



Editorial

Contemporary India is witnessing a wave of intellectual effervescence that bodes well for the country's re-emergence as a mature and responsible geoeconomic power of consequence. On the one hand, this is reflected in the fact that India now ranks alongside China in terms of the number of think-tanks — and this number is exceeded only by the USA. Perhaps far more important is the sharp increase in the number of young Indian scholars who are boldly putting pen to paper. The current issue of “Maritime Affairs”, which is the flagship journal of the National Maritime Foundation, offers eloquent testimony to this trend. India is vigorously pursuing its core national interest, namely, *to assure the economic, material and societal well-being of the people of India*. The country remains conscious of the need for predictability in international geopolitics and nowhere is this more acutely relevant than in the maritime domain. Behavioural predictability within geopolitics presupposes orderly conduct — that is, conduct based upon an internationally accepted order. In the maritime domain this is predicated upon respect-for and hence adherence-to the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea.

The criticality of a rules-based order to govern the maritime common is felt across the length and breadth of the Indo-Pacific, which is a predominantly — but not exclusively — ‘maritime’ domain. The spatial limits of the Indian concept of the Indo-Pacific stretch from the eastern shore of Africa to the shores of the Americas and this defines the country's proximate ‘strategic-geography’ — the segment of geography in which India is currently focussing much of her grand strategy. For India, the Indo-Pacific is a geography rather than being, in and of itself, a strategy. It is a space characterised by inclusiveness, cooperation and transparency (i.e., openness of intent and action). At the conceptual level, the concept of ‘SAGAR’ (Security and Growth for All in the Region) reaffirms the strong Indian desire to strengthen mutually-beneficial maritime cooperation right across this broad swath of land and sea. In the pursuit of this concept of SAGAR, India remains conscious of the need to focus continuous attention upon the manner in which regional structures are fleshed out at the political level as well as the executive level, and, the degree to which functional cooperation is nurtured, not only among the countries of the region, but also between regional maritime powers and extra-regional ones. There is a clear need to embark upon a process of pan-regional capacity-building and capability-enhancement. This will, in and of itself, advance regional cooperation in terms of maritime safety and security. Within the Indo-Pacific, regional maritime initiatives must address at least seven focal-areas or ‘pillars. The first is holistic maritime security which may be described as freedom from threats arising in the sea, or from the sea, or through the sea. The second is the need to preserve the ecology. The third refers to the sustainable harvesting of marine resources. The fourth is capacity-building, capability-enhancement, and resource sharing. The fifth is risk-reduction and the cooperative management of natural as well as manmade disasters. The sixth focus area is academic cooperation with particular attention being paid to science and technology. The seventh pillar is maritime trade, connectivity and transportation, upon which the economic wellbeing of each nation-state within the region so heavily depends. With regard to this seventh pillar, India is blessed with an especially favourable maritime geography, with natural and unhindered access to the seas. The Indian

peninsula juts seaward for a thousand kilometres and positions the country right at the intersection of the several International Shipping Lanes that crisscross the Indian ocean.

While India's maritime interests are in no way determined or shaped by the actions of other maritime actors, each of the latter afford some degree of risk in the pursuit and protection by India of its own maritime interests. Perhaps the largest contemporary 'risk' — which is quite different from a 'threat' — is embodied by the maritime endeavours of the People's Republic of China.

Consequently, it is unsurprising that a number of articles in this edition of *Maritime Affairs* seek to explore the contours of this risk and estimate its magnitude along varying metrics, including historical and contemporary geopolitical ones.

Accordingly, the first article, "*Chinese Maritime Relations with Malabar Coast, 1200-1500 AD: Quest for Naval Dominance*", by Joseph Chacko Chennattuserry, analyses the historical role of China and India as major players within the vibrant maritime intercourse that characterised the pre-colonial period in the Indian Ocean region.

In a thoughtful follow-on piece, Rakshit Mohan and Aditya Laxman Jakki, in their jointly written article titled, "*Sovereignty Issues in the South China Sea: The Republic of the Philippines vs The People's Republic of China*", have analysed the question of sovereignty and examined its many nuances. Despite several interpretations of sovereignty, territoriality remains one of its core and fundamental characteristics. In the contemporary world, the concept of Indo-Pacific has multifarious unanswered questions of sovereignty revolving around territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS). The authors have striven to look into the questions of sovereignty in the SCS through a case study of Philippines vs China.

