



Editorial

The last six months have been busy ones for the National Maritime Foundation and geopolitically-turbulent ones for much of the world. The year 2019 began on a grim note with the terrorist group, *Al Shabab*, carrying out yet another deadly attack in Kenya, involving a car-bomb and the storming of a Nairobi hotel. Sadly, the year has lurched along as it began, buffeted at irregular intervals by terrorism and violence. Valentine's Day brought little cheer to the Indian subcontinent as a Pakistan-sponsored terrorist attack in Pulwama, which killed over 40 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), invited a rare military response from India, in the form of a retaliatory strike twelve days later, on a *Jaish-e-Mohammed* (JeM) camp at Balakot in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, followed by the intrusion by Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets into Jammu and Kashmir. Vitriolic polemics and politically-inspired rhetoric in the run-up to the Indian general election, marked the ensuing days and weeks. As if these were not grim enough portents for the Indo-Pacific, the terrorist shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, a month later (on 15 March), followed by the series of deadly bomb-blasts on Easter Sunday that left Sri Lanka reeling, offered stark reminders of the ubiquitous reach of present-day terrorists and their disdain for sectarian peace and tranquillity.

There is a clear and urgent need for greater cooperation in jointly addressing common threats. Nowhere is this need more pressing than in the Indo-Pacific expanse, which has, after what one might call the 'colonial interregnum', once again become the fulcrum about which the global economy is levered. Yet, it is a geopolitically fragile region. Even as I pen these lines, fault lines in West Asia in general and the Persian Gulf in particular have widened and the chances of nations once again simply blundering into a major armed conflict have increased thanks to the attacks-on and seizure-of oil-tankers.

Closer home, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was re-elected for a second term and it is widely anticipated that India will demonstrate a greater awareness-of and focus-upon matters maritime, especially within the Indo-Pacific.

For India, the term 'Indo-Pacific' reflects the core conceptual, spatial and temporal framework that underpins the country's engagement with its external environment. Importantly, it is not, in and of itself, a 'strategy' but is, rather, an articulation of India's proximate 'strategic geography'. This assertion brings in its wake the question of how 'strategic geography' differs from 'real' geography. If one were to take a chart or map that depicts 'real' geography and then place upon it a set of coordinates defined by specific latitudes and longitudes, and, within the area that has been so bounded or enclosed, if one were to then give special focus — at the national-level — in terms of the planning and execution of one's grand strategy, this enclosed or bounded area would define one's 'strategic geography'. Obviously, the strategic geography of one country, say India for instance, can hardly be expected to be the same as that of, say, Fiji, or, for that matter, the USA, or Japan, or Russia. For spoken and written convenience, a name has to be given this area that has been bounded by the coordinates under reference. The name that we have chosen to give to this geographic space is the 'Indo-Pacific'. Other sovereign nations may well have given the same name to their own respective strategic-geographies, but this is no more or less than the ill-founded expectation that the several persons who bear the same name should be identical to one another. Likewise, every geopolitically

defined 'region' is an artificial, manmade construct, whose defining-boundaries can be (and often are) different for different geopolitical players. This is as true of the 'Indo-Pacific' as it is of any other 'region'. Thus, the fact that India's spatial construct of the Indo-Pacific might conceptually differ from that of another country is perfectly normal and entirely unexceptional. While the Indo-Pacific is a predominantly maritime regional construct, it is not exclusively so. As such, it accommodates both littoral States and hinterland or landlocked ones within its ambit. In spatial terms, it extends from the Indian Ocean littoral of Africa to our West, encompassing the seas fringing the Indian Ocean and proceeding eastward, incorporating the seas fringing the Pacific Ocean, to the western littoral of the Americas, and from the southern littoral of Asia proceeding southward to the continental landmass of Antarctica.

The ability to identify both, opportunities and challenges, and, equally important, to listen-to — and be sensitive-to — the varying perspectives of other States located-in or operating-within the Indo-Pacific, is a clear and evident prerequisite for India and the region to jointly arrive at a mutually beneficial set of solutions. It is this realisation that has driven the Indian Navy to launch an annually-recurring and regionally-focussed series of international conferences, named "The Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue" (IPRD). This year, Pakistan's protracted closure of its airspace not only imposed a burden of inconvenience and additional expense upon global aviation, but also caused a few moments of anxiety to the NMF which, as the Navy's knowledge- and organising-partner, was deeply engaged in preparations for IPRD 2019.

