



Editorial

The National Maritime Foundation engaged in a wide variety of activities during the first half of the year. In January, there was a Round Table Discussion with the Commander, US 7th Fleet. This was followed by a talk by Dr. Ashley Tellis, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace under the NMF's Eminent Persons Lecture series. In February, the Foundation organised its Annual Maritime Power Conference. Whereas the preceding two years' conferences had discussed aircraft carriers and submarines respectively, this year's conference moved away from specific platforms and focused upon the region under the banner "Challenges in the IOR – A Quest for Cooperative Solutions". The essence of what emerged is that the Indian Ocean Region's wide disparities, extreme heterogeneity, historical chasms aggravated by divisive colonialism, inherent denominational conflicts et al notwithstanding; there is a commonly perceived need to develop a regional mechanism to address maritime security concerns.

Developing upon the theme, I proposed at an Experts' Workshop on "The New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with South Asia" held at Kathmandu recently that we could perhaps draw up a regional mechanism in a manner similar to the ASEAN- ARF model. It may be recalled that the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), in its nascent form, was a regional geo-political and economic organisation formed in the Cold War decades to foster closer ties in specific fields. When the need was felt for the security issues also to be addressed, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was created. In our region, we already have two platforms in place viz. the Indian Ocean Rim - Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) to look at trade, economic, cultural and academic issues and the Indian Ocean Naval

Symposium (IONS) wherein the region's Naval Chiefs focus upon common maritime security concerns. If a handshake protocol could be provided between the two entities, the IOR would have a working regional model in place that could be suitably tweaked by its member states to fine tune its ambit and focus. In fact, if required, the IONS' scope could even be expanded beyond the maritime domain and rechristened Indian Ocean Security Symposium (IOSS).

The two models have another common feature viz. that all ASEAN members are ARF members but the vice versa is not true. Likewise, all IOR-ARC members are IONS/(future) IOSS members but the reverse is equally not true. It is also for the consideration of the regional maritime security community that the IOR-ARC and IONS endeavour can be supported along Track 2/Track 1.5 by think-tanks which are already established and have the domain expertise such as the NMF. Their combined support mechanism can mobilise participation of the regional think-tanks with a provision to accommodate space for extra regional think tanks also. This is considered important because a distinctive feature of the maritime domain is that the interests of nations are not confined to the geography of their own location and can extend to other locations also where they have a stake. The model appears workable as it would consist of a regional platform for co-operation (IOR-ARC) with a security counterpart (IONS/IOSS). Their endeavours can be jointly supported by the NMF at least for the next two years. With the experience gained, this can be taken forward as required.

The NMF had two bilateral engagements in March viz. with the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore, and with the Centre for Naval Analyses (CNA), USA. In addition, there were several informal interactions with prominent experts and a number of regular Round Table Conferences by research scholars.

This issue carries an interesting mix of research papers on a wide range of subjects. The first article, by Neil Gadihoke, discusses the geo political impact of the rapidly melting Arctic ice wherein the author postulates that the evolving dynamics will also have strategic implications for India. The next article, by Kamlesh Agnihotri, deals with the protection of trade and energy supply lines in the Indian Ocean Region. The author contends that there is a need to frame acceptable rules for the 'global commons', and that collaborative capacity building within the framework of 'Asian Maritime Partnership' could prove to be an effective means of tackling the maritime

threats and challenges in the region. Joshy Paul, in the third article, analyses the changing dynamics of Asia's emerging security domain, the stabilising potential of the emerging India-Japan maritime security co-operation and refers to the balance of power mechanism which is, slowly but surely, emerging in Asia.

The next paper, by Sharad Sinsunwal, provides a perspective on the issue of security in the global commons. Navies, the author argues, are inherently disadvantaged in securing the globalised maritime environment, because of the irreconcilable contradiction between the essentially Westphalian character of the former and the globalised nature of the latter. In the fifth article, Aditi Malhotra, reviews India-Vietnam relations and brings out the possibility of it acting as a counter to the China-Pakistan alliance. India's 'rich maritime past' is the subject of the sixth paper, by Amit Kumar. The author identifies ancient Indian texts that provide a glimpse into India's maritime past, and highlights the need to construct a coherent narrative of the ancient maritime activities and expeditions.

In the seventh paper, Amit Singh analyses the recent upsurge in tensions in the South China Sea (SCS). In his view, the disputes over the SCS waters constitute a security flashpoint which, if left unresolved, could threaten the peace and security of the entire region. The last paper, by Navaneetha Krishnan, outlines a scientific approach to measuring shipbuilding productivity. He analyses the existing productivity measurement system for shipbuilding and highlights certain gaps therein. By using a scientific approach and using Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), he avers, total productivity can be more accurately evaluated. In the only commentary in this issue, Sushil Ramsay makes a strong case for a new warship building strategy. In an intensely competitive marketplace and hugely unpredictable business conditions, he posits, the Indian shipbuilding industry needs to re-strategize its long-term goals and corporate perspectives.

As always, we welcome your feedback and comments in order to improve the quality of *Maritime Affairs* (MA).

Happy reading!

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