*

The genesis of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), New Delhi, lies in a long-felt need to redress India’s historical neglect of its maritime domain. The necessity to address the multifarious disciplines, themes, subjects and nuances that make up not merely ‘naval’ power (sea power) but that constitute comprehensive ‘maritime’ power, was well recognised by the Indian Navy and fully endorsed by the Government of India.

The NMF was accordingly established, in 2005, as the nation’s first maritime think-tank for the conduct of independent and policy-relevant research on all ‘matters maritime’. It was, from its very inception, designed to create and heighten maritime awareness amongst India’s policy-makers, intellectual echelons, and civil society at large. Towards this end, it was to be a policy-relevant research organisation of acknowledged excellence that would not only undertake serious, cutting-edge maritime research of its own but would also provide a common platform for advocacy, discourse, and debate, between maritime-related national and international institutions, organisations, and academic establishments, as also reputed and renowned individuals, professionals, and practitioners the world over.

The Foundation was inaugurated on the 15th of February, 2005, by the then Defence Minister of India, the late Dr Pranab Mukherjee, who went on to become the Honourable President of the Republic of India. While the NMF is an independent and autonomous think-tank, its intellectual and organisational development is supported by the Ministry of Defence and the Indian Navy. Over the years that have elapsed since its inception, the NMF has grown rapidly from an embryonic manifestation of India’s maritime renaissance into an effervescent, globally respected, and renowned intellectual institution with robust academic linkages within the country as well as overseas.



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### MESSAGE

I am delighted to see the Indian Navy's outstanding success in advancing the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). It was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in November 2019, at the East Asia Summit, Bangkok under the vision of MAHASAGAR.

The Indian Navy has demonstrated versatility, competence, confidence, and resilience in promoting holistic maritime security. It has expanded its engagement with like-minded partners across the Indo-Pacific region at strategic, operational and tactical levels. A key mechanism for this outreach is the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD). Successive editions of IPRD have raised global awareness of IPOI and addressed its seven pillars including Maritime Security, trade and connectivity, marine resources, and disaster risk reduction & management.

This year's IPRD-2025, themed of "Promoting Holistic Maritime Security Growth: Regional Capacity-Building & Capability-Enhancement," focuses specifically on the "Capacity Building and Resource Sharing" pillar.

I congratulate the Indian Navy, the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) and all stakeholders for their tireless efforts in bringing Indian maritime scholarship to the forefront of global discourse.

I wish the conference every success.

'Jai Hind'

(Rajnath Singh)

New Delhi  
23 Oct, 2025



## MESSAGE

1. The “Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue” (IPRD) is the Indian Navy’s annual apex-level conference, and is without doubt the maritime supplement to the New Delhi’s *Raisina Dialogue* at the strategic level. Hosted by the Indian Navy and organized and conducted on the Navy’s behalf by its knowledge-partner, the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), it seeks to focus upon the pillars of the “Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative” (IPOI).
2. For the Indian Navy, the IPRD complements both, the “Goa Maritime Conclave / Symposium” through which maritime engagement is pursued at the operational art level and also the “MILAN” series that is positioned at the intersection of the tactical and operational levels of international naval interaction.
3. Building upon the success garnered through the previous three editions of the IPRD in fleshing out specific maritime lines – of – thrust of the IPOI, this year’s overarching theme is *“Promoting Holistic Maritime Security Growth: Regional Capacity-Building & Capability-Enhancement”*. The topic will bring to fore the manner in which regional growth, maritime stability and holistic maritime security could best be promoted through specific regional measures for capacity-building and capability enhancement. The deliberations of this conference will go well beyond a mere regurgitation of regional maritime problem sets and will also concentrate upon the identification of specific solutions to address prevalent and foreseeable challenges and aspirations within the Indo-Pacific.
4. I am sanguine that this year’s conference (IPRD-2025) will once again stamp its mark of brilliance across the intellectual firmament of the Indo-Pacific.

**Jai Hind !**

(Anil Chauhan)  
General  
Chief of Defence Staff & Secretary, DMA



## Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi

PVSM, AVSM, NM

Chief of the Naval Staff  
Indian Navy



रक्षा मंत्रालय  
नौसेना मुख्यालय  
साउथ ब्लॉक, नई दिल्ली 110011  
*Ministry of Defence  
Naval Headquarters  
South Block, New Delhi 110011*

## MESSAGE

### INDO-PACIFIC REGIONAL DIALOGUE (IPRD)

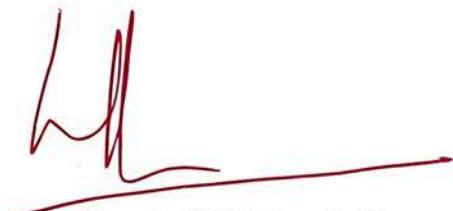
1. The Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD), now in its seventh edition, continues to be a vital manifestation of the Indian Navy's international outreach at the strategic level. Successive editions have sought to identify and advance cooperative and collaborative opportunities aligned with the seven maritime lines of effort under the *Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)*. In doing so, the IPRD also provides meaningful specificity to India's overarching maritime policy vision — *MAHASAGAR — Mutual and Holistic Advancement of Security and Growth Across Regions*.
2. As enunciated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2025, *MAHASAGAR* embodies **capacity building** as one of the critical pillars towards collective progress, and fostering cooperation amongst like-minded nations to ensure security and prosperity across maritime domains. In this regard, the conduct of this year's *Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD-2025)* with the theme "*Promoting Holistic Maritime Security Growth: Regional Capacity-Building and Capability-Enhancement*" — is both **timely and apt**, reflecting India's steadfast commitment to inclusive and collaborative maritime engagement.
3. I am confident that this Dialogue will provide an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, share perspectives, and evolve practical proposals towards addressing regional priorities. By tailoring collaborative frameworks to specific needs, it would generate actionable outcomes that contribute to a safer, more prosperous, and mutually supportive maritime order.

4. I compliment the organisers, including the *National Maritime Foundation*, for their sustained efforts in conceptualising and conducting the Dialogue, and extend my best wishes for the success of *IPRD 2025*.

*Sam No Varunah!*

*Jai Hind!*

15 Oct 25



(Dinesh K Tripathi)  
Admiral  
Chief of the Naval Staff

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



## **Admiral Karambir Singh**

PVSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd)

Chairman, National Maritime Foundation

*Former Chief of the Naval Staff*

*Indian Navy*



As the Chairman of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), I wish to place on record my gratitude to the Indian Navy for the continued faith that it has reposed in the NMF in nominating the Foundation as its knowledge partner and the chief organiser of successive iterations of the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue. I remain acutely conscious of the fact that this is a privilege of very high order and one that must be continuously earned. As has been the case with the past seven editions of the IPRD (the COVID-19 pandemic forced a last-minute cancellation of the conference in 2020), this year, too, my confidence has been given a great boost by the enormous support that the NMF has received from a whole galaxy of maritime experts from around the world, who have been willing to carve out time from their incredibly busy schedule to share their wisdom with us over a three-day period. Abbreviated versions of their extremely impressive biodatas are available in this booklet and I can say with certitude that even in truncated form, each one evokes an abundance of admiration and inspiration. I thank our distinguished speakers individually as well as collectively for their presence and the enormity of their contribution.

In generic terms, the IPRD is contextualised to the “Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative” (IPOI). The IPOI itself provides first-order specificity to India’s maritime policy, which is encapsulated in the acronym “MAHASAGAR” (Mutual and Holistic Advancement of Security and Growth for all in the Region). Each annual edition of the IPRD endeavours to sequentially add granularity and second-and third-order specificity to one or more of the seven maritime lines-of-thrust, which, taken in aggregate, make up the deeply interconnected web that is the IPOI.

This year, the maritime line of thrust upon which we will focus is 'Capacity Building and Resource Sharing'. I believe that it is, therefore, very apt that the overarching theme of IPRD-2025 is 'Promoting Holistic Maritime Security Growth: Regional Capacity-Building & Capability-Enhancement'. If 'capacity' connotes material wherewithal and 'capability' denotes the aggregate of human and organisation skill that will enable available "capacity" to be maximised, it would be most beneficial for us to concentrate upon cooperative and collaborative 'capability-enhancement', since for most countries that are located within the Indo-Pacific, it is "capability" that needs to most urgently be enhanced. How this might best be done is what this edition of the IPRD will address and generate by way of recommendations and takeaways.

I share the palpable sense of anticipation and excitement for what I am certain will be a scintillating three days of intellectual debate and the dissemination of maritime plans and programmes that will enable us to move ahead together.

I wish IPRD-2025 and all its participants every success in their mighty endeavours.

Jai hind!