IPRD-2019 was held in New Delhi on the fifth and sixth of March, and addressed itself to five broad themes of great contemporary relevance: (i) **Achieving Cohesion of the Indo-Pacific through Maritime Connectivity: Practical Solutions**, (ii) **Attaining and Maintaining a Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Way-ahead measures**, (iii) **A Regional Approach to the Blue Economy**, (iv) **Maritime-Industry 4.0: Skill-Development and Employment-generation Opportunities**, and, (v) **Achieving Complementarity between SAGAR and SAGARMALA: Regional Opportunities**. A variety of topics, relevant to each of these five themes, were dilated-upon by globally-renowned '*eminences-grises*' of the maritime domain. They were listened-to intently by policy-makers and policy-shapers from a 'Baker's Dozen' countries of the Indo-Pacific — Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The excellent response to the conference — with a 'packed-house' attendance numbering over 500 on each of the two days — was clearly indicative of the international-heft that India, the Indian Navy, and the National Maritime Foundation, now carry in maritime capitals and planning-centres, right across the globe.

The seventh of June 2019 saw Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, take over as the Chairman of the National Maritime Foundation after having demitting the office of the Chief of Naval Staff of the Indian Navy. He is the sixth Chairman and took over from Admiral Rabin-dra Kumar Dhowan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM. I echo the sentiments of all echelons of the NMF in thanking him for his remarkable vision and guidance and in wishing him every success in all his future endeavours.

It is against this backdrop that the Summer 2019 issue of "Maritime Affairs" gains special salience. This edition, consisting of eight papers and a book review, focuses on China, the Persian Gulf, as well as technology issues considered important in the maritime domain.

The first article, *Understanding China's Naval Ship Building Industry: Lessons India can Learn*, by Rear Admiral Monty Khanna, examines the major shipbuilding programmes of the PLA Navy and assesses the capabilities of the shipyards engaged in their construction. It draws out the reasons underpinning the Chinese Navy's ability to convert capital into assets in an efficient, time-bound, and cost-effective manner, and suggests best practices that India could adopt.

Capt Harinder Singh and RP Pradhan in the next article, titled *Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau in China's Infrastructure-Diplomacy and the China Dream: Will the Dominions Fall?* They seek to contextualise the notion of the contemporary 'China Dream' while deconstructing the implications of Xi Jinping's aggressive 'infrastructure diplomacy' and the BRI upon Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.

In the third article, *India's Maritime Security Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Prospects Amid Rising Chinese Influence*, Commander Shishir Upadhyaya examines the importance of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries as a vital source of India's energy requirements. The article attempts to make an assessment of India's strategic influence and the prospects for India's position in the region. Upadhyaya opines that while India has the opportunity to expand its influence via the maritime security-cooperation route, China's economic and political influence poses a major challenge.

Iran has been in focus for all the reasons that provide manna to researchers. The article, *India's Persian Desire: Analysing India's Maritime Trade Strategy vis-à-vis the Port of Chabahar*, by Ryan Mitra, addresses the bilateral relations between India and Iran, within the context of India's maritime strategy and the presence and influence of other regional players, specifically China and Pakistan.

Although piracy has diminished off the Horn of Africa, it has increased in the Gulf of Guinea. As such, the subject continues to attract attention and several aspects still need to be analysed. Amongst them is the role of international bodies. Tejal Khanna, in her article, *The Normative Role of the International Maritime Organisation in Countering Somali-Based Piracy*, examines the role played by the IMO and analyses the six-pronged approach adopted by IMO to address this global menace.

Underwater Radiated Noise (URN) is a particularly interesting and relevant area of research for both, military as well as non-military applications. The entire gamut of URN requires to be managed intelligently and dexterously, as it involves policy, technology, innovation, and, human-resource development. Commander Arnab Das, in his article, *Underwater Radiated Noise (URN): A New Perspective in the Indian Ocean Region*, examines the fundamental aspects of URN and analyses the challenges and opportunities germane to the IOR.

Maitreyee Shilpa Kishor and Commander (Dr) Nitin Agarwala, in their article, *Sustainable Desalination Technologies: Avenues for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, highlight the importance of technologies using ocean thermal energy as a sustainable method of producing fresh water, particularly for ecologically fragile regions and small island nations. Their article explores the benefits, market and prospects of sustainable desalination technologies in the Indo-Pacific region, especially as India is already operating this technology in the Lakshadweep Islands to great advantage and has the capability to share it with its partners within the Indo-Pacific.

The criticality of submarine cables to telecommunications and connectivity is well known. However, these are increasingly being explored as monitoring tools for the marine environment. Commander (Dr) Nitin Agarwala, in his article, *Green Cables – Development, Opportunities and Legal Challenges: Part-II* — Part I had been published in the Winter 2018 issue of this journal — looks at the legalities involved in employing such dual-purpose cable and the efforts that can be made to address them.

The Foundation hopes that you enjoy reading this issue. Please do communicate your feedback, especially in the form of constructive criticism, as your inputs will aid us greatly in improving the quality of the journal.

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