



Editorial

The grand success of the 2018 Edition of the “Indo-Pacific Dialogue” (IPRD) — the annual, apex-level seminar of the Indian Navy (IN), conducted on 27 and 28 February 2018 by the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) in seamless coordination with the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence [Navy] (IHQ MoD [N]) — was matter of very great satisfaction. The seminar was marked by excellent presentations of papers penned by a series of renowned Indian and international scholars, domain experts and practitioners alike, relevant to the four themes that the IPRD-2018 explored. The speakers were listened-to with rapt attention by Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of the Naval Staff of India, who, along with Admiral Rabinder (“Robin”) Dhowan, IN (Retd), the Chairman of the NMF, hosted a whole a galaxy of luminaries. This included, amongst other distinguished attendees, Mr Nitin Gadkari, the Hon’ble Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation; Mrs Nirmala Sitharaman, the Hon’ble Minister for Defence; Mr Suresh Prabhu, Hon’ble Minister of Commerce & Industry; Mr Stephen Lovegrove, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence (MOD), UK; Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne, Chief of Defence Staff of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces; ambassadors, high commissioners and governmental representatives of a number of friendly countries; senior echelons of the Indian administration and the Indian Navy; and a large number of influential and experienced policy-makers, policy-shapers, members of academia, think-tanks and the media.

Against quite so bright and encouraging a backdrop, it is only fitting that this “Summer 2018” Edition of “Maritime Affairs” is being presented as “special” edition, containing most, if not all the papers that were presented during IPRD-2018.

The welcome address from the Chairman NMF and the speeches from the “high table”, so-to-speak, set the tone for the dialogue. Salient features relevant to these are reflected in the “*Perspectives*” section of this issue.

The five sessions over which the IPRD-2018 was progressed saw 15 papers generating discussions and raising questions on four broad themes:

- The first theme was maritime merchandise trade, whose environmentally-sensitive development is an important constituent of the Blue Economy but whose centrality to maritime geopolitics precedes this economic conception by several centuries, if not several millennia. Deliberations centred upon the growth and vulnerabilities of maritime merchandise trade and the necessity to include associated infrastructure such as ports and multi-modal connectivity. These have strong geopolitical connotations and the relevant papers sought to reference the discourse on maritime merchandise trade and its allied industry to these very geopolitical considerations, with which established and emerging powers of the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) must wrestle, both individually and collectively. The deliberations on the growth, vulnerabilities, opportunities and mitigation-options pertinent thereto, addressed trade-related issues of not only the major regional maritime players such China, Japan, India, etc., but also those of several other important and dynamic regional players of North and East Africa, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.

- The second area of focus was on regional connectivity-models such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), Project MAUSAM, and the visionary concept of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region). The papers presented also examined collective economic-cum-holistic-security structures within the IOR, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), as also corresponding structures within the Pacific segment of the Indo-Pacific, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and, the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS).
- In the third focal area, pan-regional changes and challenges to the overall maritime environment of the Indo-Pacific were examined. The presentations delved into the trials and tribulations of sustaining persistent surveillance at sea, the challenges posed by the increasing digitisation of the maritime space, and, the very real and contemporary dangers of cyber-malevolence in the maritime domain.
- The fourth theme was centred upon the role of Indian industry within both, the private and the public sectors, in enhancing holistic maritime-security. The presenters paid special attention to “Make-in-India” options in the maritime domain and offered a variety of options by which the enormous potential of India’s shipyards and the effervescence of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector could best be realised and leveraged.

Based on the papers presented and the discussions that ensued, a number of policy recommendations emerged, which have since been forwarded to the requisite levels of the Indian polity.

Due to restrictions of the number of pages per issue we are, unfortunately, able to publish only eight papers and the “Perspective” piece. We thank all the authors for their understanding of this restriction and look forward to their contributions for this year’s Winter Edition.

In the editorial of the Winter Edition of 2017, I had said that as we embark upon a renewed mission of maritime advocacy, 2018 promises to be even more challenging. We have “walked that particular talk” through the first half of the year, with an average of eight meaningful-interactions per month, which is an exhilarating tempo but also one that has certainly left us somewhat breathless, with little time to recoup between successive major-events. This notwithstanding, the NMF faced up to the challenge of intellectual-stretch and is steaming “full speed ahead”, spreading the message of *maritimity*. We look forward to a full house of papers for the “Winter 2018” issue of *Maritime Affairs* and request continued contributions from all who would delve into the many intricacies of the maritime domain. Your contributions will, as always, greatly aid and enrich the maritime discourse in India, the Indo-Pacific Region, and, indeed, the world at large.

More power to your pens!

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