**Admiral Karambir Singh**

PVSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd)

Chairman, National Maritime Foundation

*Former Chief of the Naval Staff*

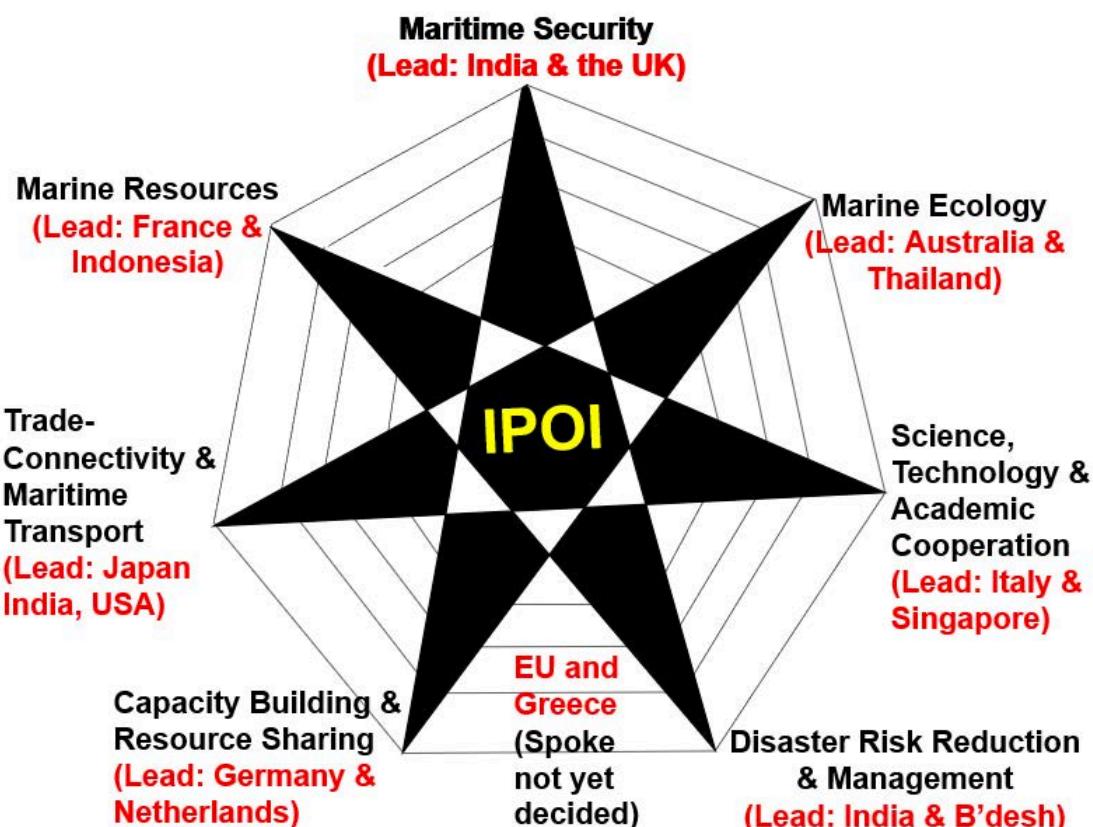
*Indian Navy*

13 October 2025

# CONCEPT NOTE

## PROMOTING HOLISTIC MARITIME SECURITY AND GROWTH: REGIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING AND CAPABILITY- ENHANCEMENT

**SAGAR**. The Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) is the Indian Navy's annual, international, apex-level conference and is the principal manifestation of the Navy's outreach at the strategic level. Each successive edition of the IPRD seeks to sequentially focus upon the pillars of the "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" (IPOI), which had been launched by India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on 04 November 2019 at the 14th East Asia Summit in Bangkok. The seven pillars of the IPOI serve to identify specific maritime lines-of-thrust and all seven are intricately and inextricably connected to one another. As such, the IPOI is best thought of as a complex, deeply interconnected 'web', with each of its seven 'spokes' representing a specific maritime 'line-of-thrust'. Over the six years that have elapsed since its initial enunciation, the IPOI has gained considerable international traction, with several countries volunteering to take the lead along one or more of these maritime 'lines-of-thrust', as is depicted in the following conceptual-schematic:



MAHASAGAR refers is, for the present, the Indo-Pacific. India's spatial conceptualisation of the Indo-Pacific stretches from the eastern coastline of Africa to the western shores of the Americas and from the southern coastline of Asia to that of Antarctica. While the Indo-Pacific is a predominantly maritime space, it does, of course, incorporate an important continental dimension as well.



Importantly, for India, the Indo-Pacific is not, in and of itself, a 'strategy.' It is, instead, a 'strategic geography' within which New Delhi formulates and executes a number of diverse strategies, all designed to promote regional economic and societal security and growth, thereby meaningfully contributing to peace, prosperity, and stability. Indeed, holistic maritime security and mutually reinforcing economic and societal growth throughout the Indo-Pacific is India's desired end-state for the region.

Any architecture for holistic-security within the Indo-Pacific — indeed, as in every other regional space in the world — must necessarily have at least three layers: a conceptual layer (this, in the case of the Indo-Pacific could be the expansion of the acronym MAHASAGAR), a political layer (this could well be an amalgam of IORA and the East Asia Summit [EAS]), and, finally, and most importantly, an executive layer that will actually "do the doing" and comprise seagoing maritime agencies — mostly but not solely embodied by navies and coast guards. This would almost certainly have to be an amalgam of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium [IONS] and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium [WPNS]). With the Indian Navy resuming the chair of IONS for the second time since the launch of this structure in the year 2008, there is considerable hope that the impetus that has been provided by the previous illustrious chairs would be accelerated even further.

Building upon the success garnered through the previous three editions of the IPRD<sup>[1]</sup> in fleshing out specific maritime lines-of-thrust of the IPOI, this year's edition — **IPRD-2025** — will focus upon the manner in which regional growth, maritime stability, and holistic maritime security could best be promoted through specific regional measures for capacity-building (connoting 'material wherewithal') and capability-enhancement (denoting human organisational and functional skills).

As has been the case in earlier editions, IPRD-2025 will encompass wide-ranging and multifaceted discussions by a galaxy of globally renowned experts in multiple facets of the Indo-Pacific maritime domain. The presentations and deliberations of this mega international conference will go well beyond a mere regurgitation of regional maritime problem-sets. They will concentrate, instead, upon the identification of specific solutions that could guide maritime policy formulation and execution at national, sub-regional, and pan-regional levels, so as to address prevalent and foreseeable challenges and aspirations within the Indo-Pacific.

[1] IPRD-2022 sought to familiarise the region's strategic community with the IPOI (in its entirety) and sensitise it to the enormous potential of this initiative. While accepting the ubiquitous impact of regional geopolitics upon the IPOI, IPRD-2022 was successful in identifying a number of maritime best-practices and several way-ahead solutions that could be adopted regionwide.

IPRD-2023 focused upon the trade-connectivity and maritime transport pillar of the IPOI viewed against the backdrop of a variety of geopolitical moves and countermoves within the Indo-Pacific, and identified regional policy-options and practices that could be proliferated across large swaths of the region.

IPRD-2024 concentrated upon the "Marine Resources" pillar of the IPOI and explored the regional impact of resource geopolitics upon holistic maritime security, with the aim of identifying regional and national policy-options that could be pursued to common advantage across the Indo-Pacific.



## SPEAKER PROFILES & ABSTRACTS *(In alphabetical order of first names)*

## Mr Akhil NAIR

Operating Officer & Global Head of Freight Forwarding,  
LOGISTEED Ltd, Hong Kong



Akhil Nair serves as Operating Officer - Global Head of Freight Forwarding at LOGISTEED International, a role he assumed in 2024. With over 17 years of leadership in global logistics, he drives LOGISTEED's freight forwarding division, focusing on operational efficiency, digital transformation, and network optimization to support the company's vision of global integration and growth.

Previously, Akhil was SVP of Global Operational Strategy & Excellence and Global Ocean Freight at SEKO Logistics in Hong Kong, where he shaped strategic direction and led ocean freight operations. His career also includes seven years at CEVA Logistics, managing global freight solutions and driving procurement and growth strategies across Asia Pacific. Additionally, he held senior commercial roles at Emirates Shipping Line, enhancing his expertise in global shipping and trade lane management.

Akhil's extensive experience spans Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa, with a deep specialization in ocean freight markets across Asia Pacific, North America, Europe, and the Middle East. Originally from Bangalore, India, he holds an MBA in International Business from The European Business School, London, and a diploma in Supply Chain Management from Copenhagen Business School.

## **VAdm (Ms) Anne CULLERE, FN (Retd)**

Science Po (Le Havre Campus),  
Le Havre, France



Vice Admiral (Retd) Anne Cullere is a distinguished French naval officer and security expert, renowned as the first woman to attain the rank of three-star admiral in the French Navy. With over four decades of experience, including ten years at sea and two commands of naval vessels, she has held senior leadership roles encompassing maritime operations, strategic planning, and defence diplomacy. Since 2016, she has served as a part-time lecturer on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific at Sciences Po Le Havre, Research Director and Instructor at The Management Institute for International Security (THEMIIS), CEO of ARXEÏS for executive coaching, and international lecturer on Women, Peace, and Security and maritime security at Expertise France. Her expertise spans leadership and management, operational command, strategic planning, international relations, media communication, and education.

She has previously served as the Joint Chief of the French Armed Forces in the Pacific, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Chief of Staff in the Indian Ocean, and Special Military Envoy for Southeast Asia. A graduate of the French War College, she also holds a Master's in International Affairs and advanced credentials from RSIS Singapore, the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (Hawaii), and the École Nationale d'Administration (Paris). An NLP Master Practitioner and executive coach, she actively promotes women's leadership and empowerment. Her distinguished service has been recognised through numerous honours, including Officer of the Legion of Honour, Commander of the National Order of Merit, and Officer of the Maritime Merit Order.

## **Mr Badriujjaman BODI**

Research Officer,  
Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research  
and Development (BIMRAD),  
Dhaka, Bangladesh



Mr Badirujjaman Bodi is a Research Officer at the Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development (BIMRAD), where he joined in April 2024. He holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in International Relations from Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka. His academic and professional interests lie in marine affairs, the blue economy, port business, international relations theory, and both traditional and non-traditional security issues, with a particular focus on South Asian geopolitics and foreign policy. Prior to joining BIMRAD, he worked as a Research Officer at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), where he contributed to several policy-oriented projects, including studies on the conditions of Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Maldives and on the perspectives of Bangladeshi university students regarding the Rohingya crisis and national security. Mr Bodi has authored multiple publications addressing maritime security and strategic affairs, including works on maritime domain awareness, Bangladesh–Japan cooperation, Sino-Indian power dynamics in the Indian Ocean, and the maritimisation of Bangladesh's foreign policy. His recent writings also explore the significance of Chinese investment in Bangladesh's marine fisheries sector.