The third article of this edition is titled, "*Between Engagement and Counter-hedging: China's India Strategy*". The authors, Mao Jikang, and Li Mingjiang, offer a relatively rare and certainly very interesting Chinese perspective of the positive and negative factors that shape bilateral ties between Beijing and New Delhi. Within the ambit of 'positive factors' are included convergent views on major international affairs, a common desire for economic development and opposition to trade-protectionism, common mechanisms to mitigate the adverse impact of climate-change, similar objectives for overall stability in bilateral ties and in Asia. The authors have not shied away from discussing the negative factors, either. These include border disputes, strategic rivalry in Asia, in particular in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), and imbalance in trade between both India and China.

Captain Amit Ray, in his article titled, "*Forecast of Chinese SSBN Force Levels*", has analysed the reasons behind China's proliferation of Nuclear-powered Ballistic-Missile Submarines (SSBNs). Acknowledging that information emerging from China is so limited as to make even the number of SSBNs actually in service with the PLA Navy not much more than estimate, the author nevertheless makes a reasoned projection of Chinese SSBN force levels by 2030 and 2040, respectively, based on a careful analysis of China's professed nuclear policy, possible SSBN deployment patterns, and developing shipyard infrastructure. Further, the likely technological developments and characteristics of the next-generation Type 096 SSBN has also been discussed.

The next article, by Joshy M Paul, titled "*India-Japan Maritime Security Cooperation: Secondary States' Soft Balancing in the Indo-Pacific*" analyses China's rise and her ambition to dominate the Indo-Pacific, which would affect the security interests of India and Japan. USA, which is the current preponderant power in the region, seems unable by itself to contain China. As a consequence, it is looking for strategic partnerships with regional countries that are militarily capable of challenging China, and to persuade such countries to balance China. The article explains the nature and context of soft power-balancing strategies and the manner in which the India-Japan maritime security cooperation has evolved over the last two decades.

Vinay Kaura then affords us a multi-faceted analysis of China's challenge to India's interests in its immediate neighbourhood. In his article, titled "*Incorporating Indo-Pacific and the*

Quadrilateral into India's Strategic Outlook” Vinay brings out how managing the strategic challenge emanating from China has become the foremost foreign-policy priority for India. He argues that given the structural constraints of the New Delhi-Beijing rapprochement, there is an urgent need for India to step up quadrilateral security cooperation with the US, Japan and Australia. The revival of the Quad reflects this growing consensus. However, the author cautions that India's hedging approach — simultaneously balancing and engaging with China — may be politically expedient in the short run, but it is not without its adverse long-term consequences.

In the next article by Pankaj Jha titled *India's Policy towards South Pacific: Expanding Horizons of the Indo Pacific Region* has emphasized that for India, the concept of Indo-Pacific means from the East Coast of Africa to the Western Pacific. Therefore, it has embarked on major policy initiative towards the South Pacific as for India it is the outer limit of the Indo-Pacific and also new periphery of its Act East policy. The paper discusses strategic and functional aspects of India's approach to Indian Ocean region through its Oceania approach.

The next article of this edition is authored by Dhanwati Yadav and titled, “*Complexity to Compatibility: Sino-Indian bilateralism concerning Maritime Security*”. Here, Yadav explains how the Indian Ocean has emerged as a principal hub of potential geoeconomic- and geostrategic conflicts between India and China. He persuasively brings out that even in the context of this Sino-Indian competitiveness, and despite the complexities arising from great powers rivalry, gestures of cooperation and consultation are being exchanged between India and China in the form of an unprecedented ‘maritime dialogue’. This, he says, demonstrates their unabated commitment to ensure maritime security while pursuing their economic and geo-political ambitions in the region. He optimistically predicts that these gestures could help reduce the historical Sino-Indian geopolitical bitterness leading up to agreeable warmth in between before promoting regional peace.

In his article titled, “*India's approach to Oceania*”, Ryan Mitra offers a fresh angle to India's strategies in the Indo-Pacific, highlighting issues relevant to the island-States that make up Oceania, many of which have long been either ignored or under-recognized by the architects of India's foreign policy. The paper analyses India's relations with various Pacific Island Countries and offers recommendations that seek to capitalise upon the bonhomie created after the successful completion of the last two editions of the ‘Forum for Indo-Pacific Islands Cooperation’ hosted by New Delhi.

