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Vol. 10 No. 1 Summer 2014, pp. iii–vi

Print ISSN: 0973-3159, Online ISSN: 1946-6609, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09733159.2014.941549>



Editorial: Maritime Affairs Summer 2014 Edition

The first half of this year saw the juggernaut of the largest democracy on earth roll out, gather momentum, build up the crescendo of colour and sound, and ultimately received the tsunami of an unprecedented mandate. At the time of going to the publishers, the transition of the new administration from election mode to governance mode is well and truly underway. This is a good time for experts, opinion shapers as well as bipartisan institutions to put forward the national priorities, as perceived by them, for informed debate and consideration of the policy makers.

Mandated by the very first objective of the National Maritime Foundation, namely to “Study and evaluate factors affecting Indian maritime security, focus on vulnerable areas, and suggest suitable options in the formulation of national maritime strategy”, it is not only desirable but indeed imperative for this journal to reflect upon the latest happenings affecting India. As maritime security is but a subset of the larger dimension of national security, it is not possible to examine the former without first commenting upon the latter. The issue of national security has been discussed threadbare for decades and there has also been some debate on the superstructure as well as the supporting columns. Admittedly, there have been a few attempts made to fix it all too but in the absence of political will to effect systemic changes top down that would add credibility to India’s national security, the overall result has largely been cosmetic, superficial and often misleading. Without a doubt, the country has recorded some resounding successes but those cannot be the reason for a nation of India’s potential to punch below its weight.

Let us start with credibility. The effectiveness of security instruments of the state becomes visible only when there is a breach or a spectacular success – inevitably the former more often than the latter. If the effectiveness is about achievement or failure, credibility relates to the perception – by collaborators and adversaries alike. The difference between the two and its implications are best illustrated by a conversation that a foreigner maritime analyst recently had with me. His opening line was that he was here in India to study the dysfunctional civil–military relationship. While appreciating his candour, I suggested that a rank outsider – who had no understanding or experience of the complex plurality of this country, the history of this civilization or experiences of the only successful example of placing democracy ahead of development in its priority since independence – might consider studying it all first hand for himself before arriving at his conclusions. He was unmoved, so I left him with the thought that to assess the civil–military relationship of a country – that jointly with another had forced the largest army surrender since the Second World War, which had blasted its way into the nuclear club through legitimately developed indigenous capability to the utter shock of all global eagle eyes that look out continuously for such a possibility, to whom the nuclear suppliers group granted a clean waiver without the prerequisite of signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty – as dysfunctional, could be a bit of a miscalculation. It is nobody's case that the civil–military relationship in India is ideal or even very effective. In fact, quite the contrary. But, dysfunctional it is not; even if it is suboptimal or less than the nation deserves. In fact, there is a lot of room and indeed every reason for immediate institutional restructuring and reforms. The need for this is brought out not so much by the visiting maritime expert's views, even if those are shared by many beyond our shores and also by some within. Or even by recent instances such as the controversy of a serving Army Chief's differences with the Government and the Naval Chief resigning to take moral responsibility for the spate of accidents in the Indian Navy. The need for correctives is actually underscored by consequences that such instances inevitably inflict upon the morale and effectiveness of highly trained body of disciplined soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Union. First the fact, and then the way these were handled by the Government, point to the imperative of an early fix.

In light of the above background and to analyse various factors affecting national security, three leading analysts of India's security structure were invited to share their views on the existing shortcomings. One of these is Admiral (Retd) Arun Prakash, a former Chief of the Naval Staff and Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee who was

later a member of the National Security Advisory Board and also a member of the Naresh Chandra Task Force for defence management. He has firsthand knowledge and experiences of the processes and procedures as well as of two attempted repair actions. In the first invited opinion, he gives an insider's view of the prevailing civil–military relationship in India. He highlights structural flaws in the organizational setup of the Indian defence forces, which skew the power balance in favour of an ill-informed bureaucracy. He concludes that the lack of synergy due to civil military dissonance has led to major national security shortcomings and has inflicted permanent damage on the institution of the armed forces.