## **Prof (Dr) Christian BUEGER**

Professor of International Relations  
Department of Political Science  
University of Copenhagen  
Denmark



Dr Christian Bueger is a Professor of International Relations at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, where he leads the Ocean Infrastructure Research Group. He is one of the directors of SafeSeas – the research network for maritime security and a research fellow at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). Prof Bueger is a leading scholar on maritime security and global ocean politics. Across over 190 publications, he has investigated issues such as maritime strategy, law of the sea, maritime domain awareness, blue crimes, operational coordination, and capacity building.

With Tim Edmunds, he is the author of *Understanding Maritime Security*, published by Oxford University Press in 2024. The book is a new go-to resource for a comprehensive understanding of maritime security and the solutions available. His current research develops guidelines for critical maritime infrastructure protection, including subsea data cables and offshore wind energy.

Bueger holds a PhD from the European University Institute. Throughout his career, he held positions at Cardiff University, Greenwich Maritime Institute, University of Malta and the National University of Singapore. He has worked as a consultant and advisor for the European Parliament, the European Council, the International Maritime Organisation, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and the Indian Ocean Commission. His work is regularly featured in international news, including Al Jazeera, BBC and The Guardian. Further information is available on his website: [www.bueger.info](http://www.bueger.info)

## **Dr David BREWSTER**

Senior Research Fellow

National Security College, Australian National University,  
Canberra, Australia



Dr David Brewster is one of Australia's leading experts on Australia's security relationships in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. He is a Senior Research Fellow with the National Security College and a Distinguished Research Fellow with the Australia India Institute.

Dr Brewster's books include India as an Asia Pacific power, about India's strategic role in the Asia Pacific and India's Ocean: the story of India's bid for regional leadership, which examines India's strategic ambitions in the Indian Ocean. His edited volumes include India and China at Sea: Competition for Naval Dominance in the Indian Ocean and Cross Currents: the New Geopolitics of the Indian Ocean.

Some recent reports include:

- Governing Bangladesh's maritime space: An assessment of Bangladesh's maritime challenges and maritime domain awareness capabilities
- Maritime Domain Awareness 3.0: The Future of Maritime Information and Intelligence Sharing in the Indian Ocean
- Governing Sri Lanka's maritime space: An assessment of Bangladesh's maritime challenges and maritime domain awareness capabilities

Dr Brewster regularly works on projects with assistance from the Australian government. His current projects include assessments for the Bay of Bengal countries and examining regional MDA information sharing arrangements.

## **Mr David WILLIMA**

Climate Researcher  
Institute for Security Studies  
Pretoria, South Africa



Mr David Willima works as a Maritime Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in the Climate Risk and Human Security Project. His focus areas are the climate and maritime security nexus, the blue economy, ocean governance and climate risk and human security.

David works to promote the blue economy and ocean governance as policy priorities with organisations such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). David also works to link local, regional and global climate programmes and capacities to deliver effective anticipatory and response action. David Willima holds a master of Arts Degree in Security Studies (University of Pretoria).

## **Mr Deryk BALADJAY**

Research Manager  
Amador Research Services  
Assistant Editor, FACTS Asia,  
Mandaluyong City, Philippines



Mr Deryk Matthew N Baladjay is a Lecturer at the Department of International Studies at De La Salle University. He is also a member of the Young Leaders cohort at the Pacific Forum. Outside his functions in academia, he serves a consultancy role for Manila-based firm Amador Research Services as its Research Manager and for FACTS Asia. Deryk specialises in East and Southeast Asian affairs, geopolitics, the Philippines-United States alliance, Philippine foreign policy, and strategic studies.

### **ABSTRACT: Regional Cooperation in Building Port and Coastal Resilience - A Filipino Perspective**

**Session IV (30 Oct 2025)**

As an archipelagic nation with more than 7,600 islands, the Philippines faces a dual imperative: strengthening port infrastructure for economic growth while ensuring coastal resilience against climate and security challenges. Since the "Build, Build, Build" program under the Duterte administration and its continuation through the "Build Better More" agenda of the Marcos Jr. administration, the Philippines has prioritized modernizing ports, integrating climate-resilient design, and enhancing maritime connectivity across its vast coastline. Ports have also emerged as strategic nodes for humanitarian assistance and disaster response, as well as for sustaining naval and coast guard operations in support of maritime domain awareness. Regionally, Manila engages through ASEAN-led initiatives on port connectivity, green infrastructure, and information-sharing, with a view to aligning national efforts with wider Indo-Pacific frameworks. These intersect directly with several pillars of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, particularly those on disaster risk reduction, maritime transport, and capacity-building. As the Philippines prepares for its ASEAN Chairmanship in 2026, its experience in combining infrastructure development with coastal resilience offers practical pathways for strengthening port systems and promoting holistic maritime security across the Indo-Pacific.

## **Admiral Dinesh K TRIPATHI**

PVSM, AVSM, NM  
Chief of the Naval Staff  
Indian Navy



Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi assumed command as the 26th Chief of the Naval Staff on 30 Apr 24. Prior to this appointment, he was the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff.

He completed his schooling from Sainik School Rewa, and thereafter joined the prestigious National Defence Academy. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 Jul 1985 and specialised in Communication and Electronic Warfare. His command assignments include command of INS *Vinash* (Missile Vessel), INS *Kirch* (Missile Corvette), and INS *Trishul* (Guided Missile Frigate). Whilst in command of INS *Kirch*, he played a pivotal role during HADR operations after the Tsunami of December 2004, for which he received a letter of appreciation from the then President of Sri Lanka.

The Admiral is an alumnus of the Defence Service Staff College, Wellington, the College of Naval Warfare and the Naval Command College at the US Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, where he won the prestigious Robert E. Bateman International Prize.

His other sea-going appointments include Executive Officer of INS *Mumbai* (Guided Missile Destroyer), Fleet Electronic Warfare Officer, Fleet Communication Officer and also the Fleet Operations Officer (akin to the Chief of Staff to the Fleet Commander) of the Western Fleet. His staff appointments include the Director of Naval Operations (DNO), Principal Director of Network Centric Operations (PDNCO), and Principal Director Naval Plans (PDNP).

After his promotion to the Flag Rank, he held several important appointments such as the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Policy and Plans), Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet, Commandant of the prestigious Indian Naval Academy, Director General of Naval Operations, Chief of Personnel and the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Naval Command.

Adm Dinesh K Tripathi is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Nao Sena Medal for devotion to duty. He is a keen sportsman and avidly follows tennis, badminton, and cricket.

## Dr Do Thanh HAI

Deputy Director-General  
East Sea Institute  
Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam  
Hanoi, Vietnam



Dr Do Thanh Hai is currently Deputy Director-General of the East Sea Institute at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV). He previously served as Minister Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Vietnam in India, a vacation scholar at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra, and Deputy Director of the Centre for Political and Security Studies of the DAV's Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies in Hanoi. He obtained his doctorate from the Australian National University and his master's degree from the Erasmus Mundus Global Studies Program.

He also published in *The East Asia Policy*, *The Journal for Contemporary East Asia Studies*, *The Pacific Review*, *The Maritime Affairs*, *The ASAN Forum*, *CSIS PacNet*, *Journal of International Review* (DAV) and a few international news outlets. He is the author of the book titled *Vietnam and the South China Sea: Politics, Security and Legality* and published by Routledge in 2017. His latest books, both of which are co-edited with Prof. Leszek Buszynski, are *The South China Sea: From Regional Maritime Dispute to Geostrategic Competition*, published by Routledge in 2019 and *Maritime Issues and Regional Order in Indo-Pacific*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2021.

### **ABSTRACT - Cooperative Regional Capability-Enhancement for the Protection of Critical Underwater Infrastructure in and off Vietnam**

#### **Session III ( 29 Oct 2025)**

Vietnam's underwater cable infrastructure represents a critical nexus where digital sovereignty and energy security meets geopolitical security in Southeast Asia. The simultaneous failure of all five submarine cables in 2022-2023, causing a 75% reduction in international data capacity, starkly demonstrated the strategic vulnerability of this critical infrastructure. The convergence of South China Sea territorial disputes, climate-intensified natural disasters, and great power competition over digital infrastructure creates a complex threat environment demanding coordinated regional responses. The paper investigates cooperative regional approaches to capability-enhancement for the protection of critical underwater infrastructure in and off Vietnam. It examines the threat landscape, reviews relevant international and regional legal frameworks, assesses Vietnam's current policies and vulnerabilities, and proposes multi-layered cooperative strategies. By situating Vietnam within ASEAN, broader Indo-Pacific security networks, and industry-government partnerships, the paper identifies practical pathways for enhanced resilience.

## **Vice Admiral G Ashok KUMAR**

PVSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd)

Distinguished Fellow

National Maritime Foundation



Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd), served as India's first-ever National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC), at the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) from February 2022 to February 2025.

Prior to his appointment as the NMSC, he had a distinguished naval career of nearly 40 years. The Admiral was the Deputy Chief and Vice Chief of Naval Staff for a total of over 05 years from June 2016 to July 2021, just prior to his superannuation from the Indian Navy.

Upon assuming the appointment as India's first National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) on 16 Feb 2022, he was instrumental in steering numerous multi-agency organisational, administrative, operational and technical initiatives for enhanced maritime security of the nation. He relinquished his appointment in February this year.

He continues to be involved with maritime issues as a Distinguished Fellow of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF).