The ‘Commentary’ by Prachi Bhardwaj on “*The Kra Canal Conundrum*” discusses the latest revival of the Isthmus of Kra canal-project. The news that China was keen to fund the project caused several maritime and political analysts from across the world to re-examine this oft-banded project, and has raised considerable apprehensions. The development of this artificial navigational waterway will have profound repercussions not only on the South-East Asian region, but on the global world order. The commentary delves into its implications and drawbacks for India, China, as also the host nation, Thailand.

This edition of Maritime Affairs also carries a review by Ms Tejal Khanna of Marianne Ridervold's book, “*The Maritime Turn in EU Foreign and Security Policies*”.

The past six months have been typically frenetic ones for the NMF, which has been engrossed in a veritable maelstrom of intellectual and research activities involving a growing number of partners from around the world. Amidst all this turbulence, the articles written by our contributors offer points-of-anchor and havens of reflection. For these, all of us at the Foundation are extremely grateful and we look forward to continued intellectual nourishment from India and abroad. There are several fresh — even virgin — fields that need to be ploughed by researchers. For instance, a significant new initiative that the NMF has taken concerns the development of a strong research-vertical of International Maritime Public Law. As nation-states move to protect the maritime common, areas beyond national jurisdiction and oceanic biodiversity are increasingly coming under close national scrutiny. Indeed, this is an area that sorely needs legal and

research-based buttressing and I am very hopeful not only of the ability of the NMF to contribute significantly and meaningfully to this process but of scholars from outside the Foundation to also pitch in with their own perspectives. Another thrust area at the Foundation is the development of a sound regional approach that would support the ongoing efforts of individual nations to successfully effect a transition from the current 'Brown Economy model to a 'Blue' one. In this endeavour, a central tenet of the NMF is that the Blue Economy is not a mere part of some other type of economy. It is very nearly the entire economy of the country and is founded upon three pillars. The first pillar is the acknowledgment that the oceans are the font of all life on earth. It is critical to remember that ocean currents and gradients are the single most influential element that affects and regulates our climate and environment. The oceans are rich in oil and mineral resources, supply us with oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide and are a virtual heat-sink. They are rich in biodiversity, and have emerged as the global economic highways for transit of trade and energy. On a global basis, about 80% of the world's population lives within 200 nm of the coast and 90% of the entire world's commerce transits upon the sea. Although all human beings naturally live on land, their sustenance is crucially linked and dependent upon water — oceans, riverine or inland. Thus, these waters have a profound influence upon our collective socio-economic, environmentally sustainable future. The scale of economic activity generated through the medium of water, such as shipping, shipbuilding and repairs, marine construction, associated infrastructure and communications, mining, fishing, etc., are enormous and can make or break the fortunes of nations. India's fortunes, too, are a derivative of the country's ability to harmonise its economy with the maritime domain. The second pillar is that we can no longer afford any further environmental degradation or destruction of the bio-diversity of the planet. Mankind has been unwise and imprudent in the manner in which it has exploited resources that the land had to offer. With depletion of resources on land, humans turned to the bounty of the seas but the old habits of uncaring exploitation on land have persisted on the oceans as well. Far too many of us continue to labour under the misperception that the oceans have an unending resource base and are an infinite heat sink. The reality is that, over the past few decades, we are witnessing a depletion of resources at a frighteningly rapid rate. Overfishing as well as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, are examples that stare us in the face and present clear and present threats to the food security of all nations big and small. Likewise, pollution of the oceans and the associated contamination of the maritime environment has severely and adversely impacted marine biodiversity. Several studies have indicated that 80% of pollutants in the seas emanate from land and we have probably already reached a stage where we have more micro-plastics in the oceans than fish. We need to address these issues. Indeed, this is precisely where think-tanks such as the National Maritime Foundation can and must undertake a significant outreach to educate the public and advocate public policies that will enable us to collectively stem and then reverse the tide. The third pillar is that all resources of the Earth must be harvested solely in a sustainable manner. This is entirely in line with the United Nations' 17 'Sustainable Development Goals'. As a responsible nation and a strong supporter of UN led initiatives, India has dedicated itself to the attainment of all 17 SDGs. 'Goal 14' — to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources — is of particular relevance to the National Maritime Foundation and all those concerned with the maritime domain.

It is hoped that these domains will be explored with customary thoroughness in the forthcoming editions of "Maritime Affairs".

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