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The recent spurt of Arctic oil and gas development is often perceived as a result of increased accessibility due to climate change. Yet the extraction of hydrocarbons in the Arctic has just as much to do with global commodities cycles and technological developments. Due to the high prices of oil and gas in recent years, Arctic liquefied natural gas (LNG) is now more commercially feasible to develop, although massive outlays are still required. LNG is a major energy source for Japan and South Korea – the world’s two largest LNG importers – and increasingly China, too. However, Arctic LNG will not form a critical part of East Asian energy portfolios overnight.

Norway, Russia, the United States, and Canada – all permanent members in the Arctic Council – hope to develop their Arctic resources to take advantage of East Asian LNG markets, where prices are currently the highest in the world at around US$15/MMBtu. Presently within the Arctic, LNG is exported only from the Snøhvit project in northern Norway. Russia has numerous plans to develop LNG exports, principally from the Yamal project. Though not north of the Arctic Circle, ExxonMobil is aiming to restart LNG exports from the Kenai terminal in southern Alaska, which exported to Japan from 1969 to 2012.

When LNG from Snøhvit project sails to Japan via the Suez Canal, it usually takes 32 days – the longest LNG commercial voyage in the world. If gas needs to be acquired quickly, however, as in the wake of Fukushima, it helps to have resources closer at hand. One such avenue to bring Asian markets closer to natural gas deposits is the Northern Sea Route (NSR), which links northern Europe and Northeast Asia via the north coast of Russia. This Arctic energy corridor could shorten the distance from East Asia to projects like Snøhvit and Yamal. Already, LNG and other hydrocarbons, such as jet fuel and naphtha, have been transported along the route.

While it is widely cited that the NSR cuts the distance between Rotterdam and Yokohama by 40%, distances to more northerly locations are further reduced, with a 56% reduction between Kirkenes, in northern Norway and Yokohama. Of course,
although the NSR is shorter than the Suez route, it is not necessarily cheaper due to Russian fees, specialised ship construction and the need to hire icebreaker escort.

Even in cases for which the NSR is not a time- or cost-saving route, as in Southeast Asia, Arctic LNG could still be of interest commercially. Singapore, for instance, is working to become an LNG trading hub for the Asia-Pacific region. It should be noted, however, that Singapore and other Asian countries are also looking south to LNG developments in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and even Papua New Guinea, projects with which the Arctic may struggle to compete.

The expanded development of resources on East Asia’s doorstep like Russia’s Sakhalin, where Gazprom has partnered with Shell and Japanese companies Mitsubishi and Mitsui, is also crucial. LNG can reach Japan in three days from Sakhalin, the NSR’s sub-Arctic eastern gateway. Asian countries are not only interested in purchasing Arctic LNG. They also seek to supply the projects with their home-grown ships and offshore equipment. South Korea, China and Japan are also shipbuilding powerhouses. South Korea has built 100 LNG tankers since 2009 next to China’s 20 and Japan’s 13. Daewoo recently won a contract to provide 16 ice-class LNG carriers for the Yamal project, furthering Seoul’s Arctic reach.

The mutual benefits that Asian and Arctic countries are drawing from trade and business cooperation could strengthen bilateral ties in the region. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe led a delegation of 100 businessmen to Moscow in April 2013, and energy cooperation was high on the agenda. In September 2012, former South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visited Norway and Greenland to sign memoranda of understanding on energy and shipbuilding. Northeast Asia’s strengths in shipbuilding and offshore technology are thus key to the developing the Arctic.

LNG developments are also happening across the North Pacific. In the US, which is awash in natural gas thanks to the fracking boom, the Department of Energy recently approved a permit for the proposed Jordan Cove LNG Export Terminal in Oregon to export up to 800 million standard cubic feet per day for 20 years, most of which will go to Asia. The growth of the US as an LNG exporter could eventually undercut Russia’s dominance, allowing Asian countries more negotiating room with Russia for LNG contracts.

In Canada’s British Columbia, 14 projects are angling to export LNG across the Pacific. A provincial trade mission in May 2014 to Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong
Kong underscores Canada’s desire to take advantage of East Asia’s increasing energy needs.

The accession in May 2013 of China, India, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea to observer status in the Arctic Council reflects their interests in the circumpolar north, particularly with regard to the development of the region’s resources. Japan, South Korea, and China are particularly keen to import Arctic energy resources and to supply projects there. This is helping to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two regions.

Yet East Asian countries are likely wary of over-dependence on any one exporter, Arctic or otherwise, especially in light of recent developments in Europe vis-à-vis Russia. Asia’s drive for Arctic LNG should thus be seen in the context of a global shift in energy supplies.

Source: Eurasia Review, 15th May, 2014

**China's Escalation in the South China Sea is Unprecedented**

- Armin Rosen

Anti-Chinese rioting in Vietnam, the result of protests that were tolerated and even encouraged by the country’s authoritarian government, has left dozens dead this week. The uproar began when China’s state oil company moved one of its rigs to an oil block inside of Vietnam's "exclusive economic zone" in the South China Sea; within days, suspected Chinese-owned businesses were being torched and Chinese citizens were fleeing to neighbouring countries for safety.

Was the escalation a calculated move by an increasingly-aggressive Beijing? And are the neighbouring countries, whose relationship has been marked by over a millennium of tension - and who have fought multiple armed engagements with one another over the past 40 years - hurtling towards an even more dangerous confrontation? A quick rundown of why the situation might be a little different from usual flare-ups over the ever-disputed South China Sea.

This an unprecedented Chinese move. As Caryl Thayer writes at The Diplomat, "This incident marks the first time China has placed one of its oil rigs in the EEZ of another state without prior permission." As Thayer notes, the Chinese have claimed that the rig is in "territorial Chinese waters," but it seems as if they understood the potentially-explosive nature of what they were doing: "The oil rig was accompanied by as many as 80 ships, including seven People’s Liberation Army Navy warships."
Both countries have been building towards something like this. In 2010, Vietnam purchased six diesel submarines from Russia in anticipation of future confrontations with China. According to the same Reuters report, China was also pressuring businesses not to invest in Vietnamese exploration of "disputed" oil and gas blocks. In March of 2012, Vietnam officially protested the Chinese state oil company's decision to open up bidding on 19 blocks in the South China Sea. As this graphic indicates, China claims much of the South China Sea for itself:

Still, China’s specific motives here are sort of vague. Why escalate tensions with Vietnam now, just days after a U.S. presidential visit to the region, and after recent improvements in Chinese-Vietnamese relations? Analyst Ely Ratner sees the situation as evidence that "domestic bureaucratic and political imperatives are overcoming the logic of strategy in Beijing" - in other words, Chinese leaders decided to move the oil rig without thinking through the potential strategic consequences. At the same time, Ratner writes that China has been less reactive lately in the South China Sea, and more willing to assert what it believes to be its territorial rights without waiting for its neighbours to provoke it.
So now what? Analysts say that this is the worst crisis in Chinese-Vietnamese relations since a 1979 border war that killed thousands on both sides. Even if this situation doesn't reach a violent tipping point, China's state oil company asserts that over a third of the country's claimed oil and gas wealth is under the South China Sea. And if China can use this incident to establish a foothold in disputed waters, it's could be the first in a series of escalations and controversies in a resource-rich, disputed, and increasingly-militarized body of water.

Source: Business Insider, 16th May, 2014

Why Vietnam is Set on a Dangerous Course over China’s Maritime Operations

-Gong Yingchun

In recent days, the Vietnamese authorities dispatched a large number of vessels, including some naval vessels, to the waters off the Zhongjian Island, forcibly disturbing the normal drilling operations of the Chinese oil rig and ramming China’s escorting civilian ships.

Such provocative actions not only pose a serious threat to the safety of the Chinese drilling rig and the lives of those working on it, but also infringe upon the right of jurisdiction of China’s government vessels carrying out maritime law-enforcement tasks within the sea areas under China’s jurisdiction.

It is true that there is a territorial dispute between China and Vietnam over some islands and reefs of the Nansha Islands, but there is not any dispute between the two countries over the Xisha Islands in which the Zhongjian Island is included.

It is also true that delimitation is yet to be done for the waters between China’s Xisha Islands and Vietnam’s coastline. However, the drilling operation by the Chinese company is only 17 miles away from the Zhongjian Island, yet 150 miles from the Vietnamese coastline.

The location obviously falls within China’s offshore waters, notwithstanding the lack of an official delimitation between China and Vietnam in this area. There is not any possibility for overlapping claims between the two countries.

According to Article 56 and Article 60 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, China has exclusive sovereign rights of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing resources within the waters off the Xisha Islands. It also owns exclusive jurisdiction over the construction and use of all installations and structures operating in these waters, including oil rigs.
It is clear that by taking excuse that maritime delimitation has not been done, Hanoi has chosen to view the whole sea between China and Vietnam as disputable sea areas and sent a flotilla of ships to disturb the normal offshore drilling operations of the Chinese company. Vietnam’s activities, a violation of international practices, have also set a dangerous precedent for a country to brazenly interrupt another country’s normal maritime operations in the sea waters under jurisdiction of the latter, which is obviously in breach of the UNCLOS.

The actions of the Vietnamese authorities are a serious provocation. The harassment by Vietnamese ships of the Chinese oil rig operating normally within the waters under China’s jurisdiction infringed upon China’s exclusive sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the natural resources within the sea waters under China’s jurisdiction. Vietnam should be held accountable for the consequences of its actions, which are in violation of international law, and China certainly has the right to take countermeasures in accordance with international law.

*The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation and the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf*, two documents passed by the International Maritime Organization in 1988, formally came into effect on March 1, 1992. China and Vietnam have both ratified and are party to these two international conventions. As stipulated by the two documents, China has legitimate rights to exercise its jurisdiction and impose some sanctions, against any country whose activities endanger the safety of navigation and its fixed platforms on its continental shelf.

By mobilizing armed vessels to ram Chinese ships in the waters only 17 miles away from China’s Zhongjian Island, Vietnam has made clear its intention of provoking a head-on clash with China and exerting pressure on China.

With such reckless and risk-taking behaviour, Vietnam has turned a blind eye to the overall picture of Sino-Vietnamese relations and ignored the ongoing efforts made by both countries to create a good atmosphere and environment for all-round cooperation, and seriously jeopardized bilateral mutual trust.

The Vietnamese attempt to force China into giving up its legitimate rights and interests by escalating regional tension is both dangerous and futile. On the contrary, Hanoi will put itself in a dilemma that it cannot handle.

Source: *South China Morning Post*, 16th May, 2014

**Will China Embrace Code of Conduct?**

- Dr. B.A. Hamzah
The ASEAN summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, has just ended with the usual pomp and circumstance. Some heads of government were visibly exasperated with fresh feuds in the South China Sea and their failure to bring order to the "Maritime Heartland".

At Nay Pyi Taw, all eyes were on China, the Middle Kingdom, for rebuffing ASEAN's proposal for a binding code of conduct (COC) on the South China Sea. The negotiation for the COC started since the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties was adopted in Phnom Penh in 2002. While a mechanism to manage order at sea remains pressing, from Beijing's perspective, the COC is a bridge too far, unnecessary and giving it just enough rope.

Besides this, the fissures within ASEAN on the COC have not impressed China. Vietnam and the Philippines are very vocal. The other claimants are more conciliatory. The non-claimant states are happy to go along with the COC to keep ASEAN together.

ASEAN should know that China is determined to dominate the South China Sea as its "own internal lake", akin to the "Yankee Lake" that the United States established in the Caribbean to keep rivals out in the early 20th century.

In my view, China is no longer eager to embrace the COC. A weaker China was more willing to let ASEAN play the China card. Hence, it lulled ASEAN into thinking that it would play ball with the COC. Today, the card has changed hands.

A more confident China, which believes it has geography and history on its side, now takes things in its stride. Worse, China believes that the COC is a pretext by some claimant parties to engage stronger external parties (read: the US) in a proxy war. As an example, within days of signing an Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with Washington, Manila is involved in a massive US-led war game, involving more than 5,000 troops near Scarborough Shoals that is occupied by China since April 2012.

From Beijing's perspective, the joint military exercise is threatening and runs counter to the earlier assurance by US President Barack Obama that the EDCA was not to counter or contain China. If China is not the threat, who is?

China believes geopolitics is also on its side. At the global level, its rise comes at a time when its biggest rival, the Frugal Superpower (after Michael Mandelbaum), is limping and retreating home. America's decline results from strategic overstretch and costly military misadventures.

China is now more emboldened as US soldiers continue to recuperate from operational fatigue. Despite the EDCA and policy to rebalance forces to East Asia, China believes the US is less likely to put more fresh boots on the ground.
The US is too preoccupied with Europe to bother about the Pacific. The situation in Ukraine will keep the US busy with Russia. Besides, Washington cannot afford to antagonise Beijing, as it needs China to moderate Iran's increasing influence in the Middle East, as well as keeping peace in Africa.

