



Foreword

Dear Readers,

I consider it a matter of great honour to write my first editorial of *Maritime Affairs* (MA). Since its first edition came out six years ago, MA's readership has grown both in volume as well as in its geographical spread. It is, therefore, important for us to provide to the subscribers with well researched articles that present different insights and perspectives as frames that are individually complete, but put together, help form a larger picture.

It is worth recalling that the historically multi-power world order, which coalesced into a bi-polar configuration after World War II, has witnessed unprecedented defining developments in quick succession in the last two decades, starting with the implosion of the Soviet Union and transiting through a unipolar moment. Today, the growth story of many developing countries, even in the midst of grave economic crises gripping the developed world, is scripting new relationships. The latter are driven more by *realpolitik* of national interests, albeit often couched in the idiom of ideology. In the increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, collaboration is often accompanied by competition and both are becoming issue based rather than identity based. The alphabet soup of platforms for concurrent multilateral exchanges is a direct consequence. Hence a “flexi-nodal world order” is probably an apt description of this topsy-turvy global configuration, wherein the grouping of nations differs from issue to issue and their interests can converge without being allies or diverge without being adversaries.

In the flexi-nodal world of today, the word “security” still evokes a primeval concern that tends to overwhelm all other drivers of the discourse, even though the notion of security has itself been assuming an increasingly wider swath in the modern times. In our own case, particularly on account of the past experience still within living memory, India’s strategic relationship with China tends to underpin every cogitation of national security. Even as the two nations experience buoyancy particularly in trade, fundamental differences continue to persist in perceptions and positions relating to security.

The simultaneous rise of two giants in geographical contiguity, albeit at different scales presently, coinciding with the redistribution of global power; presents a rich mining ground for strategic analysts. The National Maritime Foundation’s Visakhapatnam Regional Chapter, in collaboration with the Indian Navy’s Eastern Naval Command (ENC), organised a two day seminar on 14 and 15 July 2011 to examine the “Strategic Contours of India–China Relations”. This edition of *Maritime Affairs* carries some of the views presented by the participants in the seminar, as well as the perceptions of other renowned experts on the subject.

The first article is based on the talk delivered by Admiral (Retd.) Arun Prakash at the National Defence College, Manila, Philippines in November 2011. Incisively tracking maritime developments in the Indo-Pacific region after a *tour d’horizon*, Admiral Prakash advocates regional understanding on the lines of post-Napoleonic Europe. Even if Utopia is not around the corner, he avers, formation of multilateral institutions for cooperative security endeavours, starting with the maritime domain, is worth striving for. The next article is by Brigadier (Retd) Arun Sahgal and provides an insightful perspective on China’s land strategy. It reviews China’s recent military modernisation and locates Chinese military moves in the context of a strong aspiration to be the dominant continental power in Asia. China, in Sehgal’s view, looks upon itself as the “Geo-Gravitational Power Centre of Asia”.

The next piece is by Commander Kamlesh Agnihotri, which discusses the modernisation of the Chinese Air Force. China’s superior air assets, the author points out, in combination with advanced air infrastructure and a broad network of airfields in the regions close to the China–India border, have the potential to render the natural Himalayan barrier ineffective. The fourth paper, by Commander Gurpreet Khurana, examines China’s maritime strategy against the backdrop of its rise as a regional economic and military power. The paper identifies areas of both consonance

and discord, and recommends that the Indian Navy remain prepared to deal with any exigencies that may arise as China builds up a powerful maritime force. India's relations with China, according to the author, will continue to remain uncertain owing to their enhanced stakes in the global order and growing power asymmetry in favour of China.

In the next paper, Commander Navaneetha Krishnan, recipient of the first Admiral AK Chatterjee Fellowship, critically analyses the Chinese shipbuilding industry. Krishnan has undertaken a project to study shipbuilding as a core focus area of a broad strategic plan to advance nation-building through the pursuit of critical industrial activity. This paper is a building block of the larger inquiry by the author into the significance of the shipbuilding industry as a national strategic activity. The sixth paper, by Wing Commander Sanjay Poduval, addresses China's growing military space capabilities. In a plan to strike at the soft underbelly of the opponent, China, the author brings out, is ramping up its space programmes and increasingly treating outer space as a "combat zone".

The seventh paper, by Shri Zorawar Daulet Singh, compares the Indian and Chinese economic models. Zorawar examines many possible dimensions of China's economic growth and juxtaposes them against the Indian growth story. Needless to say, both economies have vulnerable spots and need to rebalance urgently. This edition of *MA* ends with a commentary by Shri B. Raman, which is an extract from his talk delivered at the seminar held at the ENC. He puts into perspective the ongoing debate about Chinese influence in Pakistan and in some of India's other neighbouring states.

While acknowledging the changing regional and global dimensions of international diplomacy, it may be fair to assess that the world is flexi-nodal today because most nations are cognisant of each other's strategic dilemmas. In the ensuing flux, if geo-strategic clarity is not as readily forthcoming as may be hoped for, it is probably because of multiple hedging, often opaque, by nations to safeguard their long-term interests. There is, therefore, scope for more studies and then for some more. So, please watch this space and also do help us fill it in. Meanwhile, as always, the NMF welcomes your suggestions and comments to improve our Journal.

This edition of *Maritime Affairs* also records the transition in Chairmanship of the NMF. The Foundation was conceived and launched during Admiral Arun Prakash's watch as the Chief of Naval Staff. After his retirement, he took over as its

Chairman on 15 Sep 2008. He hands over the baton to Admiral Sureesh Mehta who has now returned from Wellington, New Zealand, where he was India's High Commissioner. All hands on board the NMF join me in conveying our grateful thanks to Admiral Arun Prakash for so ably guiding the Foundation. We wish him all the very best and hope to continue drawing on his immense intellectual capital. We also take this opportunity of extending a warm welcome to the incoming Chairman Admiral Sureesh Mehta. His brief bio is available on the inside cover.

The editorial team joins me in conveying to all our readers Season's Greetings and a Happy New Year.

Vice Admiral (Retd.) Pradeep Kaushiva,
Director, National Maritime Foundation