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Editorial: *Maritime Affairs* Summer 2015 Edition

The National Maritime Foundation (NMF) is a leading maritime think tank and endeavours to bring focus on the maritime domain. It provides an insight into matters maritime and initiates debates and discussions for informing and building public opinion. The maritime domain is being shaped by active discussions, and there are many exciting developments on the anvil. This edition of *Maritime Affairs* adds to the ongoing deliberations in the maritime domain and puts together well-researched articles to further the maritime discourse.

The first two papers are a testimony to China's increasing focus on the maritime domain. Len discusses the relevance of the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and its centrality for seaborne energy trade for China. The paper outlines the challenges to China's MSR initiative and concludes that Beijing's maritime agenda will be hampered by the strategic distrust and political risks China faces with the Asian countries.

The second paper, by Khurana, examines the confluence between the maritime interests of China and India in the light of the MSR. It assesses whether the two countries could capitalise upon the conceptual and functional convergence provided by the MSR. The author argues that there are significant bilateral divergences between the two countries, and various challenges need to be overcome prior to capitalising upon the opportunities presented by the MSR.

The next four papers discuss ocean resources, degradation of marine ecosystems, emerging challenges for oceans and issues related to ocean governance. Jha in his paper attempts to outline India's policy responses for mineral exploration in the Indian Ocean. The paper addresses the issues of ocean economy and mineral exploration in and

beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), and how these issues have a larger strategic implication. The author suggests that India should evolve a comprehensive structured ocean exploration policy, as it has both economic and strategic benefits.

Das and Varma discuss the increasing marine noise pollution in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as a result of heightened maritime activities. The authors provide an alternate perspective of the acoustic degradation of the marine ecosystem, and its impacts on marine life. The complexities of formulating the regulatory framework and associated monitoring mechanism are also highlighted. The paper proposes steps to regulate underwater noise pollution in the IOR.

Narula, in the paper “Ensuring Sustainable Oceans”, highlights the growing concerns on ocean degradation, and the vital role of oceans for the well-being of the planet. The paper discusses the ongoing work on adopting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for the oceans and ocean governance for the “High Seas”, and calls for international cooperation for sustainable development of the oceans.

Agarwal discusses the legal issues in the protection of marine biological diversity within and beyond the EEZ. The paper examines the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the governance gaps related to marine biological Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). Developments by the BBNJ Working Group are also presented before concluding that there is a critical need for a legal instrument to specifically address the regulatory and governance gap for protection of marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction.

The last two papers deal with the Arctic and the naval shipbuilding industry, respectively. Filimonova examines the emerging prospects for Russia–India cooperation in the High North, and analyses the roles of various actors. The paper provides an overview of the Russian and Indian interest and policy in the Arctic, and presents the perspectives and challenges for both countries. Based on the shared interests and the existing longstanding partnership between the two countries, the author opines that cooperation in the Arctic region between the two countries is feasible in the mid-term.

In the last paper, Kulkarni reviews the global naval shipbuilding industry and identifies the factors that are likely to impact on future naval construction and acquisitions. The paper also examines the trends in naval design and construction technologies, and presents possible lessons for the Indian naval shipbuilding industry.

This edition also carries two book reviews. Mathur reviews Bill Hayton’s book, *The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia*, which looks at the recent developments in the region, in the light of the historical background and the recent Chinese claims.

Rai reviews Edward A. Alpers' book, *The Indian Ocean in World History*. The book, written from the Indian Ocean perspective, makes an attempt to acknowledge and analyse activities in the Indian Ocean, and its impact on history.

At the NMF, the first half of this year was marked by the successful conduct of the flagship event, the Annual Maritime Power Conference (AMPC). The theme for this year was "Asia and the Arctic: Challenges and Opportunities", and it was attended by over 200 Indian and overseas delegates. During the conference, the NMF released three books authored by NMF scholars, titled, *Maritime Power Building: New Mantra for China's Rise*, *Evolving Dynamics of the Indian Ocean: Prospects and the Way Forward* and *Strategic Direction of the Chinese Navy: Capability and Intent Assessment*. Two compilations of commentaries by NMF scholars through the year, titled *Maritime Perspectives 2014* and *Arctic Perspectives* were also released as a run-up to the conference.

A large number of visitors and delegations from the US, UK, Japan, France, Qatar, Malaysia and Bangladesh visited NMF during the first half of this year. The NMF–S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) bilateral conference on the "Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Asia" was also hosted by NMF in April 2015.

The NMF has completed 10 years of existence and it is reaching out to institutions in India and beyond through academic Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with universities, collaborative research projects and interactions with think tanks. I invite all of you to join me in adding to the maritime discourse, and extend an invitation to researchers and practitioners to contribute to this journal. Best wishes for the second half of the year.

Dr Vijay Sakhuja
Director, National Maritime Foundation