The COC is an agreement between ten states against one. Its asymmetrical nature does not bode well for China. It drags in the non-claimant parties, with whom China has no territorial quarrel. The fissures or cracks between the claimant states and non-claimant states (visible in Phnom Penh in 2012 and evident in Myanmar this year, another non-claimant state), have weakened the ASEAN initiative.

ASEAN must not be too pushy over the COC. When ASEAN was formed in 1967, its original mission was very clear: to keep peace among the member states. Today, there is a danger that the internal fissures may undermine ASEAN's mission, strategic relevance and centrality.

Source-  Columnist, 17th May, 2014

**Oil Giants Set Their Sights on Arctic Waters**

- Chester Dawson

Big oil is eager for another crack at drilling in the oil- and gas-rich Arctic offshore. But that renewed interest comes amid intense scrutiny in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

Encouraged by higher crude prices, better technology and steep costs that pose barriers to entry for all but the deepest pockets, heavyweights such as, Chevron Corp., Conoco Phillips, Mobil Corp. and Royal Dutch Shell have spent billions of dollars to snap up offshore Arctic leases. The Arctic holds about one-third of the world's untapped natural gas and 13% of as yet undiscovered crude, or roughly 90 billion barrels of oil, and more than three-quarters of those deposits are offshore, according to U.S. Geological Survey estimates.

Major oil companies have tested these waters before. But three decades ago, when drilling was last attempted on a large scale in the U.S. and Canadian Arctic offshore, neither the price of oil was high enough nor the drilling technology advanced enough to make extracting oil in the punishing climate profitable. Now the industry has the price it needs, and says it has the technology to extract the oil and do it safely. The trouble is, most of the new leases were acquired before the 2010 Gulf spill, which put the fate of U.S. and Canadian Arctic offshore projects in limbo.

Since the U.S. imposed a six-month moratorium on offshore drilling in 2010, U.S. and Canadian regulators have been nudged by industry for new drilling-lease approvals and besieged by environmental groups concerned about spills. Canada
introduced stricter rules for Arctic offshore drilling in 2011, but has yet to receive a formal application for drilling under the new rules. Its first application could come next year from a consortium including BP, Exxon Mobil and its Canadian subsidiary, Imperial Oil Ltd. The group has submitted a project description for drilling in the Beaufort Sea and is engaged in preliminary consultations with various Canadian regulatory authorities.

The U.S. is also attempting to balance environmental and economic interests in its own new Arctic Drilling Rule, which regulators say will be released shortly. Once the new U.S. regulation goes into effect, the first U.S. auction for Arctic offshore leases since early 2008 could take place in 2016. Set to go on the block first are drilling-license leases for the Chukchi Sea off Alaska's northwest coast.

Several other nations are moving ahead with Arctic exploration programs of their own, including Russia, Norway and Greenland, a part of Denmark, adding to the pressures on U.S. officials to act quickly. "We have to realize that we are in an international game," Christopher Smith, the U.S. Department of Energy's principal deputy assistant for fossil energy, said at a recent conference in Washington on Arctic ultra-deep-water oil. "We have to balance the challenges of caution with our desire to make sure the U.S. is taking a true leadership role."

But that balancing act may become even more difficult in the wake of a National Research Council report last month that highlighted the challenges of Arctic offshore drilling. The report, commissioned by the federal government and the American Petroleum Institute, an industry group, found that the U.S. isn't fully prepared for the prevention or mitigation of a large-scale oil spill in Arctic waters.

At a minimum, environmentalists are pushing for mandatory use of equipment designed to withstand maximum ice forces, redundant safety systems such as blowout preventers and double-walled pipelines, and a ban on drilling in particularly sensitive Arctic habitats, like Bowhead whale migration routes. "This is the most dangerous place in the world to drill for oil offshore," says Marilyn Heiman, U.S. Arctic director at the Pew Charitable Trusts. "There's a lot of discussion about whether we're really ready for it."

Energy companies say technological innovations and lessons learned from the Deepwater Horizon accident have lowered the risk of a massive offshore oil spill in the Arctic or anywhere else. The oil giants have wagered billions of dollars on leases and technology to enable them to drill at depths and in weather conditions once considered impenetrable.

But opponents of Arctic oil production see little reason to be optimistic about new industry safeguards in the wake of efforts by Shell, which two years ago, under a lease obtained in 2008 during the George W. Bush administration, was allowed to drill the first new exploratory well in the Chukchi Sea in more than two decades. Although the company says it has spent about $6 billion so far on its Arctic drilling
program, in 2012 it proved unable to deploy a promised spill-containment system, and its rig ran aground on a return voyage to port.

The U.S. Department of the Interior issued a withering report in March of 2013 that said Shell’s 2012 drilling program "raised serious questions regarding its ability to operate safely and responsibly in the challenging and unpredictable conditions offshore Alaska." Environmental groups, meanwhile, are using the courts to challenge the Interior Department's decision to honour Arctic leases issued during the Bush administration.

Shell suspended its drilling program in 2013—just before the Interior report was released—and in February this year new CEO Ben van Beurden ruled out resuming the program this year. But representatives say the company remains committed to exploring what it has called the "most promising undeveloped hydrocarbon basins" in the U.S.

Imperial Oil has begun initial consultations with Canadian regulators as it prepares to seek approval for what some experts say will be the deepest Arctic offshore well and perhaps the most expensive well ever drilled. The oil field beneath the Beaufort is expected to yield more than a billion barrels of oil for Imperial and its partners, but at a development cost of more than $10 billion, according to Exxon Mobil senior Arctic consultant Jed Hamilton. "The Beaufort is symbolic of the types of things we look at in our business," says Rich Kruger, chief executive of Calgary-based Imperial.

Before it can proceed with the Beaufort project, however, Imperial must win an exemption to a long-standing safety policy in Canada. Under Canadian rules, operators must have standby capacity to complete a relief well to stop a blowout within the same summer drilling season. But Imperial expects to drill so deep it will take up to four years to complete its first exploratory well. The company thus will likely seek an exemption, which regulators can grant if they deem alternative measures equivalent.


**Trouble Brewing in South China Sea**

-Gwynne Dyer

If you were running China, and you wanted to distract your own population from economic woes at home by pushing one of your many territorial disputes with your neighbours into open conflict, which one would you choose?

Not Japan, even though most Chinese people really dislike and distrust Japan: it is allied to the United States, and China is not yet ready for a military confrontation with the US Navy. Not the Philippines, either, for the same reason. But Vietnam, a
communist state, is all alone with no allies. It is perfect for the role, and it will play its part well.

Early this month, China moved its Haiyang Shiyou 981 oil-drilling rig into a part of the South China Sea where Vietnam also claims the seabed rights. Vietnam sent ships to protest the move, China sent more ships to protect the rig - Hanoi accuses China of massing 80 vessels in the area, including warships - and the fun and games began: ramming, battles with water cannon, and a great deal of self-righteous indignation on both sides.

The Vietnamese regime has never been afraid to defy China: it even fought a border war with its giant neighbour to the north in 1979. This year, for the first time, Hanoi publicly commemorated a 1974 clash in which Chinese forces seized the Paracel Islands and killed 40 sailors of the old South Vietnamese navy.

By last week, there were anti-Chinese demonstrations in Hanoi and Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). Those were undoubtedly authorised by the Vietnamese regime, which keeps a tight hold on its population. What happened in Binh Duong province in southern Vietnam last Tuesday was probably not. Official reports speak of three factories housing Chinese-owned businesses being set on fire on an industrial estate, but local reports talk of 19,000 workers rampaging through the estate and burning 15 factories.

Hanoi does not want this sort of thing to happen, of course - it scares off much-needed foreign investment - but when you press on the nationalist button, you can never be sure what will come out. Beijing should also be wary of this, if indeed it is really using its border disputes to stoke nationalist fervour in China. Nationalism is not a precision tool.

We cannot be sure this is Beijing's main motive, of course. Maybe it is just a premature outburst of great-power arrogance that is driving China to push so hard on all its territorial disputes this year. But it is certainly doing it. Since January, China has declared an "Air Defence Identification Zone" over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, which are also claimed by Japan.

It has outraged the Philippines by starting to build an airstrip and/or naval base on Johnson Reef (ownership also in dispute) in the Spratly Islands. It has even provoked Indonesia into openly challenging Beijing's claims in the South China Sea for the first time. It is talking about establishing a similar Air Defence Identification Zone over almost all of the South China Sea, a maritime thoroughfare for more than half the world's merchant trade.

Since the beginning of this year it has been requiring that foreign fishing vessels ask permission to enter the area it claims as its exclusive economic zone - again, almost all of the South China Sea - although it has not yet tried to enforce this rule very vigorously. The area China claims, on the basis of its alleged sovereignty over the
many uninhabited islands, islets, shoals and reefs scattered across the South China Sea, extends more than 750km from its south coast.

According to the "nine-dash line" drawn on Chinese maps which is the only graphic (but very imprecise) guide to Beijing's claim, its control extends to around 50km to 75km of the coasts of all the other littoral states.

This huge U-shaped claim, taking in more than 90% of the whole South China Sea, is as unsustainable in fact as it is hard to defend in international law. Nor does China seek to prove it by legal means. Last month, when the Philippines submitted a 4000-page "memorial" to the judicial body that arbitrates maritime disputes under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, China refused to file a counter-claim or respond in any way.

China's position would appear to be that you do not need to prove your claim in the courts if you can enforce it on the ground (or rather, on the water). And indeed, the sheer number and range of unilateral Chinese initiatives in recent months suggest that the policy of the new ruling team in Beijing (which will be in power for the next 10 years) is driven by full-spectrum bloody-mindedness.

However, the desirability of a foreign confrontation to distract the Chinese population from the recession that will probably soon hit the country's economy cannot be far from the minds of the regime either. In either case, if there is shooting, it will probably start off the Vietnamese coast, simply because Vietnam has no defence treaty with the United States.

Source: Otago Daily Times, 19th May, 2014

**The Power of the Sea**

- Arun Kumar Singh

The Chinese Navy — also known as PLAN or People’s Liberation Army Navy — has emerged as the world’s third largest Navy in terms of blue water capable combat units, after US and Russia.

China is also the global leader in building merchant ships, fishing vessels and ports. China has realised that sea power, if properly showcased and exploited, gives a nation greater flexibility than even nuclear weapons, in furthering its national interests.

I had written about China’s growing naval presence in the Indian and Pacific oceans in these columns (At Sea, Sino-India Ties Need Propulsion, April 11). In its eagerness to show off its sea power, China has taken some new initiatives, including a rare, embarrassing tumble, when it took the unprecedented step of cancelling, at
the last minute, its much-publicised International Fleet Review (IFR) at Qingdao, scheduled for April 23.

To further showcase its growing sea power, China decided to recently host two maritime events almost simultaneously at Qingdao. The first was the 20-nation WPNS (Western Pacific Naval Symposium) comprising important Asia-Pacific Navy Chiefs, including US, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Australia, with three observer nations — India, Bangladesh and Mexico. The WPNS concluded on April 22, with a basic agreement for confidence building at sea, by reiterating well known flag signals for indicating activities like flying and diving operations etc, so that passing ships can keep clear and not impede such operations. The WPNS, is an ongoing annual dialogue, which was initiated by the US, some years ago.

On conclusion of WPNS, on April 22, China had planned to hold its second IFR, this year on April 23 (the first IFR was held in 2009, in Qingdao), to mark the 65th anniversary of the Chinese Navy (where President Xi Jinping was to take the salute of the participating ships, submarines and aircraft). The IFR was to be followed by sea exercises on April 24. Ten nations accepted the invitation and seven sent ships (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Singapore etc). Japan was not invited and the US Navy, too, decided not to participate. India sent its home built stealth frigate, INS Shivalik.

On April 16, China abruptly cancelled the IFR, citing its preoccupation with the ongoing search for Malaysian Flight MH-370 as the excuse. The real reason was perhaps, that rising superpower China, was acutely embarrassed with the low foreign participation and the absence of the US Navy. Only elementary sea exercises were held on April 23.

On May 1, China moved its newly built indigenous oil rig, HYSY 981, with an escort of 80 ships, including seven naval warships, to commence sea bed drilling exploration, within 120 miles off Vietnam’s coast (well within Vietnam’s Exclusive Economic Zone), leading to mass anti-Chinese protests and the evacuation of 3,000 Chinese nationals from Vietnam. This dispute in the South China Sea (SCS) is ongoing, and adding to the tensions there.

On May 20, peeved with NATO support to Ukraine and anti-Russia sanctions by the US, President Putin visited Shanghai, and for the first time the Russian and Chinese navies jointly exercised at sea in a scenario involving “operations in disputed island territories” (an obvious reference to the China-Japan dispute over the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea or ECS).