## **Ms Grace FULLER**

First Secretary  
Australian High Commission  
New Delhi



Ms Grace Fuller is currently First Secretary Defence in the Australian High Commission, responsible for the India-Australia bilateral defence relationship.

Ms Fuller has spent 08 years in the Department of Defence in roles covering operations, trade, and international policy. Grace has also worked as an international advisor for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and has also been deployed to the Middle East as Policy Adviser to Australia's Commander Joint Task Force 633.

Ms Fuller holds a Master's in Public Policy from the University of Melbourne and wrote her history honours thesis on the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

## **Dr Gudrun WACKER**

Senior Fellow, Asia Division  
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik  
German Institute for International and Security Affairs  
Berlin, Germany



Dr Gudrun Wacker is Senior Fellow in the Asia Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP) in Berlin, a think tank providing political advice to the German government and parliament. Her research focuses on Chinese foreign and security policy, especially EU-China relations, China and the Asia-Pacific region, and security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and the Indo-Pacific. She is currently an EU delegate to the Experts and Eminent Persons Group of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

### **ABSTRACT: Options for Cooperative Counterbalancing of China in the South Pacific**

**Session V (30 Oct 2025)**

The 12 independent Pacific island countries and 9 dependencies/territories are important due to their vast Exclusive Economic Zones, raw materials and critical infrastructure. Main – and existential - challenges for the islands are climate change, natural disasters and health with external aid playing a vital role in addressing these issues. Over the last years, great power rivalry between the USA and China has affected the region in several dimensions. The presentation will focus on existing platforms of regional cooperation, China's interests and activities in the region, the role of other external actors and major trends in foreign aid. It will also address options for better coordination among external actors and the challenge of finding a balance between the needs and priorities of the islands themselves and geopolitical interests.

## **Professor Hideshi TOKUCHI**

President

Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS)

Tokyo, Japan



Professor Hideshi Tokuchi joined Japan's Defense Agency (now the Ministry of Defense) in 1979 and became the country's first Vice-Minister of Defense for International Affairs (2014–2015). Over his distinguished career, he held key leadership roles, including Director-General of the Defense Policy, Budget and Equipment, Personnel and Education, and Operations Bureaus. Since June 2021, he has served as President of the Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS), a Tokyo-based think tank, and is a visiting professor of international security studies at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS). He holds a Bachelor of Law from the University of Tokyo (1979) and a MALD from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (1986). His recent English publications focus on Japan's evolving national security strategy, Japan-Europe cooperation, and climate security.

### **ABSTRACT: Adaptation and Response to Climate Change A New Opportunity for Capacity-Building Cooperation for Regional Armed Forces**

**Session I (28 Oct 2025)**

National security traditionally focuses on protecting sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, often clashing with environmental goals. Yet, climate change is increasingly a core national security issue. Its effects—on water, food, territory loss from sea level rise, and extreme weather—can destabilize regions, heighten conflict risks, and strain armed forces through frequent disaster-relief operations. It also undermines troop health, infrastructure, and equipment performance. Climate change intertwines with geopolitics, as seen in competition over critical minerals and new Arctic trade routes. However, militaries face difficulty adapting due to their heavy emissions and prioritization of readiness over sustainability. Politicization and scientific uncertainty further hinder action. Nonetheless, climate change compels militaries to reassess the link between energy use and operational effectiveness, presenting opportunities to innovate and reduce fuel dependence.

## **Mr Huib MIJNARENDS**

Deputy Ambassador of the Netherlands to India



Mr Huib Mijnarends is currently serving as Deputy Ambassador to India at the Dutch Embassy in New Delhi. Before assuming this role, Huib served as Counter Terrorism Special Envoy of the Netherlands and before that held several other posts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague as well as at the Dutch embassy in Caracas and the Dutch Representations to the UN in New York and to the EU in Brussels. He furthermore served as political advisor in Uruzgan (Afghanistan) and for two years as policy officer in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin. Huib especially enjoys working in and with people from other countries because of the cultural diversity, the dynamics and new insights that come with it. He gets energised by bringing people together around topics that matter and considers getting Ricky Martin on stage at the United Nations in New York one of his biggest achievements. Huib finalised his studies in European Studies at the University of Amsterdam in 1996. He is married to Alix Fresson and has two children and enjoys travelling, thrillers and tacos.

## **Dr (Ms) In-Joo YOON**

Research Fellow, Global Strategy Research and Development  
Director, Ocean Security and Strategy Research Division  
Korea Maritime Institute  
Busan, Republic of Korea



Dr (Ms) In-Joo Yoon served as a member of the Governance Section Committee for the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (YSLME) project by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, ROK. In the realm of North Korean expertise, she was invited to be a member of the Expert Committee for Industry under the Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation and the National Unification Advisory Council, which is also a presidential consultative body. For other governmental consultations, she was a member of the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Unification, the Inter-Korean exchange committee of Busan Metropolitan City and Gyeongsangbuk-do, and the Evaluation Committee for Education and Training at the Human Resources Development Institute of Busan Metropolitan City. She was a visiting scholar at the East-West Centre, and the Centre for Korean Studies at the University of Hawaii.

She obtained her PhD from Korea University, majoring in North Korean Studies. Her research interests include the maritime industry, inter-Korean cooperation in maritime issues, and the North Korean economy, society, tourism, and transition. Her publications include works such as "Trends and Implications of North Korea's National Fleet: Focusing on Flagging Strategies and Trade Dependency," "Assessment of Performance Related to Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14) for Countries around the Korean Peninsula," and "A Review of the Ocean Economy of North Korea: Relationship between Economic Status and Fisheries Policy" among others.

## **H.E. Mr Indra Mani PANDEY**

Secretary General

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral  
Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)



His Excellency Mr Indra Mani Pandey is a career diplomat of India. He joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1990. Before his current assignment, he served as Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and Other International organisations in Geneva. He had earlier served as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs in charge of the Disarmament & International Security Affairs Division. During his 33-year-long career as an Indian diplomat, Ambassador Pandey has served as Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. Before his Ambassadorial assignment in Muscat, he served as Deputy Ambassador of India to France and Consul General of India at Guangzhou, China.

Ambassador Pandey had also served in various diplomatic capacities at Indian Missions in Cairo (Egypt), Damascus (Syria), Islamabad (Pakistan), Kabul (Afghanistan) and Permanent Mission of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva (Switzerland). During his earlier stints at the Ministry of External Affairs of India in New Delhi, Ambassador Pandey handled assignments in the West Asia and North Africa Division; the Consular, Passport and Visa Division; the Counter Terrorism Cell; the Americas Division; and the Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Myanmar (BSM) Division.

During October 1998-June 1999, Ambassador Pandey attended the Foreign Service Programme at Oxford University, the U.K. In 2009, he attended the 49th Annual Course on National Security and Strategy, conducted by the National Defence College of India. Ambassador Pandey is married to Mrs Sushma Pandey and they have a daughter, Devangi.

## **Dr Iqbal Singh SEVA**

Director

Institute of South Asian Studies  
National University of Singapore  
Singapore



Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea is the Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Singapore (NUS). He is an internationally recognised scholar of contemporary and modern South Asia, focusing on South Asian politics, social and political thought, governance and Islamic thought. He has held academic appointments in leading institutions globally and is the author of several publications.

Before joining ISAS, Associate Professor Sevea was an Associate Professor with the Department of History at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where he was a faculty member from 2012 to 2021. Prior to this, he was an Assistant Professor and the Coordinator of the Contemporary Islam Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His publications include *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and Nationalism in Late Colonial India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), *India and the Future of G20: Shaping Policies for a Better World* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023) and *Islamic Political Thought in Modern South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming, 2025). He holds a DPhil in History from the University of Oxford.

## Admiral Jayantha PERERA

RWP, VSV, USP, ndc, psc, MSc(DS), MSc (D&SS)  
*Former Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy*



Admiral Jayantha Perera, the 19th Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, brings over 37 years of distinguished military service and expertise in maritime defence. A specialist in safeguarding maritime boundaries and promoting ethical ocean governance, he rose through the ranks to lead the Navy in 2014. He holds two Master's degrees—one in Defence Studies from the University of Madras and another in Defence and Strategic Studies from the National Defence University, Islamabad. Throughout his career, he held several key naval appointments, including serving as the first Commanding Officer of SLN Flag Ship Sayura in 2000, and has been decorated with multiple gallantry medals. Following his retirement, he served as Advisor to the President on Maritime Affairs (2015) and as a member of the Presidential Task Force for COVID-19 prevention. Currently, he serves as a consultant and board director at the Maclarence Group and sits on the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce's Steering Committee on Law and Order.

### ABSTRACT: Sri Lanka's Perspective on Resilience-Centric Regional Cooperation Session IV (30 Oct 2025)

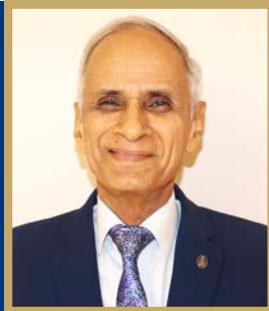
"How inappropriate to call this planet Earth, when it is clearly ocean." — Sir Arthur C. Clarke

The Indian Ocean is now a critical global artery for trade, energy, and strategic competition. For South Asia, maritime security is existential, shaping regional voices on the global stage. Sri Lanka, at the strategic heart of the region, champions resilience-focused cooperation to address cross-border challenges like climate change, disasters, and supply-chain disruptions.