The second invited opinion is by Harsh V. Pant, an academic of international stature with expertise in strategic and maritime matters and an astute understanding of how these play out in the Indian environment. In continuation of his previously published works, he highlights the power imbalance between the trinity in the article “The Soldier, the State and the Society in India: A Precarious Balance”. He brings to fore the serious differences and the lack of mutual trust, which is degrading the functional relationships between institutions and concludes that the growing discord in civil–military relationship may endanger the democratic ethos of India.

The third invited opinion is on the internal security dimension and the centre–state relations. N. Manoharan, in his article on “Federal Aspects of Internal Security: Indian Case”, examines the characteristics of Indian federalism and how such a set-up impinges on India's internal security. Outlining the constitutional background for the division of power among the centre and the states, the paper infers that it is beyond the capability of the states to counter effectively the internal security threats on their own. The article suggests that cooperation rather than vote bank competition is the only suitable way ahead to tackle the growing internal security concerns.

This edition carries two articles on strategic cooperation in the maritime domain that are relevant for India. Ashok Sharma in his article, “India's Expanding Foreign Policy in the Asia Pacific Region: Implications and Prospects for the India– New Zealand Relationship” builds the case for strategic cooperation between India and New Zealand. Raghavendra Mishra, in his article “Managing Strategic Security Transactions in the Indian Ocean Region – Moving Away From Zero-Sum Lens” outlines the geopolitical framework and presents a case for strategic cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

History helps us understand the past to deal with the present better and formulate policies for the future. Sohinee Basak, in her article “Coastal Gujarat on the Eve of

Portuguese Arrival” attempts to study the factors in the 16th century that paved the way for Portuguese dominance in the region. Looking towards the future, Kapil Narula outlines the “Emerging Trends in the Shipping Industry” and presents various options to overcome environmental and economic challenges to enhance “sustainability”.

This edition also carries three book reviews. Raghavendra Mishra reviews Aaron L. Friedberg’s book, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, which is the current flavour of 21st-century strategic discourse. In the light of growing tension in the South China Sea, Priya Kumari reviews the latest book by Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia’s Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End to a Stable Pacific*. While China continues to remain in the spotlight, India is not too far out on the periphery either and Ateetmani Brar analyses the power struggle and the inconvenient relationship between the two giants in the book authored by Tien-Sze Fang titled *Asymmetrical Threat and Perceptions in India–China Relations*.

In so far as the NMF interactions are concerned, the Annual Maritime Power Conference was hosted on the topic of “Evolving Dynamics of the Indian Ocean”. This was followed by the annual bilateral workshop with the Centre for Naval Analyses hosted by the NMF, this time in New Delhi, on “Maritime Power Building: New Mantra for China’s Rise”. The first half of this year also saw a number of bilateral interactions with the French, New Zealand and Japanese delegations who visited NMF, and an exploratory visit by the NMF delegation to Think Tanks in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The scholars’ round tables continued with monthly regularity covering diverse subjects such as Australia–China Strategic Cooperation, Coastal Security, US Rebalance to Asia Pacific and Application of Game Theory to maritime domain. There were also round-table discussions with experts and lectures for the faculty.

By the time this edition of *Maritime Affairs* appears in print, I will have moved on upon conclusion of my extended tenure. It has been an honour and privilege to be the Director of NMF and Editor of *Maritime Affairs* for three years and I take leave of the readers with a big thank you for all the support so generously extended. The institution has a glorious future ahead and I wish it, and my successor, every success in its pursuit. Personally, for me, it would be a pleasure to be in touch via kaushiva@hotmail.com on common matters of professional interest. Until then, au revoir and Godspeed to each one of you.

Vice Admiral (Retd) Pradeep Kaushiva
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