On May 21, Russia and China signed a $400 billion deal for Russia to supply piped natural gas to China for 30 years, commencing 2018. It now appears that nuclear power Russia may also get involved in the disputes of the Asia Pacific Region (APR).
In February, Beijing surprised India during bilateral talks by proposing to include India and Sri Lanka in its earlier October 2013 proposal to ASEAN which is a revival of the 15th century Maritime Silk Route (MSR), which had involved seven sea expeditions, each with over 300 sailing ships, to the Indian ocean region (IOR), from 1405 to 1433, by legendary Chinese Admiral Zheng-He. The admiral was accorded a sea burial off Calicut after his death in 1431. The MSR had linked up with the famous land silk route by which China carried out trade with Europe.

China is now reviving the ancient land silk route, and its MSR proposal includes economic benefits to participating nations, the setting up of a “maritime co-operation fund”, and more ominously establishing legitimate Chinese logistical and naval facilities (read bases) in the Indian Ocean region, to safeguard China’s SLOCs (Sea Lanes of Communication) for its energy imports and commercial exports. To further sweeten the proposal, China has offered India an FDI of $300 billion for upgrading its creaking infrastructure.

India’s participation at Qingdao in the first Chinese IFR (2009), and the recent (April), WPNS and sea exercises off Qingdao, is a sign of its maturity and also indicative of the growing capability of the Indian Navy which has ships deployed on anti-piracy duties off Somalia since 2008, and off our coasts on anti-maritime terror patrols since 2008 (post 26/11 sea borne terror attack on Mumbai). These are in addition to the routine two to three months’ deployments in the South and East China seas. A spate of naval accidents since August 2013 have shown that India needs to provide more funds for not only replacing over-aged ships and submarines, but also for increased maintenance and logistics to the Navy, which is now sailing a 100 per cent more after 2008. To ensure that India sends the right signals to Beijing, Indian warships are slated to participate in a trilateral exercise “Malabar 2014”, along with warships of Japan and the US. This exercise will be held off Okinawa Island (not far from Qingdao), towards the end of 2014.

Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi while focusing on India’s rapid economic growth and diplomacy also needs to understand that a powerful Navy will give India greater flexibility in protecting its global national interests, while acting as a deterrent to any mischief by China and its proxies. The new mantra should be to trade with China (and Pakistan, if it gives MFN status to India), accept Chinese FDI, move to solve the border problem, but keep our Navy strong and ready, as the hard-headed Chinese will respect only economic power backed by sea power, along with nuclear deterrence.

Source: Deccan Chronicle, 23rd May, 2014

**The Maritime Silk Road**

- Victor Cherubim
Sri Lanka is an important partner in building the 21st Century “Maritime Silk Road,” said President Xi Jinping meeting Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa at Shanghai on the sidelines of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia a few days ago. For us in Sri Lanka, what China says, it does. We know that China is set to put up $1.6 billion fund to support the Maritime Silk Road, as part of an initiative to revive and develop the ancient Maritime Silk Road linking China’s coastal ports and areas with South East Asian countries. It was mooted by President Xi in his visit to Indonesia last year and soon this sea route will be operational.

This project is not a pie in the sky. Centuries ago as early as the 5th Century Fa Hsien known as Faxian, a Chinese Buddhist monk travelled the Silk Road from his home in Shang’an to the countries of Nepal, Pakistan, India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) between 399 and 414 AD. He travelled overland on the way and by sea on the way back. His last overland stop was, what is today the island of Sri Lanka, where he visited the Abhayagiri Vihara Temple, with an image of the Buddha in jade green.

Today’s Silk Route will extend the construction of port projects in Gwadar, Hambantota and Chittagong respectively, thereby linking the ancient maritime Silk Road, with trade relations. The Sea has always been important to merchant traders. It has also been vital in geopolitics. For Sri Lanka, what is fascinating is the historic link between our neighbouring countries, many of whom are Buddhist. For China, we hope it is not only trade but opening up China’s cultural traditions.

The proposed route could begin in Quanzhou in Fujian Province, through Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, Beihai (Guangxi) and Haikou (Hainan) before moving south through the Malacca Strait to Tanjong Priok (Jakarta) and Semarang (Indonesia) to Port Swettenham (Kuala Lampur) to Kolkata (India) then perhaps to Hambantota (Sri Lanka) and Gwadar (Pakistan) across the Indian Ocean to Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) Nairobi (Kenya) through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean and on the Athens before meeting with the land based Silk Road in Venice.

Some time ago, in distant memory, I did traverse some part of this route from Saigon (Vietnam) to Colombo (Sri Lanka) by freighter. As a Ship's Agent, years later, I visited Chinese ports. To me it is common sense that China is investing so much human capital besides starting construction projects in this development. As an island nation we need the backing to open up Sri Lanka for tourism and for trade.

The meeting of East and West in the years ahead will be enhanced by trade and there is no doubt about it.

Source: The Guardian, 24th May, 2014
China’s Consistently Inconsistent South China Sea Policy

-Ryan Santicola

Adrien Morin contends that China’s foreign policy is consistently non-assertive toward Western power, basing this on its policy throughout the Syrian crises. While Mr. Morin’s thesis on consistency may find support in China’s position on non-interventionism in Syria, it falls apart in his attempted extrapolation to the South China Sea.

Despite any perception within China that its policy in the South China Sea is not “foreign policy,” it is – not because the territory and water in dispute are decidedly international, but because the disputes at issue involve multiple sovereign state actors and must be navigated through diplomacy. China’s own practice of acceding to multilateral and bilateral agreements pertaining to the South China Sea confirms this fact – why would China conclude international agreements regarding an area to which it genuinely believed it had perfect title?

In fact, the common refrain from China on the best course of action to resolve territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea has been a foreign policy tool, namely bilateralism. This is China’s explanation for its refusal to participate in arbitration with the Philippines before the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Similarly, it is the stated basis for China’s continued reluctance to resolve a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea with ASEAN.

So, China has a consistent foreign policy of bilateralism in the South China Sea, right? Wrong. When it comes to the South China Sea, and where Mr. Morin goes astray, China’s foreign policy in practice diverges greatly from its stated policy. In practice, Chinese foreign policy has been anything but consistent and has included aspects of multilateralism, bilateralism, and (most recently) unilateralism, achieving an almost incomprehensible level of unpredictability.

In the multilateral context, China has demonstrated that it will accede to both binding and non-binding commitments with which it has no intention of complying. In 1996, China signed onto the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), yet continues to assert maritime claims that are wholly incongruent with that regime. In the non-binding realm, China is a party to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). Yet, through its continued harassment of ships in international waters, escalatory actions at the Scarborough Reef in 2012, and engagement in land reclamation projects in the Spratly Islands in 2014, it has flagrantly disregarded its political commitment to avoid conduct that would, according to the DOC, complicate or escalate disputes and have implications for peace and stability.
China’s adherence to its bilateral commitments, its stated foreign policy preference for the South China Sea, has been similarly underwhelming. In May, China unilaterally moved the CNOOC oil rig HD-981 into disputed waters off the coast of Vietnam and in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands. This action was taken despite China’s 2011 bilateral agreement with Vietnam on “the basic principles guiding the settlement of sea-related matters” in which both nations agreed to resolve sea-related disputes “though friendly negotiations and consultations.” Similarly, in 2012, China unilaterally failed to hold up its end of a bilateral negotiation with the Philippines that required the mutual withdrawal of its ships following the Scarborough Reef stand-off. In other words, states that comply with China’s demands for bilateralism over multilateralism or arbitration arrive at the same place had they resisted those demands in the first place – unilateral Chinese action.

The conclusion that emerges from a consideration of China’s practice of foreign policy in the South China Sea is that the only thing consistent about that policy is its inconsistency and lack of any discernible strategy. These inconsistencies not only raise doubts as to whether China has operated in good faith in negotiating and interpreting both its binding and non-binding international agreements, but also whether stability and cooperation can be introduced to the region notwithstanding those inconsistencies.

Source: Diplomat, 24th May, 2014

**Sovereignty is Indisputable**

- Yang Zewei

Chinese governments since ancient times have never given up the exercise of its jurisdiction over South China Sea islands

A series of recent actions taken by Vietnam to disturb and play up the normal drilling of Haiyang Shiyou 981, an oil rig owned by China National Offshore Oil Corporation, in the waters off China's Xisha Islands has put tensions in the South China Sea in the spotlight of worldwide attention. Hanoi should know that such drilling in the said area is China's sovereign right endowed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

First, the Xisha Islands have been a Chinese territory since ancient times. Available historical documents record that Chinese people first discovered the South China Sea islands in the Han Dynasty (202 BC-AD 220) and also gained an initial knowledge about the South China Sea. With the progress of the navigation technology and the invention and wide use of compass, the navigation and activities of Chinese people at sea tended to be more frequent from the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Since then, South China Sea islands and adjacent waters have not only
become a wide area for Chinese people to engage in production and commercial activities, but have also become an important water area for China's navy forces to patrol and defend. In AD 971, Zhao Kuangyin, the founding emperor of the Song Dynasty, began organizing a patrol naval squad, whose regular cruises and patrols in the South China Sea established China's jurisdiction over the Xisha Islands. In 1279, Kublai Khan, the founding emperor of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), sent General Guo Shoujing to the South China Sea for the inspection and research of the sea's geography and landscape to offer security guarantees for the cruising imperial naval force. Afterwards, the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties both put the South China Sea islands and adjacent waters under their jurisdiction, and it has ever since become a common practice for China's naval forces to make inspection tours for coastal defence and exercise sovereignty over them. There were also countless maps, archives, documents and logs reserved from the Ming and Qing dynasties that recorded the South China Sea islands.

The traces of Chinese people's activities from ancient times have also left numerous remains of historical relics there. Aside from the sites of historical relics, quite a few stone tablets erected during the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China (1912-1949) on South China Sea islands and reefs to maintain and declare China's sovereignty over them have also been excavated. Most of these stone tablets were the monuments of then Chinese government officials or military officers who landed on these islands or reefs for inspections.

During the period of the Republic of China, the Chinese government took a series of active measures maintaining its sovereignty over the South China Sea islands, including the renaming of islands and reefs at the sea, including the Xisha Islands, by the government agency in charge of maps censorship. After World War II, China resumed its exercise of sovereignty over the South China Sea islands, in accordance with the spirit of a series of international documents, including the Cairo Declaration and Potsdam Proclamation. From November to December 1946, the government of then the Republic of China sent Yongxing, Zhongjian, Taiping and Zhongye warships to the South China Sea for taking over the sovereignty of Xisha, Dongsha, Zhongsha and Nansha islands that had been grabbed by Japan during World War II. In February 1948, the government of the Republic of China published an official map, The Location of South China Sea Islands, which explicitly marked South China Sea islands, including the Xisha Islands, as a part of China's territory.

Source: Shanghai Daily, 26th May, 2014

**Navies of the World: The Royal Navy in the Pacific**

- James R. Holmes
Isn’t today’s Royal Navy the merest shadow of the hegemon that once ruled the waves? Didn’t London throw in the towel on the Indian and Pacific oceans decades ago, withdrawing from east of Suez when it could no longer afford a fleet big enough to concentrate meaningful power along the Eurasian rimlands? Isn’t it starving the surface fleet of shipbuilding funds to bankroll nuclear submarines and a couple of flattops? Hasn’t the gulf separating ends from means — and mismatched priorities within those means — reduced the Royal Navy to a boutique navy composed of a handful of sexy platforms and not much else — a force with little punch outside Europe? All true, arguably. Britain looks like a post-Mahanian sea power.

And yet. Just last week the U.K. government published a National Strategy for Maritime Security worthy of a nation with Great Britain’s seafaring past. Give it a read. Then let’s probe the document to see how a middle power like the United Kingdom means to wring maximum value from sparse assets and manpower. For fun, we might also juxtapose it against the U.S. Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower. Maybe our Global Force for Good can learn a thing or two about how to make and execute strategy on a shoestring.

Our European friends are forever clamouring to know how they can support the U.S. pivot to Asia. David Cameron’s government supplies a welcome answer: by “developing the maritime governance capacity and capabilities of allies and partners in areas of political, military, or economic importance, including South-East Asia, the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Caribbean and the Gulf of Guinea.” And, potentially, by taking more direct measures to safeguard shipping passing through those waterways.

In short, British mariners will help others help themselves while rendering direct help in times of need. In so doing they will lighten the load on outsiders, who often find themselves policing developing nations’ offshore environs. By helping coastal states become fully sovereign — sovereignty connoting control of territory, first and foremost — European navies can perform yeoman service to the common interest in free navigation. Equipping local coast guards and navies for constabulary duty spares others — the United States, Europe, Japan, South Korea, even Russia and China — from having to crack down on Captain Jack Sparrow or A. Q. Khan in places like the Gulf of Aden or Gulf of Guinea.