This requires maritime security, sustainable governance, and cooperative mechanisms—including enhanced domain awareness, disaster-response systems, resilient ports, and green maritime logistics. By fostering trust, interoperability, and knowledge sharing, Sri Lanka envisions a collaborative Indian Ocean region where shared vulnerabilities become opportunities for stability, prosperity, and deeper regional partnerships.

## **Admiral Karambir SINGH**

PVSM, AVSM, IN (Retd)  
Former Chief of the Naval Staff  
Chairman, National Maritime Foundation  
New Delhi



Admiral Karambir Singh was India's 24th Chief of the Naval Staff from 31 May 2019 to 30 November 2021. He is currently the chairman of the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi, a position he assumed on 17 January 2022.

The Admiral was commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1980. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, and the College of Naval Warfare, Mumbai. A Naval aviator, he earned his wings in 1981 as a helicopter pilot and has flown extensively on the Chetak (Alouette Mk III) and several variants of Kamov helicopters.

He has commanded the Indian Coast Guard Ship *Chandbibi*, the guided-missile corvette INS *Vijaydurg*, and two of the Indian Navy's frontline guided-missile destroyers, namely, INS *Rana* and INS *Delhi*. He has also held seagoing appointments, including those of Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet.

On promotion to flag rank, the Admiral served as the Chief of Staff of the Eastern Naval Command. He has also held other important flag appointments such as the Chief of Staff of the Tri-Services Unified Command in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra and Gujarat Naval Area (FOMAG).

As a Vice Admiral, he was the Director-General, Project Seabird. He oversaw all aspects of the development of the Indian Navy's expansive and modern base at Karwar in India's southern state of Karnataka. He then served as the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, and later as the Vice Chief of Naval Staff at the Naval Headquarters. He was the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command and assumed Command of the Indian Navy on 31 May 2019, serving until his retirement from active service on 30 November 2021.

## **Mr Kiruja MICHENI**

Project Manager,  
DCoC Sub-division on Maritime Security and Facilitation  
(Maritime Safety Division)  
Nairobi, Kenya



Mr Kiruja Micheni works with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) as the Project Manager for the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment. He has more than ten years of experience supporting regional states to build capacity and counter maritime security threats through the implementation of the Code of Conduct.

Mr Micheni comes from a naval background and has extensive experience in maritime safety and security. He has also worked as a security expert for international NGOs and the corporate sector. He is an alumnus of the University of Wales (Cardiff University), UK, and holds a master's degree in international transport.

In his current role, he is responsible for the implementation of IMO's capacity building programme, providing assistance to the 20 signatory states of the Djibouti Code of Conduct, as amended, to counter piracy and other illicit activities at sea.

## **Rear Admiral Kunal Singh RAJKUMAR, VSM**

Joint Secretary (Navy & Defence Staff)  
Department of Military Affairs (DMA),  
New Delhi



Rear Admiral Kunal Singh Rajkumar is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (77th Course) and was commissioned in the Indian Navy on 1st January 1991. The Flag Officer is an Executive Surface Warfare Officer who has served in various fleet ships based at Eastern and Western Naval Commands. He has commanded a guided missile corvette and a guided missile frigate.

Over the years, his important shore appointments include being the Principal Director Naval Operations, Principal Director Net Centric Operations and Joint Director Personnel at Naval Headquarters, Directing Staff at Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and Commodore Training at the Navy's Training Command at Kochi.

On promotion to Flag Rank in 2021, he served at the Defence Intelligence Agency at HQ Integrated Defence Staff, New Delhi. He was thereafter the Chief Staff Officer Operations of the Western Naval Command, headquartered at Mumbai, till January 24. As the Flag Officer Doctrines and Concepts (FODC) from Feb 24 to Jul 25, he led the analysis and development of tactical warfare, operational concepts and doctrines. Admiral Rajkumar is presently appointed at the Department of Military Affairs as the Joint Secretary (Navy and Defence Staff). For his distinguished service, the Flag Officer was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 2024.

RAdm Rajkumar has attended the Head of Department Surface Warfare Course in the USA, the Joint Services Command Staff Course in the UK, the Higher Defence Management Course in Secunderabad and the apex-level National Defence College Course in New Delhi.

**Cdr (Retd) (Ms) Marianne PERON-DOISE**

Research Associate

Director of Indo-Pacific Observatory

The French Institute of International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS)

Paris, France



Cdr (Retd) (Ms) Marianne Péron-Doise is a Paris-based geopolitical analyst specialising in Indo-Pacific strategic dynamics, EU-Asia security relations, Asian defence policies, and maritime security. She is a Research Fellow at the French Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS), directing its Geopolitical Observatory for the Indo-Pacific. Previously, she was a Research Fellow at IRSEM (2015–2022) and Political Advisor at NATO Maritime Command (2012–2015). She consults for the EU maritime project CRIMARIO and has held Asia-focused roles in the French Ministry of Armed Forces. Marianne has been a visiting fellow at Japan's JIIA and NIDS, teaches maritime security at Sciences Po Paris and Université Catholique Lille, and regularly participates in international maritime conferences.

**ABSTRACT: France and its Pacific Island Territories, integration into the Indo-Pacific mainstream****Session V (30 Oct 2025)**

France, generally seen as a European power, is also a resident power in the Indo-Pacific, through its Indian Ocean presence and its Pacific islands territories (New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna). All these territories grant France a vast EEZ and a strategic role in the region. This presentation, which focuses on the South Pacific, will explore: the military and diplomatic role of France's Pacific territories in regional security, their economic and environmental integration and how they are supported by sustainable projects and regional partnerships. It also explains that despite France's cooperative strategy, based on shared sovereignty and regional dialogue, relations with its South Pacific territories are facing political tensions, notably in New Caledonia, where the recent Bougival Agreement proposes a new status. The paper concludes that successful integration of these territories into the Indo-Pacific mainstream depends on balancing national ambitions, local aspirations, and regional cooperation, including enhancing relations with India to reinforce maritime security (MDA, IIU fishing, HADR).

## **Capt Mark BLAINE, SA Navy (Retd)**

Security Institute for Governance and Leadership  
in Africa (SIGLA)  
Faculty of Military Science  
Stellenbosch University  
South Africa



Captain Mark Blaine is a retired combat officer of the South African Navy with close to forty years of military experience, including command experience of various SA Navy warships. He spent four and a half years as Defence Advisor to the South African High Commission in Kenya and completed his master's degree in maritime security through Coventry University. In the period leading up to his retirement in January 2023, he lectured at the South African Military Academy. He is currently a researcher for the Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA) of Stellenbosch University, with his focus on African maritime security matters such as maritime governance, undersea cable networks, subsea infrastructure and cybersecurity. He consults for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Maritime Crime Program (GMCP) on maritime security, capacity building, external evaluations, as well as their training programmes.

### **ABSTRACT: A South African Perspective of Indo-Pacific Regional Cooperation to Strengthen the Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 (AIMS 2050)**

**Session II (29 Oct 2025)**

Advancing Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 (AIMS 2050) within the Indo-Pacific requires coordinated capacity-building, regional integration, and holistic maritime security. South Africa's strategic location along the Cape Sea Route positions it to shape maritime governance and regional security. Strengthening stability demands expanded surveillance, AIS coverage, and regional information sharing, while naval exercises such as Oxide, Atlasur, IBSAMAR, and Good Hope enhance interoperability. Beyond hardware, a focus on human capacity, trade facilitation, disaster management, blue economy, and climate resilience is essential. By linking national coordination, regional roadmaps, and joint operational initiatives, South Africa can operationalise AIMS 2050 and foster a secure, prosperous maritime domain.

## **Ms Muanpuii SAIAWI, IFS**

Joint Secretary, Government of India,  
Disarmament & International Security Affairs (D&ISA)  
Division,  
Ministry of External Affairs



Ms Muanpuii Saiawi is an Indian Foreign Service officer of 2005 batch.

She has served in Embassy of India in Republic of Korea, Japan and in Israel. In the Ministry of External Affairs she has served as Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Director (Disarmament & International Security Affairs). She was Joint Secretary (Cyber Diplomacy & New Emerging & Strategic Technologies) from 2022-2023. She was the Chair of the 2022 Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Ms Saiawi has been Joint Secretary (Disarmament & International Security Affairs) since September 2022. The Division handles a wide range of multilateral disarmament issues; the multilateral export control regimes; maritime security and international cooperation with ISRO and Department of Atomic Energy.

## **Ambassador (Cmde) Peter IAU**

Commodore (Retd), MQM, DMS, CBE

Security Risk Consultant

Pacific RBS Limited

*Former Ambassador of PNG to Indonesia*



Ambassador (Cmde) Peter Iau has over 40 years of experience in government, military, and diplomatic roles. He is a seasoned professional known for his exceptional leadership, strategic thinking, and crisis management skills. Having served as the Ambassador for Papua New Guinea to Indonesia and as the General of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, he has extensive experience in top-level positions and navigating risky security situations. Currently, he is the founder and CEO of Pacific RBS Ltd, a consultancy firm specialising in risk management issues. He provides consulting services to companies across Papua New Guinea, leveraging his expertise in government relations, international diplomacy, and military operations to help clients navigate complex challenges and achieve their business objectives.

Commodore Iau is also a Strategic Security and Risk Advisor to the Council at the University of Papua New Guinea and a consultant to the PNG SEZ Authority. Fluent in English, Motu, and Pidgin, he holds a master's degree from the University of Wollongong and a graduate diploma from Southern Cross University, Australia.

## **H.E. Dr Philip ACKERMANN**

Ambassador of the Germany to India and Bhutan  
New Delhi



His Excellency Dr Philipp Ackermann studied art history and economics in Bonn, Heidelberg and Utrecht, and received his doctorate in art history in 1993. That same year, he joined the German Foreign Service. His overseas postings include Rabat (Morocco) and New York (German mission to the UN). From 2006 to 2007, he headed the German Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kunduz, Afghanistan. Between 2007 and 2010, he served as political counsellor in New Delhi (India). He was Deputy Head of Mission in Washington DC from 2014 to 2016.