That’s much-needed relief. The British strategy also implies a geographic division of labour whereby middleweight and small sea services take charge of relatively tranquil expanses. Their shouldering constabulary duty frees heavy U.S. Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard forces for action in more menacing waters such as the Persian Gulf, Bay of Bengal, and Western Pacific. (It’s worth noting, moreover, that the French Navy flat top Charles de Gaulle has roamed the Indian Ocean as of late. Paris, it seems, is taking on a share of the load as well. Here’s hoping burden-sharing keeps trending!) From a purely parochial standpoint, what’s not to like?
The coalition, geographic, and functional dimensions of the Maritime Security Strategy are what piqued my interest. But a few other aspects warrant mentioning for the sake of completeness. First, unlike the 2007 U.S. Maritime Strategy, which was signed out by the uniformed service chiefs, the British strategy bears the signatures of civilian political officials. That puts the Cameron government’s stamp of approval on the document. Which is a good and potentially a bad thing: it telegraphs that all agencies responsible for seagoing affairs will pool expertise and resources in a common, government-spanning effort. If and when the Conservative government falls, however, the strategy could find itself discarded along with other policies. The U.S. strategy endured a change of administrations precisely because it was seen as an apolitical document, not an artefact of the Bush administration. The Maritime Security Strategy’s longevity could prove ephemeral.

Second, the strategy’s framers outline an action/reaction cycle for British involvement in high-seas contingencies. Officialdom and mariners, they say, will Understand, Influence, Prevent, Protect, and Respond to events deemed potentially troublesome. The logic is sound. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Two observations about this. One may be trivial. Understanding what’s transpiring in the maritime domain bespeaks a fuller net assessment than the corresponding American jargon, maritime domain awareness. Awareness connotes gathering data, understanding a higher-order grasp of the situation. A linguistic distinction without a difference? Maybe, maybe not.

The other observation: postulating a cycle from understanding the situation to responding to it implies linear, sequential thinking and action. Consequently, one hopes U.K. officials won’t interpret their strategic guidance too literally. Like the intelligence cycle (Planning and Direction, Collection, Processing, Analysis and Production, and Dissemination) or John Boyd’s decision cycle (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act), the British cycle is, or should be, in perpetual motion. It’s not a checklist. And like Boyd’s OODA loop, events could compress the maritime-security cycle into a short time indeed. Dexterity of mind and deed is crucial when you’re a middleweight like Great Britain, with broad national interests and exceedingly finite resources to uphold those interests.

Lastly (for now), and strikingly, the Maritime Security Strategy explicitly endorses conscripting private security firms as an ally in the fight for oceanic law and order. I will never forget spring 2009, when — while briefing the commanders of Operation Atalanta at The Hague — I suggested arming merchantmen to stave off Somali piracy. Hired guns were among my options. The response was something to behold, and not in a congratulatory way. It appears reality has set in since then. What Europeans once saw as trigger-happy cowboy diplomacy has become accepted wisdom — in some pockets of maritime Europe, at any rate. Welcome to the Wild West, folks.
All in all, the National Strategy for Maritime Security is a nifty piece of work. Still, it’s just a piece of parchment. Making strategy is not the same as executing it. As with all great enterprises, then, the devil broods in the details. It will be worth monitoring how the United Kingdom fares in this one in the coming years. London’s strategy could become a template for other middle powers.

Source: Diplomat, 28th May, 2014

Who Should Lead South China Sea Peace?

-Yann-huei Song

Since 2006, a number of peace and cooperation initiatives have been proposed by the leaders of East Asian countries that aim to reduce tensions and maintain peace and stability in the East China Sea (ECS) and the South China Sea (SCS). These initiatives include:

1. The proposal to make the ECS a “sea of peace, cooperation and friendship” by the Chinese and Japanese leaders between November 2006 and July 2012;

2. The “Spratly Initiative” announced by Chen Shui-bian, former President of the Republic of China (R.O.C. or Taiwan), in February 2008;

3. The ASEAN-China Zone of Peace, Freedom, Friendship and Cooperation (ZoPFF/C), proposed by the Philippines' President Benigno Aquino III in September 2010;

4. The East China Sea Peace Initiative (ECSPI)” proposed by R.O.C. President Ma Ying-jeou in August 2012.

As a result of these peaceful proposals, two agreements were signed by parties to the disputes in the ECS, namely, the 2008 Principled Consensus on East China Sea Issue between China and Japan and the 2013 fisheries pact between Taiwan and Japan. A peaceful outcome was also seen in August 2013 when Taiwan acted in line with the ECSPI to resolve its dispute with the Philippines after the Philippine Coast Guard shot a Taiwan fisherman dead in May the same year. It was reported that the two countries will sign an agreement covering law enforcement in fisheries affairs by the end of July 2014.

Despite of these positive developments, there has not been much progress with regard to strengthening peace and stability in both the ECS and SCS. Tensions in these two East Asian semi-enclosed seas escalated after the former Japanese Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara announced his plan to purchase the disputed Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands in April 2012, and in the same month the Philippines
dispatched a warship to detain fishing vessels from China in the waters near the disputed Scarborough Shoal.

Not only has this troublesome situation continued, but also tensions in the SCS have been further intensified since China began to conduct oil exploration activities in the disputed waters near the Paracel Islands by deploying the giant oil rig HD 981 in early May this year. In the same month, the Philippines accused China of violating the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) because Beijing conducted construction works in an area China occupies in the Spratly Islands, namely the Johnson South Reef (Chiqua Jiao in Chinese). It was speculated that the construction work is for building a runway on the reef. The United States responded with sharpened rhetoric toward Beijing, describing a pattern of “provocative” actions by China.

Provocative actions have also been taken by the Philippines in support of its maritime claims in the South China Sea. On May 7, 2014, the Philippine Coast Guard detained 11 Chinese fishermen who were found conducting fishing activities in the waters near Half Moon Shoal. The Philippines accused these Chinese fishermen of fishing in its waters and violating its fisheries and environmental law.

On January 22, 2013, the Philippines initiated arbitral proceedings against China when it presented a note to the Chinese Embassy in Manila, accompanying a Notification and Statement of Claim, in accordance with Article 287 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (“UNCLOS”) and its Annex VII. The purpose of filing the proceedings is to seek a resolution to the disputes between the Philippines and China over maritime claims and entitlements in the South China Sea. On March 30, 2014, the Philippines submitted its Memorial to the Arbitral Tribunal, which contains the Philippines’ analysis of the applicable law and the relevant evidence. It also requests that the Tribunal declare, among other things, that China’s maritime claims in the SCS based on the so-called nine-dash line are contrary to UNCLOS and therefore invalid. The United States gave strong support to the Philippines’ legal move.

On May 21, 2014, it was reported that Vietnam is also considering taking legal action against China over its sovereignty claims in the South China Sea. This move, if taken, would likely escalate tensions between the two countries. Again, however, the U.S. gave support to the Vietnamese move as White House spokesman Patrick Ventrell said that Washington “supports the use of diplomatic and other peaceful means to manage and resolve disagreements, including the use of arbitration or other international legal mechanisms.” U.S. support for the Philippine and Vietnamese legal actions certainly upset Beijing.

In the past, for the purpose of reducing tensions in the South China Sea, a number of peace and cooperation initiatives have been proposed by the leaders of the countries that are involving in the sovereignty and maritime disputes in the area. In
February 2008, Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan’s former President, announced a Spratly Initiative during his trip to Taiping Island (Itu Aba), the largest in the Spratly archipelago. In September 2010, the Philippine President Aquino III proposed the idea of ZoPFF/C. In addition, over the past nine years, China has also proposed to make the South China Sea “a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation,” in particular when the Tripartite Seismic Survey Agreement was signed in March 2005 among the three national oil companies of China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. On April 3, 2014, the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Manila reiterated this commitment.

At the Fourth Summit of Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, which was held in Beijing on May 21, 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed that in order to effectively cope with the complicated security challenges, all countries should absolutely abandon the old security concepts. He advocated a new Asian security concept featured as being common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable, and forge a cooperative security pattern of openness, equality and transparency so as to march toward an Asian security path of common construction, sharing and win-win results. This proposal can be considered a new type of peace and cooperation initiative in East Asia. But there has been no response from the United States to this idea.

As far as Taiwan is concerned, Taipei is one of the claimants and “stakeholders” in the South China Sea, and yet it has long been excluded from the regional dialogue process that deals with the South China Sea issue. Taiwan was barred from signing the 2002 DOC and from participating in the consultation process that aims to adopt a regional code of conduct in the South China Sea. Nevertheless, although Taiwan has not been invited to participate in the South China Sea-related regional security dialogue process, all of the claimants, including outside powers, in particular the United States, are fully aware of the fact that the largest island in the Spratly archipelago, i.e., Taiping Island (Itu Aba), has been under Taiwan’s effective control since 1956. Under UNCLOS, this island can generate a 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf, which gives rise to a maritime boundary delimitation issue between Taiwan and the Philippines, as well as between Taiwan and Vietnam.

Taking note of recent developments in the South China Sea, what actions should be taken by Taiwan to help safeguard its sovereignty and maritime rights in the South China Sea? Is it necessary to return Taiwanese military, in particular marine troops to the island? Is it required not only building a wharf but also extending the existing runway on Itu Aba so that its function can be expanded? Is it considered inconsistent with President Ma’s South China Sea policy if Taiwan conducts military exercises in the sensitive waters in the Spratly Islands? Is it necessary to revise the current policy position on no cross-Strait cooperation in the South China Sea? It is possible to ask the governments of the Philippines and Vietnam to talk about ways and means to deal with the disputes in the South China Sea? Last but not the least, is it feasible to
apply the concept and principles of ECSPI to the South China Sea and come out with a South China Sea Peace Initiative (SCSPI)?

As far as the United States is concerned, we should take note of the Container Security Initiative ("CSI"), Proliferation Security Initiative ("PSI"), and the Regional Maritime Security Initiative ("RMSI") which were proposed and implemented in response to the 911 terrorist attacks. The goal of these U.S.-led security initiatives is to counter against the threat of international terrorism both from land and sea. Given the fact that the U.S. has important national interests in the South China Sea, is it useful to consider a U.S.-led peace and cooperation initiative in the South China Sea?

Who should take the lead to initiate such a peace and security initiative? Should it be the United States, China, ASEAN member states, ASEAN as a group, or Taiwan? On April 9, 2014, at CSIS Videoconference, President Ma said that “the spirit of East China Sea Peace Initiative could also apply to the South China Sea.” Judging from recent developments in the South China Sea, it seems that the time for this move has come.

Source: China Post, 29th May, 2014
Seychelles Elected as Co-Chair of UN’s Contact Group on Piracy

Seychelles, Japan and the UAE have been elected as co-chairs of Working Group 3 on Maritime Operations and Coordination of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), taking over from the Republic of Korea this week, together with $600 thousand pledged towards maritime law enforcement in the Seychelles islands.

As co-chair, Seychelles is expected to develop best management practices to protect vessels from piracy in the region and create mechanisms for vetting procedures for the recruitment of private armed guards for maritime companies.

According to a joint statement from the Seychelles Ministry of Home Affairs and Transport and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the 16th Plenary meeting of CGPCS and its Trust Fund board meeting were held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York between May 12 and 15, currently under the European Union’s chairmanship. “The unanimous election to co-chair Working Group 3 demonstrates the faith that the international community has placed in Seychelles’ ability to secure the Indian Ocean and the vital role it has played in ensuring the end of impunity for Somalia based piracy,” reads the statement.

During the Trust Fund Board meeting a grant of $600 thousand was allocated for a project for development of maritime law enforcement capacity as well as analytical and investigative capacity via the setting up a Police Marine Investigation Unit.

Source: Seychelles News Agency, 16th May, 2014

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to Expand Cooperation on Caspian’s Security

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan intend to expand cooperation on security of the Caspian Sea, said Kazakhstan’s military attaché in Azerbaijan, Colonel Almazbek Bazarbayev, APA reports. The Colonel said that this issue was discussed during Kazakh Defence Minister Serik Akhmetov’s visit to Azerbaijan in late April.

Azerbaijani Defence Minister Zakir Hasanov also underlined the importance of expanding cooperation on maritime security. The military attaché said that relevant
documents were developed in this regard and are being agreed between the parties.

“Currently Kazakhstan is establishing its Naval Forces. New ships are being built, bases are being constructed. We have good relations with Azerbaijan in military and civil maritime fields”, Colonel Bazarbayev said.

Kazakh students are studying in Azerbaijan High Military Marine School. In accordance with the agreement between the parties, Centre for Remote Recognition and Surveillance of Azerbaijan State Maritime Administration controls over Kazakh civil ships in world oceans.

Source: APA, 16th May, 2014

**US Navy Helps Coastal Africa Map a Common Picture of the Sea**

Using a Web-based mapping tool that plots nearby ships through their VHF (very high frequency) transponders, USA is helping Africa to map its coastline. Armed robbery, illegal fishing and drug trafficking are major issues facing Gulf of Guinea nations such as Cameroon. They are also concerns for the U.S. military, which has funded or financed new coastal radar sites in several countries.