In Berlin, he worked between 2002 and 2006 in the offices of Federal Foreign Ministers Joschka Fischer and Frank-Walter Steinmeier. From 2010 to 2014, he held the position of Head of Task Force Afghanistan-Pakistan in the Federal Foreign Office and as Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Before being assigned to his current job, he was Director General for Africa, Latin America, the Near and Middle East at the Federal Foreign Office for five years.

## **Vice Admiral Pradeep CHAUHAN**

AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd)

Director General

National Maritime Foundation

New Delhi



Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, AVSM & Bar, VSM, is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, the Defence Services Staff College, the Naval War College, and the National Defence College. He holds BSc, MSc, and MPhil degrees.

After an illustrious four-decade long career in the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy, during which he was commended three times by the Hon'ble President of India, he retired on 30 November 2013. He is now the Director-General of the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi — India's foremost resource centre for developing and advocating strategies that promote and protect the nation's maritime interests.

Since retirement, he has remained an active thought-leader and leadership mentor. He serves on the visiting faculty of higher-command establishments of all three defence services, as well as tri-service institutions such as the College of Defence Management, Hyderabad, and the National Defence College, New Delhi. He also advises the government through regular engagement with the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (Navy), the Ministry of External Affairs, and the National Security Council Secretariat. A prolific writer with over ninety-five published papers and articles, he is also an Adviser and Fellow of several leading think tanks.

## **Mr Raj MOHABEER**

Officer in Charge  
General Secretariat  
Indian Ocean Commission  
Mauritius



Mr Raj Mohabeer, an economist by profession, has served since 2000 as Officer in Charge at the General Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), an intergovernmental organisation of South-West Indian Ocean Island States. Previously, he worked as an economist at Mauritius' Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. His portfolio spans economic cooperation, trade, regional integration, infrastructure, maritime security, and the blue economy, including engagement with Small Island Developing States in the Pacific and Caribbean. He has promoted the blue economy and led the development of a Maritime Security Architecture for the Western Indian Ocean under the MASE Programme, and has headed the Secretariat for the Contact Group Against Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

### **ABSTRACT: Way-Ahead to Synergise the IOC, IORA, and IONS: An IOC Perspective**

**Session VI (30 Oct 2025)**

The Indian Ocean features a diverse and evolving array of maritime security mechanisms, including IOC, IORA and IONS. While it is observed that diverse mechanisms lead to overlapping mandates, fragmented decision-making, bureaucratic bottlenecks, differing strategic priorities, and competition for resources, all of which result in lack of absorption capacity at national level, the bedrock for adequately addressing maritime security; thus, diluting the effectiveness of otherwise promising actions. The IOC, IORA and IONS constitute frameworks for complementary strategic partnerships and platform for exchanges to counter maritime threats and enhance maritime governance. Given that none of these have supranational authority, there is, therefore, a need to initiate policy alignment and coordinated actions to avoid duplication of efforts and inefficiencies in operational responses. Another option, which seems the most reasonable and practical is to encourage the IOC's led Regional Maritime Security Architecture to further strengthen and expand into the larger Indian Ocean region.

## **Shri Rajnath SINGH**

Hon'ble Raksha Mantri (Defence Minister)  
Government of India



Shri Rajnath Singh was born on July 10, 1951, into a farmer's family in Babhora, District Varanasi (now District Chandauli), Uttar Pradesh (UP). He received his basic education in his hometown and later completed his MSc in Physics from Gorakhpur University, UP. He began his career as a lecturer in Physics at K.B. Post-Graduate College in Mirzapur, UP.

In 1972, he became the RSS Karyavah (General Secretary) of Mirzapur city. From 1969 to 1971, he served as the Organisational Secretary of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in the Gorakhpur Division. Shri Rajnath Singh entered politics in 1974, and in 1977, he was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly. He was later elected as a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) in 1988 and became the state's Education Minister in 1991. During his tenure as Education Minister in UP, he established some landmarks by introducing the Anti-Copying Act and Vedic Mathematics in the syllabus. He became a member of the Rajya Sabha in 1994. On November 22, 1999, he became Union Surface Transport Minister, wherein he had the opportunity to initiate the National Highway Development Programme (NHDP), a visionary project of India's former Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

On October 28, 2000, he became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and was twice elected as an MLA from the Haidargarh constituency in Barabanki. On May 24, 2003, he was appointed Union Minister of Agriculture and later, Minister of Food Processing. During this period, he initiated several significant projects such as the Kisan Call Centre and the Farm Income Insurance Scheme. He also launched the 'Bharat Suraksha Yatra,' which traversed several states to address the growing threats to internal security.

Shri Rajnath Singh became the BJP National President on December 31, 2005, a position he held until December 19, 2009. In May 2009, he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Ghaziabad, UP. On May 26, 2014, Shri Rajnath Singh took oath as Union Minister for Home Affairs, a portfolio he held until May 30, 2019. On May 31, 2019, he was appointed as the Union Minister for Defence. Subsequent to the formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government after the 2024 General Elections, Shri Rajnath Singh has once again assumed charge of the Ministry of Defence.

## **Mr Ristian Atriandi SUPRIYANTO**

University of Indonesia (Universitas Indonesia)



Andi/Ristian is a lecturer with the Department of International Relations and researcher at the ASEAN Study Centre, FISIP, Universitas Indonesia (UI). He is also a research fellow with the Indonesia Sinology Forum (FSI), Jakarta, and a PhD scholar at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University. Ristian obtained a Master of Science in Strategic Studies from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University (RSIS-NTU) in Singapore and a Bachelor of Social Science in International Relations from UI. Before joining UI, he worked for the Maritime Security Programme at RSIS-NTU. Andi comments and writes numerous works on sea power, maritime security, strategic studies, and international relations. His works include "Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia: Problems and Prospects for Small and Medium Navies" (Palgrave, 2018) with Geoffrey Till. Submitted in March 2025, Ristian's doctoral thesis is titled "Competing over America in the Cold War: Australia-Indonesia Relations, 1945-1978".

## **RAdm Ronmel Jude ONG, PN (Retd)**

Non-resident Fellow  
Stratbase Alberto del Rosario Institute  
Makati City, Philippines



Rear Admiral Rommel Jude Ong (Retd) is a Professor of Praxis and Senior Research Fellow at the Ateneo School of Government (ASOG), where he designed the Security Governance Track for the Master's in Public Management (MPM) Program and directs the MPM Twinning Program in collaboration with the AFP Education, Training, Doctrine Command. His research spans Chinese political warfare, Philippine defence spending, ASEAN minilaterals, and security sector reform. He has contributed chapters and edited books on Philippine security and governance. Formerly Vice Commander of the Philippine Navy, he is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy (Class of 1987) and holds advanced studies from the US Naval War College, National Defence College of the Philippines, and a Master's in Development Management from the Asian Institute of Management.

### **ABSTRACT: From Infrastructure to Strategic Terrain: Securing the Digital Lifelines Beneath Our Seas**

**Session III (29 Oct 2025)**

Submarine cables, which carry over 97% of global data traffic, have emerged as critical strategic assets in the digital age. This paper reframes these undersea infrastructures from mere technical conduits to contested strategic terrain, vulnerable to sabotage and hybrid threats. Drawing on recent incidents in the Taiwan Strait, Baltic Sea, and Red Sea, it highlights the geopolitical risks and operational challenges of cable disruption, including prolonged restoration timelines and limited repair capacity. The resource speaker proposes a multi-pronged framework for cable security: elevating protection to strategic deterrence, institutionalizing minilateral and public-private coalitions, shaping international norms, and investing in technological innovation such as AI-enabled seabed monitoring and satellite redundancy. Emphasizing the symbolic and sovereign significance of digital lifelines, the paper calls for anticipatory governance and coalition-building to safeguard connectivity in contested maritime zones. Securing submarine cables is not just a technical imperative—it is a strategic necessity for resilience and deterrence.

## **First Admiral Salim, TNI**

Head of the Centre for Maritime Studies  
Indonesia Naval Command and Staff College  
Jakarta, Indonesia



Admiral Salim, S.E., M.Phil., M.Tr.Opsla was born in Surabaya on October 28, 1972. He graduated from the Indonesian Naval Academy in 1995 and has held various command assignments in Indonesian warships and fleets. He has completed extensive civil and military education, both domestic and international, and served in numerous roles within the Indonesian Navy and Armed Forces, including UN missions in MONUSCO (Congo), UNISMA (Mali), and UNIFIL (Lebanon).

His professional training includes the International Surface Warfare Officer course (USA), Indonesian Air Force Staff and Command School, Command and Staff Operation Law (Sydney), armaments and navigation courses in the Netherlands, Germany, and France, and a Cyber Security course in Italy. He completed a Master's in Security Studies at Madras University and attended the National Defence College (equivalent to Lemhanas RI) in New Delhi. He is currently enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Airlangga, Surabaya.

## **H.E. Mr Sanjiv RANJAN**

Secretary General  
Indian Ocean Rim Association  
Ebene, Mauritius



His Excellency Mr Sanjiv Ranjan assumed the role of Secretary-General of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) on January 01, 2025, for a tenure of 3 years. A distinguished diplomat with three decades of experience in international relations and cooperation, Mr Ranjan is set to lead IORA's efforts in fostering regional collaboration among IORA Member States. Mr Ranjan holds a B.A. (Honours) in Economics from Delhi University and an MA in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1993 and has since built a distinguished career in diplomacy in multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

From 1995 to 2009, Mr Ranjan held various diplomatic positions in Indian embassies in Madrid and Lima and at the Permanent Mission of India in New York. His tenure included significant roles in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in New Delhi. He also served as Deputy High Commissioner of India to Mauritius from 2006 to 2009, strengthening ties and contributing to regional cooperation. In 2009, Mr Ranjan was appointed Director (North) in the MEA and, later, Joint Secretary in the Development Partnership Administration in 2012, overseeing critical projects in India's neighbourhood. He was instrumental in coordinating the third India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi in 2015.

His ambassadorial assignments include serving as India's Ambassador to Argentina with concurrent accreditation to Uruguay and Paraguay (2016-2019) and to Colombia with concurrent accreditation to Ecuador (2019-2022). Most recently, he has been serving as Officer on Special Duty (Secretary Rank), overseeing personnel, establishment, and e-governance within the MEA in the Government of India.

Fluent in English, Hindi, and Spanish, Mr Ranjan is renowned for his diplomatic skills and his commitment to fostering international partnerships. His appointment as Secretary-General of IORA marks the beginning of a new chapter for the organisation, which plays a pivotal role in promoting cooperation among Indian Ocean Rim Member States, Dialogue Partners and Other International Stakeholders.

## **Mr Sanjeev SANYAL**

Secretary to the Government of India  
Member of the Economic Advisort Council to the  
Prime Minister of India



Mr Sanjeev Sanyal is currently a Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM). He was the Principal Economic Adviser to the Finance Minister for five years till February 2022 and the co-Chair of the G20's Framework Working Group. Before joining the government, he spent over two decades in financial markets and was Global Strategist and Managing Director at Deutsche Bank.

An alumnus of Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi, Mr Sanyal later attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. He was awarded the Eisenhower Fellowship in 2007 for his work on urban dynamics. In 2010, he was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Mr Sanyal is the author of a number of best-selling books, including Revolutionaries, Land of the Seven Rivers, The Ocean of Churn, India in the Age of Ideas, and the Indian Renaissance. He has also published over two hundred articles and columns in leading national and international publications.

## Rear Admiral Surya WIRANTO (Retd)

Indo-Pacific Strategic Intelligence (ISI)  
Jakarta, Indonesia



Rear Admiral Surya (Retd) is a retired senior officer of the Indonesian Navy with extensive expertise in military, maritime, legal, and academic fields. Born in Jakarta on March 25, 1959, he held key positions, including Commander of Warships, assignments at Navy Headquarters, educational institutions, and the Ministry of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs. He earned a Doctorate in Law from Jayabaya University and completed advanced military education at the Royal Australian Naval Staff College, Armed Forces Staff and Command School, and National Resilience Institute. Post-retirement, he has served as Secretary General of the Alumni Association Strategic Centre (ISC), advisor for Indo-Pacific Strategic Intelligence, member of the Indonesia-Australia Defence Alumni Senior Advisory Group, affiliate of the Indonesia Institute for Maritime Studies, and lecturer at the National Defense University.

### **ABSTRACT: Indonesia in Africa: Strengthening the 'Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050**

**Session II (29 Oct 2025)**

This paper explores the shared maritime future of Indonesia and Africa, emphasising regional cooperation as the key to safeguarding the seas. Both regions, with their vast coastlines and archipelagic features, depend on the ocean as a lifeline for economic growth, community welfare, and national security. Yet, despite common challenges and opportunities, collaboration between Indonesia and Africa remains limited. By aligning Indonesia's Maritime Outlook with Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS 2050), this study highlights the potential for joint investments in port infrastructure, cooperative responses to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and coordinated naval patrols across the Indian Ocean. It argues that maritime security, resource sustainability, and inclusive development must be pursued together, enabling the Global South to shape its own maritime destiny through solidarity, capacity-building, and shared stewardship.

## Rear Admiral (Prof) Shaul CHOREV

IsrNavy (Retd)

Head of the Institute for Maritime Policy & Strategy (MPS)  
Israeli National Centre of Blue Economy and Innovation  
Haifa, Israel



Rear Admiral Shaul Choren (Retd) is Head of the Maritime Policy & Strategy Research Center, the Wydra Division for Shipping & Ports, and the Ezri Center for Iran and the Persian Gulf at the University of Haifa. He is a professor of International Relations, Head of the Reuven Chaikin Chair for Geostrategy, and directs the M.A. program in National Security and Maritime Strategy. Formerly, he served as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations of the Israeli Navy and Head of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, holding multiple senior defence positions, including Commanding Officer of naval bases, flotillas, and the Dolphin Submarines Project in Germany. He holds a BA in Economics and Political Science, an MSc from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, and a PhD from Bar Ilan University. He lectures on maritime strategy, defence policy, international security, arms control, and defence innovation.

### **ABSTRACT: Cooperative Regional Capability-building and Capability- enhancement for the 'Blueing' of Israel's Economy**

#### **Session III (29 Oct 2025)**

Offshore economic activities are gaining global attention, with the UN Decade of Ocean Science (2021–2030) promoting marine sustainability. Israel has emerged as a leader in the blue economy and BlueTEC, leveraging innovation, technology, and human capital to enhance energy, trade, infrastructure, and maritime security. Key initiatives include the National Center for Blue Economy and Innovation (Haifa, 2020), the Maritime Policy for Israel's Mediterranean, and the 2023 BlueTEC Plan addressing infrastructure gaps and organisational coordination to foster marine innovation and sustainable resource use. The government also aims to develop Eilat as an international seafood hub, while the Institute for Maritime Policy and Strategy (MPS) conducts independent research on maritime policy and security.

Regional cooperation enhances capabilities for sustainable development, economic growth, and disaster response. Israel participates in the Union for the Mediterranean, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, and initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor to strengthen trade, energy, and blue economy sectors. Projects such as the Prosperity water-for-energy deal and EU-funded decarbonization programs highlight the integration of renewable energy, sustainable shipping, and cross-border collaboration to support regional prosperity and environmental protection.

## **Ms Sylvia MALINBAUM**

Head of India and South Asia Research  
Centre for Asian Studies  
French Institute for International Relations (IFRI)  
Paris, France



Ms Sylvia Malinbaum is Head of India and South Asia Research at Ifri's Centre for Asian Studies. Before joining Ifri in 2024, she served as Deputy Financial Advisor at the Regional Economic Service for South Asia within the French embassy in India, working under the Directorate-General of the Treasury at the Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Industry. Based at the French consulate in Mumbai, she was responsible for fostering economic cooperation between France and Western India and supporting French companies interested in the Indian market.

Sylvia worked for seven years at the Directorate General of the Treasury, exclusively in international postings in Kenya, Egypt, and then India. She holds a Master's degree in Management from ESCP Business School, following two years of preparatory classes at Lycée Louis-le-Grand.

## **Prof (Dr) Wongi CHOE**

Professor and Head  
Centre for ASEAN-India Studies  
Korea National Diplomatic Academy  
Republic of Korea