Nine nations share waters along the Gulf’s most active stretch, from Ivory Coast to Gabon, creating a patchwork of surveillance systems and a host of technical and political issues with sharing data. Many nations have gaps in their radar coverage. The dishes also have their limitations as surveillance tools. They are good for line-of-sight detection 20 to 30 miles out — enough to cover territorial waters — but well shy of the 230-mile exclusive economic zone, a region where countries protect their own fish and resource stocks.

Until recently, the lack of a common radar picture left Gulf nations with few resources for sharing information on suspicious vessels, a problem more pronounced among poorer nations unable to afford much coastal radar coverage. Navy trainers in Africa, was looking for a way to develop that common picture when she spoke to a representative of the Volpe Centre, a Department of Transportation initiative that creates transportation-related projects for federal agencies. The representative said he might have something in mind — the centre had once worked on a similar concept for U.S. Southern Command.

Programmers pulled that project from the shelf, modified it and in 2010 released SeaVision, a Web-based vessel tracking system that uses ships’ transponders to draw a real-time picture of marine traffic on a common, unclassified interface. Based on Google Maps, the program takes data from the Automatic Identification System, the transponder signal system required of all flagged merchant vessels, and uses it to map ships in real time. Users can track vessels, look at their steaming histories
and correspond with other SeaVision users to highlight particular vessels or pass along information.

The AIS data comes via participating countries, who agree to plug their receivers into the program. Satellite AIS receivers ensure vessels can be tracked farther out from coastlines. The Naval command for Africa began disseminating SeaVision in 2011 through its exercises with African forces, and McLean encouraged countries to continue using the program in their regular surveillance. “We didn’t want to do something that they just used doing exercise because we wanted to build a capability that was consistent — it was there whether we were there or not,” she said.

A year after the program’s introduction, 20 countries were using SeaVision. Administrators can track logins, allowing them to see which users appear comfortable with the program and which may need more training or might be having technical issues. The Navy still provides many of the accounts, she said.

AIS alone can’t provide a complete picture of a nation’s territorial waters or the exclusive economic zone. Merchant ships can turn the system off, and smaller boats may not even have it. Well over half the vessels in the Gulf of Guinea are operating without AIS. The new European Union satellite program Sentinel-1 is expected to provide African nations free satellite images beginning later this year, she said. Although the satellite passes will be irregular — perhaps once every few days — the images will show how many ships are not using their transponders. Coastal radar, which some countries are feeding into the system, can provide similar information. As the U.S. military continues to update radar towers and add new ones, the information should become even better.

Countries should use the new data to enforce AIS requirements, and as a general indicator of where ships are clustering, McLean said. “It’s telling you about a problem,” she said. “You can tell the patterns of life. OK, well there was this many ships there last week. Is there this many ships there this week? What fish is in season?” Sea Vision should also receive a boost with last summer’s Code of Conduct signed by West and Central African nations in Cameroon. The agreement, which followed a period of escalating armed robberies in the Gulf, calls for better information sharing among signatories and a new regional information-sharing centre in Cameroon. In Idenau, forces from Cameroon and Nigeria recently tested the new agreement with combined exercises aimed at boarding a suspicious vessel.

Further improvements to coastal surveillance across Africa, often called maritime domain awareness by the military, will remain a cornerstone of the Navy’s work with African nations as long as maritime crime threatens global trade, oil prices and inland stability, said Smith, the official with U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa.

Source: Stars and Stripes, 16th May, 2014
Singapore Will Not Take Sides in South China Sea Dispute

Singapore will not take sides on claims in ongoing disputes in the South China Sea, but it is pushing for faster progress in the drafting of a Code of Conduct. Foreign Minister K Shanmugam said that in an interview with Channel News Asia, during his visit to Washington DC. Mr Shanmugam said what is important is freedom of navigation in the high seas, and the ability to settle disputes peacefully. And this is why the Code of Conduct needs to be in place, he said.

"We need to make faster progress. What will it involve? We know what we want to achieve. Claims are not going to be sorted out through the Code of Conduct, that's a matter between the claimant states. "But how do countries pursue their claims, what they can do, how do they interact with each other, those are issues that the Code of Conduct has got to deal with. It's not going to be easy, it's not going to be immediately done, it will take time, but we need to push on with it," said Mr Shanmugam, who is also Law Minister.

Source: Channel News Asia, 16th May, 2014

White House Calls China’s Actions in Vietnam Dispute Provocative

China’s decision to place an oil rig in disputed waters in the South China Sea is a provocative act and raises tensions in the region, the White House said. "We consider that act provocative and we consider it one that undermines the goal that we share, which is peaceful resolution of these disputes and general stability in the region," White House spokesman Jay Carney said at his regularly scheduled briefing. "We're very concerned about dangerous conduct and intimidation by government-controlled assets operating in this area," Carney said.

Anti-Chinese violence flared in Vietnam this week after China put an oil rig in a spot claimed by Hanoi. The move is the latest in a series of confrontations between China and neighbors over small islands in the oil-and-gas rich body of water, prompting fears that Beijing has adopted a more assertive approach to territorial disputes after seeing Russia annex Crimea.

The White House statement was the most direct U.S. criticism of China since the placement of the oil rig escalated tensions in the region. During a trip through Asia in April, Obama provided reassurances to several countries that while the United States wants to see maritime disputes settled through diplomacy, it would live up to
its obligation to defend its allies in the region. "These events highlight the need for the claimants to clarify their claims in accordance with international law and to reach agreement on appropriate behavior and activities in disputed areas," Carney said. He added that while the United States does not take a position in the disputes, it opposes any efforts to settle them by intimidation or coercion.

The Philippines, one of Washington’s closest allies in Asia, has said China is reclaiming land on a reef that both countries claim, and is building what appears to be an airstrip on it. It has offered the United States the use of an underdeveloped naval base on a nearby island to ensure U.S. warships can enter the vicinity.

Carney said he disagrees with a statement by China’s foreign ministry that it is in fact the U.S. announcement it will pursue a more active role in Asia - the so-called rebalancing - that is stirring tensions by emboldening Vietnam and others to behave more aggressively to territorial standoffs.

Source: Reuters, 17th May, 2014

**Maritime Disputes Keep China Away from World Economic Forum**

China’s absence from the World Economic Forum on East Asia to be held in Manila between May 21 and 23 is due to its responsibilities in hosting Summer Davos, according to a statement from the forum, although some media outlets have speculated that the real reason is the recent series of territorial disputes in the South China Sea, reports Want Daily.

The anti-China protests in Vietnam against China’s oil rig in the South China Sea have spread to the Philippines which also has competing sovereignty claims with China in the region. On Friday, hundreds of protesters, including Filipinos and ethnic Vietnamese residents in the Philippines, demonstrated in front of China's embassy in the country. Some of them wore turtle costumes to draw attention to the case of the Chinese fishermen arrested for poaching sea turtles in disputed waters.

The demonstration was organized by Philippine-American organization USP4GG. The World Economic Forum’s head of Southeast Asian affairs said China participated in the forum’s event on Africa held in Nigeria a week ago. The country will not attend the forum on East Asia since it will host the annual meeting of the New Champions, which is also known as Summer Davos in Tianjin. Around 600 representatives from 30 countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand will attend the Tianjin event. Philippine
president Benigno Aquino III will deliver a speech while his Indonesian and Vietnamese counterparts are also scheduled to attend.


**SEA Countries Mute on China's $1-Billion Oil Exploration Rig**

Southeast Asian countries are reluctant to challenge China and appear relatively “mute” and “impotent” in the face of Beijing’s stationing of a $1-billion oil exploration rig in the disputed South China Sea and the deadly anti-China protest in Vietnam, according to a senior fellow of the US think tank Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Murray Hiebert, deputy director of the Sumitro Chair for Southeast Asia Studies at the CSIS in Washington, cited the reclamation of Mabini (Johnson South) Reef that was raised by President Aquino with leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Myanmar last week.

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of Vietnam had also warned his ASEAN colleagues at the meeting about China’s extremely dangerous action. Aquino raised with the ASEAN leaders, indications that China was reclaiming land around Mabini Reef, possibly to build an airstrip. Prior to the ASEAN summit, Philippine authorities seized a Chinese fishing boat and its crew in Hasa-Hasa (Half Moon) Shoal, an area close to mainland Palawan, for poaching protected sea turtles.

Myanmar, current chairman of the ASEAN, released a statement on May 11 expressing “serious concerns over ongoing developments in the South China Sea.” The statement said the leaders had called for restraint and peaceful resolution of the dispute, but without mentioning China. He said ASEAN foreign ministers issued a rare stand-alone statement expressing “serious concerns” about developments in the sea and calling for quicker action in negotiating a Code of Conduct between China and the regional grouping. “Vietnam and the Philippines undoubtedly hoped for stronger support from their neighbours, two of which – Malaysia and Brunei – have their own overlapping claims with China in the South China Sea, which serves as a major international shipping route, has rich fishing grounds and is believed to hold deposits of oil and gas,” Hiebert said in his commentary “China’s Push in the South China Sea Divides the Region” originally published by Yale Global Online.
In 2012, the 10-nation bloc for the first time in its 45-year history failed to issue a joint communiqué at the end of the summit in Cambodia because Phnom Penh refused to include any reference to a discussion of the sea disputes. 
Source: ABS-CBN News, 18th May, 2014

**Ukraine Faces Russia with a Crippled Navy**

Ukraine's navy is in Odessa's harbour, though it can be hard to spot. It's tucked behind a collection of storage tanks and overshadowed by immense cargo vessels docked nearby. There are a couple dozen boats, few much larger than a decent-sized yacht and many in desperate need of repair. The government is begging the public to help pay their bills.

This is what's left of Ukraine's fleet since Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula two months ago, taking with it the navy's key base and most of its ships. "Times are not the best for the fleet now," admitted Capt. Oleh Chubuk, spokesman for Ukraine's naval command. The reality is far worse. Separatist unrest is battering eastern Ukraine, breakaway leaders have vowed to disrupt Presidential elections and Crimea has been annexed by Russia.

Ukraine's military is facing its worst crisis with a navy that has lost two-thirds of its vessels, an army desperate for basic equipment, and a defence ministry that has taken to hustling 50-cent donations that people can make with mobile phone text messages. It has raised more than $1 million so far that way — enough to buy one interceptor missile on a U.S. Navy warship — but military officials are thrilled. "We'll use the money to buy the things we lack, like bulletproof helmets and medical supplies," said Bogdan Buta, Ukraine's deputy defence minister. 

Kiev's Western allies, meanwhile, including the United States, have shown little willingness to help it rearm, fearing that more weaponry could upset diplomatic negotiations or provoke Russian President Vladimir Putin further. The loss of Crimea, a peninsula that dangles from the Ukrainian mainland deep into the Black Sea, meant the loss of Kiev's naval headquarters as well as a series of navy bases and all the ships and boats in port there. This has left Ukraine with little influence over its own crisis and, despite its long coastline and numerous ports, little power in the Black Sea.

In Odessa, the port city that is now the main base for the Ukrainian navy, the sense of betrayal by Russia is deeply felt. Formed after the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine originally didn't even think it needed a large navy, said Evgenii Livshyts, a retired submarine captain living in Odessa. Moscow, the new naval
commanders thought, would remain a friendly presence as Russia kept its huge Black Sea Fleet in Crimea and paid Ukraine rent for the base.

An undisclosed number of Ukrainian sailors switched sides to work for Russia after the takeover of Crimea, including the country's naval chief, Adm. Denis Berezovsky. But remaining sailors insist morale has not been battered. "You should have seen their eyes!" said Livshyts, gleeful at the memory of Ukrainian sailors who refused to join the Russian navy. "You can create any kind of weapon. But this spirit, you can't create it. It's just there."

For weeks after the takeover, Ukrainian sailors played cat-and-mouse games with Russian ships, trying to keep their vessels from being taken by Moscow as long as possible. The standoffs were mostly nonviolent, with Kiev fearing that dead Russian sailors could be used as an excuse for more aggression. Originally outfitted with castoff Soviet equipment and overshadowed by Moscow's forces, the Ukrainian military has never had it easy. Successive Kiev governments kept its funding to the minimum, and officials say former President Viktor Yanukovych, the pro-Russian leader who fled earlier this year after months of protests, purposefully starved his own armed forces so they would pose less of a challenge to Moscow.

Ukraine spent $5 billion on defence last year, less than 10 percent of what Russia says it budgeted for its military. The results have been predictable, with Ukrainian soldiers lacking everything from training to body armour. Acting President Oleksandr Turchynov recently said the country had just 6,000 combat-ready soldiers. The navy has fared worse. Ukraine's fleet, so decrepit that many ships need the help of tugboats to go anywhere, was reduced from about 75 ships before the Crimea takeover to 28 afterward. Russia is slowly returning some seized ships, apparently dismayed by their poor condition. "The Ukrainian navy was weak before, but now it's even weaker," said Pavel Felgenhauer, a Moscow-based military analyst. "They've got only one ship good for action."