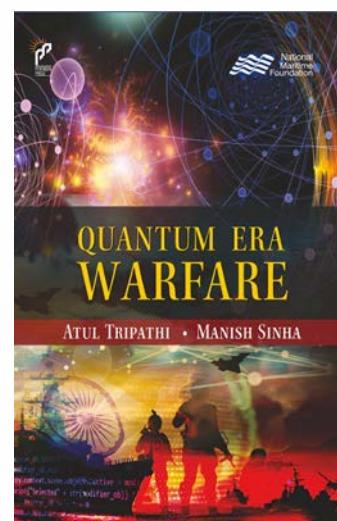
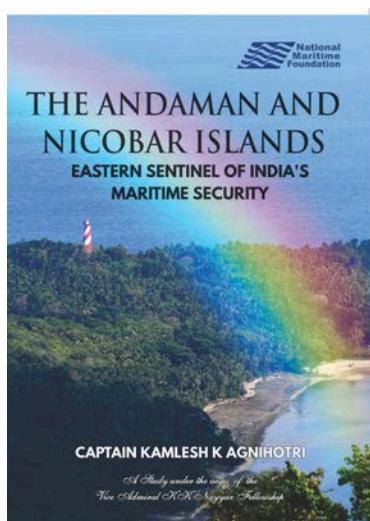
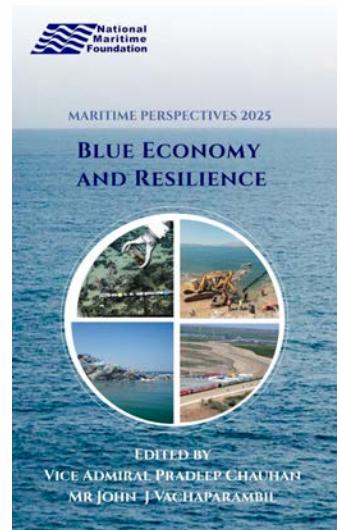
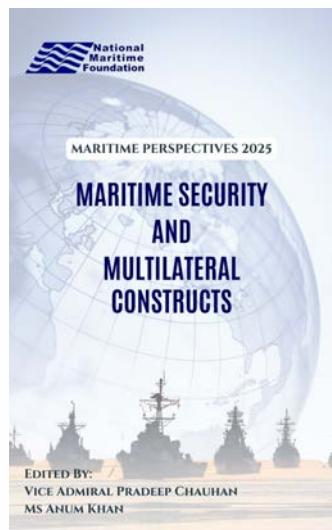
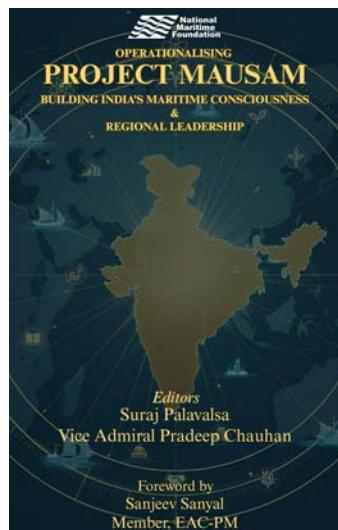
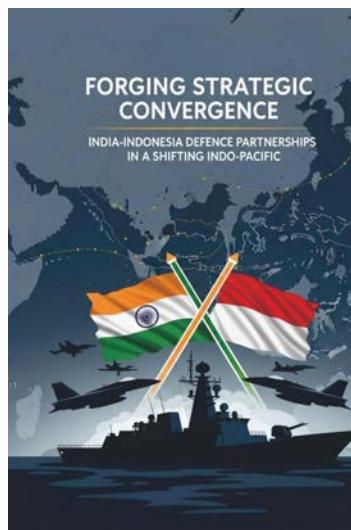
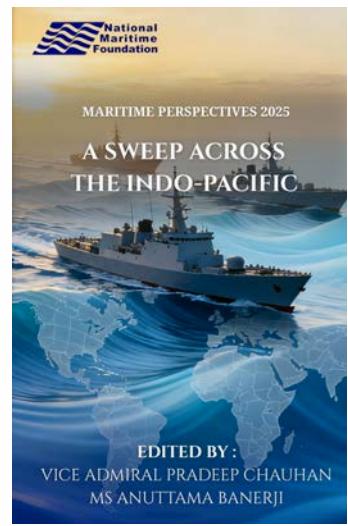
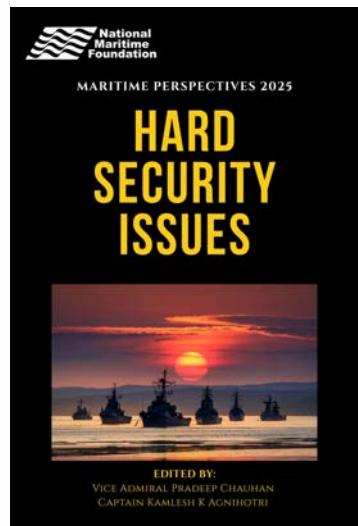
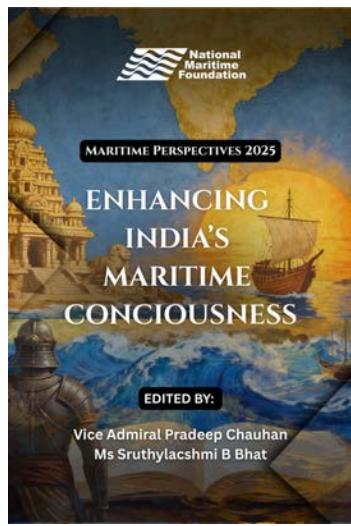


CHOE Wongi is a professor of Indo-Pacific Studies and serves as the Head of the Centre for ASEAN-Indian Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA). His current research interests include South Korea's regional role and strategy, the geopolitical dynamics, maritime security and regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific. His most recent writings include "AUKUS: Strategic Implications for Regional Security" (in Korean, February 2024); "Why Seoul Should Embrace New Delhi in its Strategic Outlook" (March 2024); "China's Change of Status Quo in the South China Sea and Prospects for Maritime Order in East Asia" (in Korean, December 2023); "US-China Rivalry and the Atrophy of ASEAN Centrality" (in Korean, December 2023); "ROK's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Achievements to Date and Challenges Ahead" (in Korean, October 2023); "India's Multi-alignment Diplomatic Activism and Implications for ROK-India Strategic Partnership" (in Korean, May 2023); "South Korea's New Southern Policy: the Limits of Indo-Pacific Geopolitics" (book chapter, April 2023); "The ROK's Indo-Pacific Strategy under President Yoon: Key Elements and Strategic Implications" (December 2022); "The Quest for Strategic Balance and South Korea's Indo-Pacific Conundrum" (August 2021); Thirty Years of ASEAN-ROK Relations (A co-edited volume in Korean, 2019), etc. He received a BA and a MA in international relations from Seoul National University in Korea and a PhD in political science from the University of Washington in the United States.

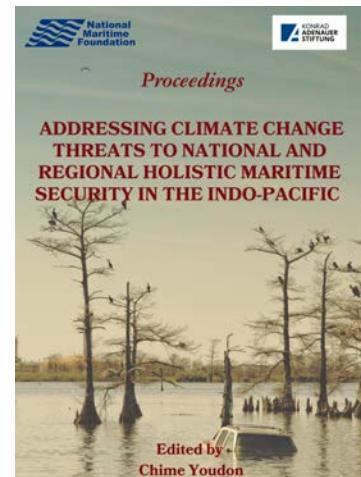
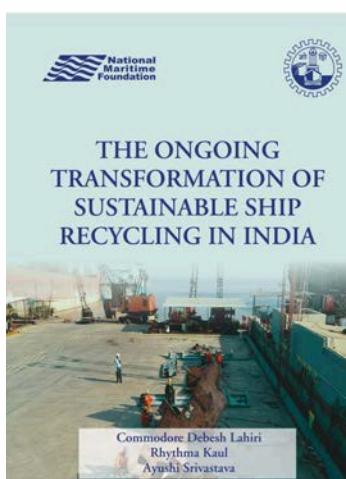
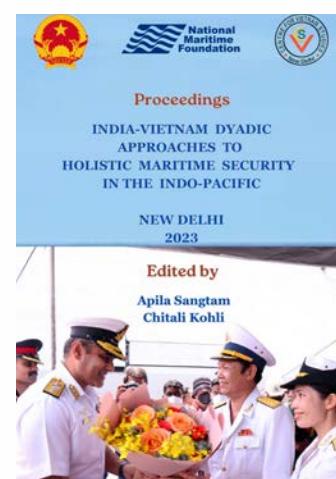
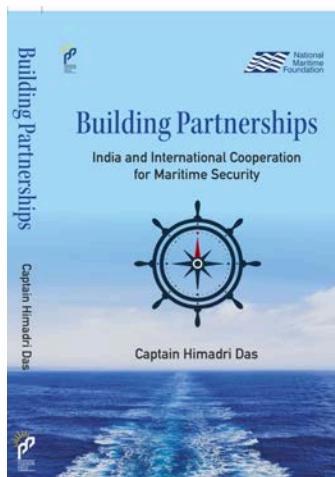
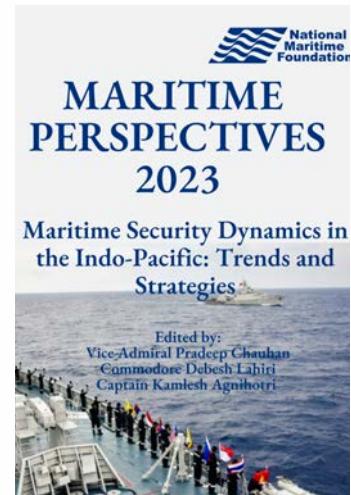
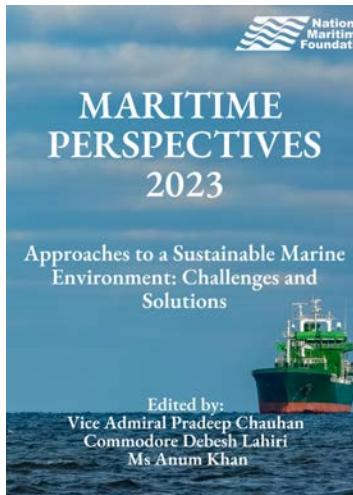
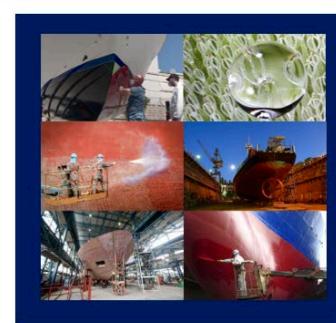
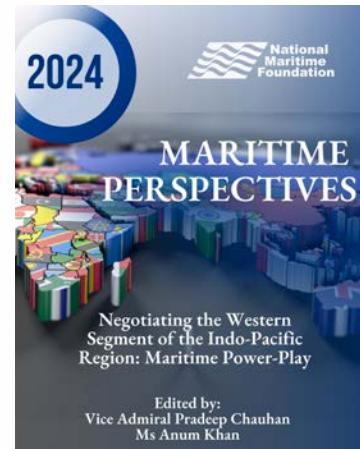
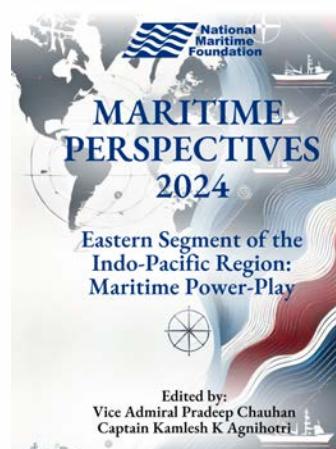
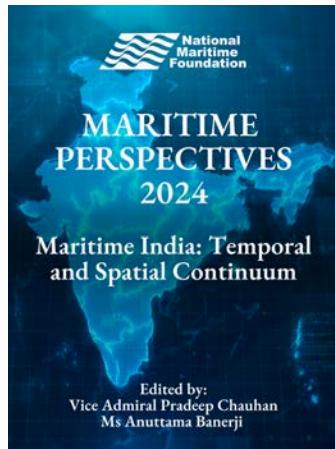


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