That ship, the 400-foot Hetman Sagaydachniy, evaded capture because it was on its way back from an anti-piracy deployment off the Horn of Africa when Crimea was seized. The frigate's arrival in Odessa a few days later, despite announcements from Russia that it had switched sides, was a big morale boost. Felgenhauer isn't surprised at the high morale. Despite its long history of troubles, and its desperate lack of funding, Ukraine's military now seems intent on rebuilding. "They're trying to put their act together and fill their ranks with volunteers," he said. Chubuk agreed, saying the navy is now "trying to spread its wings."

US Sends Warship to the Black Sea

The US Navy is sending a guided missile cruiser to the Black Sea, the Pentagon said, the latest bid by Washington to reassure allies worried over Russia's intervention in Ukraine. "I can confirm the Vella Gulf, a Navy cruiser, will be going in to the Black Sea", Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby told reporters. The Vella Gulf will arrive in the Black Sea after the recent departure of the frigate USS Taylor, which left the area on May 12.

Since the crisis in Ukraine began in March, the United States has deployed troops to Eastern European countries for joint drills and sent ships to the Black Sea for exercises with NATO states in the area. But the 1936 Montreux Convention that governs the Black Sea bars outside countries from keeping warships in the strategic waters more than 21 days. The Pentagon, keen to allay the concerns of allies bordering Russia, has said it would keep up regular deployments of troops to NATO members in Eastern Europe through the end of the year. The higher US military profile also would "include naval presence in and out of the Black Sea," according to Kirby.

Source: Space Daily, 20th May, 2014

US Navy ‘Shaping Events’ in South China Sea

The United States’ top naval officer said the Navy’s growing presence in the Asia-Pacific region is beginning to show results and shape events, but acknowledges it will be ‘a long-term effort.’ Admiral Jonathan Greenert, the Chief of Naval Operations, said he hopes the U.S. Navy will be able to expand cooperation with India once its new government takes its place.

Speaking at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Greenert said the growing military-to-military dialogue with China is beginning to show results, especially in the South China Sea, where maritime tensions between China and its neighbors are on the rise. He said China was among the Asia-Pacific powers that joined the United States last month in adopting a Code of Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) during a meeting in Qingdao.

The Philippines and Vietnam are among the nations that have territorial disputes with China. During President Obama’s Asia trip last month, the United States signed a 10-year security agreement with Manila. Greenert said navy-to-navy “interoperability” with the Philippines today is “reasonably good,” but how the two countries build on that, he said, is a matter of discussion and could involve a status of forces-type
agreement (SOFA). The U.S. Navy has also requested more port calls in Vietnam. Greenert also said he would like to see more cooperation with Hanoi “in a deliberate manner.”

The admiral also expressed the hope the United States could renew a strategic partnership with India, a relationship he said the two navies once enjoyed. “Stable mil-to-mil relations are there, they’ve been there with India. We need to improve our communications and our interoperability. Currently, we do exercise with the Indian navy. It’s a lot of humanitarian assistance, search-and-rescue, [and] medical. But, my goal would be to get back to where we were in the mid-2000s. We were doing very comprehensive events in an exercise called Malabar, which is an annual exercise we have with the Indian navy. We were doing carrier operations together, very, very complex, integrating air wings, and I think it would be great if we could get back to that level,” said Greenert.

Greenert said with the new Indian leadership coming to power, perhaps they would be willing to have a greater presence in the western Pacific. He said it will depend on what the political ramifications are and where they are willing to go. The chief of naval operations said the Navy is fully committed to the Asia rebalance. Today, 51 of the Navy’s 289 ships are deployed in the Asia-Pacific region, and that presence will grow to 58 ships next year and 67 by 2020.

Greenert said 23 nations are to take part in Rim of Pacific war game exercises off Hawaii, running June 26 to August 1, involving hundreds of aircraft, 40 warships and 25,000 military personnel, including army and navy forces from China for the first time.

Source: Voice of America, 20th May, 2014

**U.S. Hopes for Pacific Cooperation with India Navy under Modi**

The United States hopes to be able to expand naval cooperation with India once a new government is in place in New Delhi, the chief of U.S. naval operations said. Admiral Jonathan Greenert said the United States would like to see this cooperation extend to India’s participation in exercises in the Western Pacific region, where an increasingly powerful China is becoming more assertive. “There's a strategic partnership and opportunity up there with India that is emerging,” Greenert told a Washington think tank.

U.S. officials say plans to expand naval cooperation with India ended up on a back burner during a long-running row between New Delhi and Washington over the treatment of an Indian diplomat in New York and in the run-up to India’s election earlier in May. Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party won
a resounding victory in the election. The scale of the win, which gave Modi India’s strongest mandate in 30 years, will assure him greater control over the country’s security agenda, and analysts say India may finally be able to deal with overseas rivals from a position of strength.

India's state-run energy company, Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), has a stake in a gas field in the South China Sea, a region where China, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia have competing claims. India has sparred diplomatically with China in the past over this exploration block, and in late 2012, India's navy chief said India was prepared to deploy vessels to the South China Sea to protect its energy interests. China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and there were confrontations between Chinese and Vietnamese ships this month after Beijing deployed an oil drilling rig in disputed waters 150 miles (240 km) off Vietnam's coast. Vietnam has broadened its military relationships in recent years in response to China's assertiveness, including with India and the United States. Last week, the U.S. Seventh Fleet, which guards U.S. interests in the Pacific, renewed a call for more ship visits to Vietnam. Greenert said he was not familiar with the specifics of the negotiations on increased cooperation with Vietnam, but he added: "I would like to see it increase in a deliberate manner."

Source: Reuters, 20th May, 2014

**NATO Still Sees No Sign of Russian Ukraine Troop Pullback**

NATO said there was still no sign that Russian forces were being withdrawn from the Ukraine border after President Vladimir Putin announced a return to their bases. "We have not seen a change at the border," a NATO official said when asked if there had been any developments subsequent to Putin's announcement.

NATO has estimated there are some 40,000 Russian troops on the border, whose presence has raised fears they may intervene in troubled eastern Ukraine after Moscow's annexation of Crimea in March. A pullback could ease spiralling tensions five days ahead of a key Presidential poll. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Deshchytsia said that his government could not yet confirm Russia's claim it had pulled its troops back from his country's border. "We hope that the declarations by Russian politicians that the troops are to be withdrawn from Ukraine’s borders don't just remain declarations," he said in Berlin.

Ukraine border guards said earlier that Russian forces had left an area within 10 kilometers (six miles) of the frontier following Putin's statement in which he also called on Kiev to halt military operations against pro-Kremlin rebels in the country’s
east. Russia's defence ministry said Tuesday troops were still preparing their
departure. "The men have started dismantling their tent camps, loading equipment
and forming columns of vehicles and armour," the ministry told Interfax news agency

Source: Global Post, 21st May, 2014

India for Stable Maritime Environment in Asia

Amid fresh tension in the Southeast Asian region over China's push to lay claim over
the South China Sea, India said it supports a stable maritime environment in Asia,
including the right of maritime passage and unimpeded commerce in accordance
with international law.

Dinkar Khullar, secretary (West) in the External Affairs Ministry, said India
"recognises the priority needed to consider new approaches within the overall
framework of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to promote
international cooperation for the sustainable use of living resources of the high seas
as well as mutually beneficial sharing of seabed resources located in areas beyond
national jurisdiction". Addressing the fourth summit of the Conference on Interaction
and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Shanghai, Khullar
congratulated China for assuming the chair of CICA and also welcomed Bangladesh
and Qatar as the grouping's newest members.

He said India has supported "this farsighted initiative of Kazakhstan President
Nursultan Nazarbayev to strengthen security and cooperation in Asia since its
inception 22 years ago." "CICA has grown steadily in membership and importance. It
has joined the ranks of leading forums in Asia for dialogue on security issues and
confidence building." "The Asian security landscape is diverse and unique. We face
complex transnational challenges such as terrorism, insecurity in the maritime
domain, WMD proliferation, drug-trafficking and other transnational organised
crimes." "Maritime territorial disputes have the potential for undermining
comprehensive security and mutual confidence. Ironically, they can also be turned
into opportunities for forging cooperative approaches to enhance development and
prosperity in Asia," he said, according to an external affairs ministry statement in
New Delhi.

On terrorism, Khullar said it poses a serious threat to the security and well-being of
our peoples. "Almost each and every country in CICA has suffered from terrorist
atrocities. Our commitment to CICA principles should be manifested in our actions
and our positions on combating terrorism and its links with organised crime,
narcotics and arms smuggling," he said. "There is scope for more concrete
cooperation in combating terrorism, cyber-crime and piracy within the CICA while
respecting national competences." "CICA has its role to play in the development of a
cooperative framework in Asia based on mutual trust, mutual benefit and sovereign equality," Khullar said. "The principles enshrined in the Almaty Act, notably sovereign equality, refraining from the threat or use of force, territorial integrity and peaceful settlement of disputes has to be at the heart of Asian security, now linked inextricably to global security and prosperity." "India looks forward to working with all member states of CICA to advance this summit's vision for a new Asia of peace, stability and cooperation," he said.

Source: Business Standard, 21st May, 2014

**Russian Navy Plans New Expedition to Arctic**

Russia's Northern Fleet is planning new expeditions to the Arctic regions this summer, a spokesman for the fleet has said. "This year we intend to continue laying the route through the temporarily forgotten water regions of the Arctic seas," Andrei Korablev said at a roundtable on securing Russia's national interests in the Arctic.

The fleet is planning expeditions to the islands of Franz Josef Land, Severnaya Zemlya, the New Siberian Islands and Wrangel Island. "We will continue to study the Arctic Ocean, conduct scientific research and meteorological observations, study the navigation and hydrographic conditions, correct charts and sailing directions, survey the geodetic stations in the Arctic, as well as explore the areas of navigation for ships of non-ice class," Korablev said.

The studies are to be carried out not only in the interests of the military, but also to ensure maritime economic activities in the Russian Arctic, as well as to preserve the Northern Sea Route as a national transport system. "In addition, we plan to create military infrastructure on almost all the islands and archipelagos of the Arctic Ocean in order to create a unified system of monitoring the air, surface and underwater conditions," Korablev noted.

Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated on April 22 that Russia is also actively engaged in the Arctic region to protect its national security and economic interests. The Russian Defence Ministry has already announced plans to reopen airfields and ports on the New Siberian Islands and the Franz Josef Land archipelago, as well as at least seven airstrips on the continental part of the Arctic Circle that were mothballed in 1993.

Source: Rianovosti, 21st May, 2014
Oman Plays Key Role in Fight against Maritime Piracy

Oman in May advanced its counter-piracy efforts, meeting in Cairo with experts from other Arab justice and interior minister's councils to review a draft regional protocol on combating piracy. The sultanate's counter-piracy efforts and multi-level co-ordination with Gulf, Arab and international partners has contributed to a drop in incidences of piracy, Oman's Coast Guard said.

Maritime piracy has reached its lowest level in six years, according to an International Maritime Bureau report issued this year which cited 15 incidents of piracy in the waters adjacent to Somalia in 2013, down from 237 in 2011. "Given the sultanate's strategic location overlooking one of the most vital waterways in the world, the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the Royal Navy of Oman plays an active role in protecting national strategic, security and economic interests through its constant and permanent presence in Omani seas," said Omani political analyst and journalist Hatim bin Hamad al-Taie.

The Royal Oman Police complement the work of the navy, he said, as the force enrols its anti-piracy specialists in training programs on the international legal aspects of maritime piracy and Interpol methodology in combating this phenomenon. Oman is a key Interpol partner in combating maritime crime, he said, adding that police also conduct comprehensive training on maritime piracy investigations, crime scene management and the use of Interpol tools and technology to interrogate perpetrators. The sultanate also is an active member of the Gulf Co-operation Council's counter-maritime piracy working group, which seeks to secure the Somali coast, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, al-Taie said. Oman works closely with neighbouring countries such as Yemen to counter maritime piracy.

The two countries were "among the first to sign the Djibouti anti-piracy code on combating piracy in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean", said Mohammed al-Majaashi, executive director of Yemen's Regional Maritime Information Sharing Centre. Each year, a Yemen-Oman ministerial committee meets to discuss how to strengthen co-operation in anti-piracy information exchange, commercial ship traffic and protection of the maritime environment, al-Majaashi told Al-Shorfa.

Last year, Oman's Ministry of Transport hosted a meeting of piracy information exchange centres which worked to boost co-operation between Sanaa, Mombasa, Dar-e-Salaam and Singapore to curb the hijacking and piracy of ships, he said. "The sultanate is among the countries that have achieved high rates of response to alerts from these centres," he said, noting that the Oman Coast Guard has been quick to respond to and verify incident alerts. Oman has significant anti-piracy capabilities, including numerous naval vessels and maritime reconnaissance aircraft, he said.

Reconnaissance aircraft also play a role in the verification of alerts and in the early detection and prevention of piracy attempts, he said. "Piracy is no longer strictly a
regional problem, it has become a global problem, and thus no single country can combat this phenomenon alone," al-Majaashi said. "Countries in the region must act with support from international powers to keep the maritime environment safe."

In January, Oman signed an agreement with Japan to enhance political and security co-operation "to maintain the safety of shipping lanes and thus contribute to the achievement of peace and prosperity for the international community as a whole", Al-Watan al-Arabi newspaper reported. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe welcomed the joint effort, while Omani Sultan Qaboos bin Said affirmed the sultanate's determination to continue international partnerships in order to secure stable and safe passage in the Gulf.

Source: Al-shorfa, 21st May, 2014

**Reasons behind the Sino-Russian Joint Military Exercise**

As China and Russia launched their six-day Maritime Cooperation 2014 naval exercise on May 20, the Sina Military Network based in Beijing stated four reasons why this joint naval exercise is important to regional security.

The article said first that this is the largest joint naval exercise held by the People's Liberation Army Navy and the Russian Navy since 2005. A total of 14 surface combat vessels, two submarines, nine fixed-wing aircraft, six helicopters and two special operation detachments were mobilized for the exercise currently taking place in the East China Sea. The Russian Pacific Fleet has sent nearly all of its most advanced vessels for the exercise, it said.

Among all the Russian warships deployed is the Varyag, a Slava-class missile-guided cruiser that is one of the nation's most powerful ships. It is capable of carrying 16 SS-N-12 anti-ship missiles, the range of which is estimated to be 500 kilometers and which can deliver a nuclear warhead. The article called it the perfect weapon to go up against a US aircraft carrier in any potential conflict in the Asia-Pacific.

China meanwhile has sent the Zhengzhou, a Type 052C guided-missile destroyer launched on Dec. 26 last year and which the article called the most advanced combat vessel in the PLA's East Sea Fleet. Like its five sister ships, the Zhengzhou can carry 48 HQ-9 long-range surface-to-air missiles based on the Russian-built S-300 to intercept enemy aircraft. It can also attack enemy ships or land targets with missiles including the C-805 and the YJ-62.

The joint exercise has featured air defence, anti-submarine and humanitarian operation drills. The Su-30 fighters and the JH-7 bombers of the PLA Navy have also been deployed to provide air support to both fleets, the report said.
Reports also say that the PLA"s J-10 fighter are taking part in Maritime Cooperation for the first time. As the J-10 is designed for air combat instead of attacking enemy vessels, the article said that Maritime Cooperation 2014 had given the Chinese valuable experience in learning how to control airspace through the coordination of fighter and surface vessels. The special forces of the two nations are using the exercise as a chance to practice their skills in retaking hijacked commercial ships.

The article suggested the joint naval exercise will send a strong message to the international community, and particularly the United States, that China and Russia are working together in the Asia-Pacific. China is surrounded by the United States' regional allies and security partners such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Philippines while Russia's relationship with NATO countries has been deeply affected by the Ukraine crisis, the article noted.

As Japan has territorial conflicts with both China and Russia, the naval exercise has special significance for Tokyo, the article said. The Jiji Press, based in Tokyo, said China's president Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin are working together to build a new security mechanism in the Asia-Pacific. Russia will also jump at the chance to demonstrate that it has not yet been completely isolated by the international community, according to Agence France-Presse.

The article concluded by stating that the exercise is taking place just as tensions are rising between China and the United States in the South China Sea and at a time when Russia is facing similar tensions in Eastern Europe. Maritime Cooperation 2014 is a message to the world that Moscow and Beijing will not be used by Washington against each other, according to the article. China, like Russia, sees itself as a target of the US Asia Pivot strategy, and the Chinese navy may need assistance from the Russian Pacific Fleet to face off against the US if tensions rise to boiling point in the future, according to the article.


Air Marshal Garud Reviews Maritime Air Operations

Air Marshal AP Garud, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Southern Air Command (SAC) visited the Head Quarters Maritime Air Operations (HQMAO) based at Mumbai and reviewed maritime air operations. He reviewed the progress on various operational tasks of HQMAO and was apprised of the improved co-ordination with the Indian Navy, resulting in synergies in securing the maritime frontier of the country, a defence spokesperson said.

He was also apprised of the various air operations and exercises conducted in the recent past including the involvement of maritime elements of the Indian Air Force during Ex-TROPEX 2014. HQMAO was previously under the control of Gandhinagar
based South-Western Air Command of IAF. It was placed under Southern Air Command on April 1, 2009.

The Air Marshal has flown in excess of 6100 hours on various helicopters and training aircraft in his career spanning over 37 years. He is a Qualified Flying Instructor and has held various command and staff appointments. He has also served as Inspector General (Air) BSF and Director General Inspection and Flight Safety at Air Headquarters.

Source: Business Standard, 21st May, 2014

**Turn Vikrant into Martyrs' Memorial, say MPs**

A group of newly elected BJP and Shiv Sena MPs from Maharashtra has urged the central government to turn INS Vikrant, the country's first aircraft carrier, into a martyrs' memorial. In a letter to Defence Secretary R.K. Mathur, the 18 MPs said: "Save the Vikrant, convert it into a war museum 'Shahid Smarak', stop the scrapping process, stop it from being sent to Darukhana scrap yard and reconsider and revive the Vikrant Shahid Smarak Project.

"The fate of INS Vikrant has swung between hope and despair since it was decommissioned in January 1997. The Supreme Court May 16 allowed the Indian Navy to move the old vessel, once the pride of India, from Mumbai naval dockyard to Darukhana ship breaking yard. This was after the government told the court that the Vikrant was in a condition of extreme obsolescence and deterioration and could no longer be repaired or refurbished.

The BJP and Shiv Sena MPs who have revived the "Save Vikrant" appeal include Kirit Somaiya, Gopal Shetty, Rahul Shewale, Chantaman Wanaga, and Sunil Gaikwad. Activist Kiran Paigankar had moved the apex court opposing the government move to relocate the Vikrant to the Darukhana ship breaking yard, and questioned the vessel's safety in its new berthing place.

Paigankar sought the conversion of INS Vikrant into a museum. The court, issuing notice on his plea May 5, ordered status quo. After the government pleaded that it only wanted to relocate INS Vikrant and not dismantle it, the court May 16 allowed it to be moved. The IB Commercial Pvt Ltd bought INS Vikrant for Rs.63 crore in an auction in January 2014 after the Maharashtra government pleaded lack of funds to maintain it as a museum.

The keel of the aircraft carrier, earlier known as HMS Hercules in the British Royal Navy, was laid Oct 14, 1943 and it was launched in 1945. It was bought by India in 1957 and commissioned in the navy Feb 16, 1959.

Source: Indian Express, 21st May, 2014
Conflict Risk in South China Sea Could Hurt Global Trade - Vietnam PM

Territorial tensions in the South China Sea endangers global trade and puts at risk recovery from a global financial crisis, Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said. Vietnam is currently embroiled in a maritime border dispute with China, after Beijing deployed an oil rig at the Paracel islands, an area which Hanoi said is within its 200-nautical mile economic zone. "The risk of conflict will disrupt these huge flows of goods, and have unforeseeable impact on regional and world economies. It may even reverse the trend of global economic recovery," Dung told participants of the World Economic Forum on East Asia in Manila, noting that two-thirds of global trade pass through the South China Sea. (Reporting by Rosemarie Francisco; Editing by Simon Cameron-Moore)

Source: Reuters, 22nd May, 2014

Abe Meets Vietnam Deputy PM, to Discuss Maritime Cooperation

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met with Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam and they are expected to agree to enhance cooperation in ensuring maritime security amid the growing assertiveness of China in nearby oceans. The meeting comes after China increased tensions in the South China Sea by deploying an oil rig off the Paracel Islands, whose sovereignty it disputes with Vietnam, leading to clashes between Chinese and Vietnamese vessels.

The development has added to Japan's concern about Chinese maritime policy at a time when Beijing has repeatedly sent patrol ships into territorial waters around the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, a group of uninhibited islets it also claims, in the East China Sea. Abe is expected to brief Dam on Japan's policy of proactive contribution to global peace and stability based on international cooperation.

They are also likely to discuss Japan's assistance for Vietnam to build infrastructure and develop human resources as part of efforts to support growth in the rapidly developing economy. Dam was visiting Japan to attend a forum held in Tokyo. Also government sources said Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida is planning to visit Vietnam from late June to early July to promote cooperation in ensuring maritime security in the East and South China seas.

In a planned meeting in Hanoi, Kishida and Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh are likely to agree to speed up consultations on Japan's provision of patrol ships for Vietnam to better cope with China's maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea, the sources said. In reference to China's muscle-flexing in the East and South China seas, Kishida and Minh are expected to affirm that Tokyo and Hanoi will never tolerate any attempt to alter the status quo through coercion or force, according to the sources.
The two ministers are also likely to agree to increase communications with the Philippines and other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to keep Beijing's territorial ambitions in check, they said. Claiming the South China Sea almost entirely, Beijing has been asserting control over the land features and waters encompassed by its U-shaped "nine-dash line" in territorial disputes with Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Kishida and Minh are likely to agree to urge the 10-member ASEAN and other regional powers at a regional security forum slated for early August in Myanmar to act in unison over such moves by China. Kishida is considering visiting Cambodia before or after the planned trip to Vietnam, according to the sources.

Source: Global Post, 22nd May, 2014

**Chinese Admirals Call at Indian Eastern Naval Command HQs**

Rear Admiral Han Xiaohu, Commander PLAN Training Ship Task Group, and Rear Admiral Li Jianjun, Assistant Chief of Staff and Political Commissar of PLA Dalian Naval Academy visited the Headquarters, Eastern Naval Command on 19 May, 2014.

The Flag Officers of the PLA Navy called on Vice Admiral Anil Chopra, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, and held discussions on issues of mutual interest. They were accompanied by the Ambassador of Peoples Republic of China to India, Mr. Wei Wei, and the Defence Attache of China to India, Major General Cai Ping.

The Flag Officers are embarked onboard PLA Navy ships Zhenghe and Weifang that are on a four day visit to Visakhapatnam. During their stay here, the Officers and crew of the Ship visited ships of the Eastern Fleet and the Kursura submarine museum.

Ships of the PLA Navy were also open to visits from the Indian Naval personnel and their families. The PLA Navy Band performed alongside the Indian Naval Band at a concert held at Samudrika Naval auditorium, to an appreciative audience of personnel from both the Navies.

Source: Naval Today, 22nd May, 2014

**Philippines, Indonesia Sign 'Model' Maritime Border Accord**
Indonesia and the Philippines signed a maritime border accord, hailing it as a model for peacefully settling increasingly tense territorial disputes in the region. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said the agreement, the result of 20 years of negotiations, showed that the escalating rows in the South China Sea could be resolved without violence.

"This indeed is a model, a good example, that any disputes including maritime border tension can be resolved peacefully -- not with the use of military might which (may) endanger stability and peace in our region," Yudhoyono said after overseeing the signing with Philippine President Benigno Aquino at the presidential palace in Manila.

Tensions have flared in the South China Sea, which is believed to hold vast oil and gas deposits, with China embroiled in separate rows with Vietnam and the Philippines over disputed waters. Deadly riots broke out in Vietnam last week after China deployed an oil rig in contested waters.

Aquino said the new agreement between Indonesia and the Philippines served as "solid proof of our steadfast commitment to uphold the rule of law and pursue the peaceful and equitable settlement of maritime concerns".

Signed by the Indonesian and Philippine foreign ministers, the agreement delineates the boundaries of both nations' overlapping exclusive economic zones in the Mindanao Sea, the Celebes Sea and the Philippine Sea. Under international law, countries have exclusive economic zones extending 200 nautical miles from their coasts that give them rights to resources in those waters. But these zones can overlap between neighbouring countries.

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan have conflicting claims to parts of the South China Sea. The Philippines and Vietnam have repeatedly expressed concern and more recently anger at what they perceive as increasingly hostile Chinese efforts to assert China's rule over the disputed areas. China is also engaged in a worsening dispute with Japan over islands in the East China Sea that has severely damaged relations between Asia's two biggest economies.

Yudhoyono, in Manila for a state visit and to attend the World Economic Forum on East Asia, voiced alarm at the growing disputes. "The situation in East Asia is filled with tensions and so is the situation in Southeast Asia, including the South China Sea," he said. He urged China and Southeast Asian nations to "return to the spirit" of a 2002 agreement in which they said they would not take any actions that raised tensions in disputed areas.

Source: Global Post, 23rd, May, 2014

**India, Singapore Begin Joint Naval Exercise**
India and Singapore began a week-long joint naval exercise off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The exercise, titled SIMBEX-14, is an annual bilateral war gaming conducted by the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and would conclude on May 28, a release from the Indian Naval headquarters here said.

The 2014 edition of the Singapore Indian Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) would be the 21st such exercise that began in 1993 to enhance inter-operability and mutual understanding between the two navies. Bilateral naval cooperation between the two countries was first formalised when RSN ships began training in Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) with the Indian Navy in 1994.

Since its inception, SIMBEX has grown in tactical and operational complexity. It has transcended the traditional emphasis on ASW to more complex maritime exercises, involving various facets of naval operations like Air Defence, Air and Surface Practice Firing, Maritime Security and Search and Rescue Operations. “Both navies derive considerable value form SIMBEX. Inter-operability between the two navies has matured to a point where standard operating procedures for the conduct of exercise have been formalised,” the Indian Navy said.

This year, the Indian Navy is represented by Naval Ships Kuthar and Karmuk from the Eastern Naval Command, besides a Maritime Patrol Aircraft and a helicopter from Andaman and Nicobar Command.

Source: Indian Express, 23rd May, 2014

**Two Bangladesh Naval Ships Arrive in Mumbai**

Two Bangladeshi naval ships, enroute to Lebanon are on a three-day visit to Mumbai. The ships - BNS Ali Haider and BNS Nirmul - which are a part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) arrived in the city on May 21. They are commanded by Captain Mohammed Anwar Hussain and Commander Tanzim Faruq respectively and have a combined complement of 320 personnel, a Navy release said here on Thursday. This is the first occasion when BNS has visited Mumbai and hence the current visit holds a special significance for the Western Naval Command, it said. “During the ships’ stay, crew will engage in professional interactions with personnel of Western Naval Command,” the release said. The Indian Navy has been
in the forefront to train Bangladesh Naval Personnel and visit by the ships would further enhance bilateral relations between the two countries in general and the two Navies in particular, it added.

Source: Free Press, 23rd May, 2014

**Coast Guard Carries Out Security Exercise with Navy, Air Force**

The Indian Coast Guard carried out a two-day coastal security exercise along the 1,600 km coastline of the state with Indian Navy, Air Force, BSF marine commandos, Customs and Gujarat Police.

The coast guard officials said that the exercise was carried out for protection of the vulnerable areas and points across the coastline. The personnel of all forces were put to test to their alertness and response level in managing the emergency situations and prevent infiltration exercises. The ships and aircraft of all forces were used including the marine police force of the Gujarat Police. The port security boats of the Port Security Unit of the Coast Guard and Harbour Tugs were also deployed for a joint exercise.

The exercise was also joined by the officials of the Fisheries Department, Gujarat Maritime Board, Kandla Port Trust, Mundra Port, Pipavav Port, Director General of Shipping, Director General of Lighthouses and Lightships, Airport Authorities, NCB, CRPF, GSDMA and Industries Department to strengthen the synergy of the surveillance.

Source: Indian Express, 24th May, 2014

**PLA Ballistic Missile Submarines Spotted Off Hainan**

Three Chinese ballistic missile submarines have been seen spotted near the waters off China’s southern island province of Hainan, according to the Canada-based Kanwa Defense Review operated by Andrei Chang also known as Pinkov, a military analyst.
According to Kanwa, satellite photos available online show three submarines that seem to be shorter than the ordinary Type 094 Jin-class ballistic missile submarine. With the capability to carry 12 JL-2 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), the three submarines are either the modified version of Type 094s or Type 096 Tang-class ballistic missile submarines. It indicates however that China is building more nuclear-powered strategic submarines, Kanwa said.

Hainan is the forward base for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy to deploy its warships into the disputed South China Sea, and this may explain the three ballistic missile submarines in the region. In addition, the deep waters of the South China Sea provide Chinese nuclear-powered strategic submarines with the perfect cover to avoid the detection of US aircraft, warships and satellites.

With three nuclear-powered strategic submarines, China is capable of launching at least 36 ICBMs, according to Kanwa, adding that the PLA Navy is in fact building up its second strike capability. Meanwhile, satellite photos also indicate that the country’s Type 092 Xia-class submarine remains in port and may likely be replaced by the Type 094 submarine in the near future.


**Abe May Get Freer Hand to Deploy SDF In ‘Gray Zone’ Incidents**

The government is considering giving prime ministers a free hand in mobilizing the Self-Defence Forces to respond swiftly to “gray-zone” incidents, sources said. Such power might be imbued through advance approval from the Cabinet, allowing the SDF to quickly respond to incidents that could threaten Japanese interests, such as small-scale attacks on commercial shipping vessels or illegally landings on remote Japanese islands.

But making mobilization easier, observers say, could raise the possibility of armed clashes erupting because rapid SDF involvement could give a foreign country a pretext for launching an attack on Japan. The subject will be raised between officials of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner, New Komeito, when they continue discussions Tuesday on the government’s aggressive stance on revamping national security.
The government also aims to revise the SDF law accordingly during an extraordinary Diet session in the fall, but that may not happen, given New Komeito’s position that the Japan Coast Guard should be the first-responder when gray-zone incidents threaten Japanese waters. Some politicians in the ruling bloc fear that deploying the SDF from the beginning could be interpreted as Japan initiating military action. Under the current rules of engagement, the Japan Coast Guard and the police are the ones who are supposed to deal with situations where combatants disguised as fishermen threaten to take a remote Japanese island. Only if they are unable to deal with the situation can the SDF be mobilized under the SDF law. Some government officials have voiced concern about this arrangement because obtaining Cabinet approval to mobilize the SDF would take too long in a pressing situation. Under the government’s envisioned plan, the SDF law would be revised to read that the prime minister may approve an SDF mobilization if there is a “special need” for it, according to the sources.

The coast guard is currently patrolling the waters around the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands, a remote group of uninhabited islands claimed by China, which calls them Diaoyu and Taiwan, which calls them Tiaoyutai. China has been sending its new coast guard ships to the waters as well as other government vessels and aircraft on a regular basis, heightening tensions between the two sides.

Source: Japan Times, 25th May, 2014

**Celebration near Spratlys Not Aimed at China**

The Philippine Navy’s 116th anniversary celebration at its base in Ulugan Bay in Palawan province was not intended to taunt China, the country’s rival claimant over parts of the South China Sea. Navy flag officer-in-command Vice Admiral Jesus Millan said in state news reported that the celebration at the naval installation facing the disputed sea is part of the government's plan to upgrade it and at the same time uplift the personnel's morale.

"What we are doing there is [part] of our obligation to develop our facilities there to accomplish [the Navy's] mission and improve the morale of our men," Millan explained, denying reports that the move is linked with the growing Chinese presence in Philippine-claimed waters. Puerto Princesa City's Ulugan Bay, estimated to be around 100 nautical miles from the hotly contested Spratlys Islands, is eyed to
become the homeport of the Armed Forces' new frigates BRP Gregorio del Pilar and BRP Ramon Alcaraz, as well as upcoming strategic sealift vessels.

Millan said the upcoming event in Ulugan Bay is to emphasize the need to develop it with an earmarked P500-million fund. President Aquino is also set to grace the celebration." It is our commitment really to sustain our units in the field so that they can carry out their mandated roles," he added. He said, however, that the upgrade of the naval facility is "strategic" and would bring benefits to the country's security. Earlier this month, the Philippine Navy also said that impending improvements on Ulugan Bay should not be "misinterpreted" as a counter-move against China. "In the first place, we have an existing facility there, the headquarters of the [Naval Forces West], and a P500-million fund has been programmed for its development," Navy spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Gregory Fabic said.

The bay sits beside Oyster Bay, which Armed Forces chief Gen. Emmanuel Bautista said to likely become host to American forces under the recently forged Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

Source: Philstar, 26th May, 2014

Taiwan Building Port in South China Sea, No Protest from China

Taiwan is building a US$100 million port next to an airstrip on the lone island it occupies in the disputed South China Sea, a move that is drawing hardly any flak from the most assertive player in the bitterly contested waters - China. The reason, say military strategists, is that Itu Aba could one day be in China's hands should it ever take over Taiwan, which it regards as a renegade province.

While Itu Aba, also called Tai Ping, is small, no other disputed island has such sophisticated facilities. Its runway is the biggest of only two in the Spratly archipelago that straddles the South China Sea, and the island has its own fresh water source." Taipei knows it is the only claimant that (China) will not bother, so it is free to upgrade its facilities on Tai Ping without fear of criticism from China," said Denny Roy, a senior fellow at the Hawaii-based East-West Centre think tank." China would protect Taiwan's garrisons if necessary.

"The upgraded facilities on Itu Aba should be finished late next year or earlier, officials from Taiwan's defence and transport ministries said, replacing an existing wharf that can only handle small vessels. That would give Taiwan a port able to accommodate 3,000-tonne naval frigates and coastguard cutters while
improvements are being made to the 1,200-metre (3,940-foot) long runway for its Hercules C-130 transport planes, they told Reuters.

Officials said the new port was not just a demonstration of sovereignty but also a way to support a trade dependent economy while helping Taiwanese deep-sea fishermen and marine and mineral research in the area. About $5 trillion in shipborne goods pass through the South China Sea every year.

The facility would provide services to any Taiwanese ships in the region, said Chen I-piao, acting chief engineer at the Taiwan Area National Expressway Administration Bureau, the unit responsible for building the wharf. Diplomatically isolated, Taiwan found itself in the international spotlight earlier this month when mobs attacked mostly Taiwanese factories in Vietnam, enraged by China's deployment of a giant oil rig in waters further north that are claimed by Hanoi. Many of the rioters mistook Taiwanese companies to be owned by mainland Chinese.

Experts say any airstrip there would unlikely be a strategic game-changer because of the difficulty in building a workable runway on an atoll, unlike an island like Itu Aba. And as Itu Aba is the largest island in the Spratlys and the only one with natural water supplies, legal experts say this could help any future formal claim to a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone and any fish and oil within it. Taiwan has not cooperated with China on the South China Sea despite the historical ties to each other's claims given the political mistrust between them, but also because of its need to maintain good relations with the United States, a vocal critic of Beijing’s policies in the disputed waters. For the most part, Taiwan has kept its head down, not wanting to upset China or claimants in Southeast Asia given its economic links to both. At various times Taiwan has pushed to be involved in regional mechanisms to easing tensions but resistance from China means it plays no part in any efforts through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). "I think the major concern is U.S.-Taiwan relations. The U.S. government asked Taiwan not to move close to China on the South China Sea," said Song Yann-Huei, a South China Sea expert at Academia Sinica, a study center sponsored by the Taiwanese government.

Source: The Star, 26th May, 2014

**Indian Navy Receives 4th P-8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft from Boeing**

Boeing has successfully completed the first half of its contract with the Indian Navy by delivering the fourth P-8I maritime patrol aircraft on May 21 at INS Rajali naval air
station. The new fleet of aircraft is likely to replace the age-old Tupolev Tu-142 fleet. The P-8I fleet has been especially designed for India and is largely a variant of the P-8A Poseidon aircraft that is currently being deployed by the US Navy.

Indian Navy was the first buyer of the P-8I aircraft, having placed the order back in January 2009. The first flight of the P-8I was conducted way back in 2011 while the official flight test program commenced in July 2012. It was only in December 2012 that the first P-8I was delivered to India. India has placed orders for eight P-8I maritime aircraft.

The P-8I aircraft is based on the 737-800, which is one of the most popular airplanes to come from the factory of Boeing. The plane is 39.47m long, 12.83m high, and the wing span measures 37.64m. The forward section of the P-8I features a weapon bay while the wings are capable of carrying ATS missiles. The P-8I is manned by 9 crew members and is capable of taking off with a gross weight of 85,139 kg. The aircraft is powered by two CFM56-7 engines, supplied by CFM International. Maximum speed of the P-8I is 789 kmph, with the aircraft capable of flying up to 2,222 km range. The P-8I features an open-system architecture, advanced sensor, and display technologies, and incorporates several unique design features and subsystems that are tailor-made for the Indian subcontinent. "This marks an important milestone - the halfway point for P-8I deliveries to India," said Dennis Swanson, the BDS vice-president in India. "The program's success in the past year is really a testament to the great work between Boeing, the Indian Navy, and industry," he added.

Source: Gizmodo, 27th May, 2014

**OVL and Rosneft Signs A Deal to Explore Hydrocarbons in Arctic**

ONGC Videsh Limited, the overseas arm of the state-owned explorer ONGC, has signed a deal with Russia's largest oil and gas producer Rosneft to jointly explore hydrocarbons in the offshore Arctic.

Mr Igor Sechin, President and Chairman of the Management Board of Rosneft and Mr Dinesh Kumar Sarraf, Chairman of OVL and CMD of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, in the presence of Russian President Mr Vladimir Putin. The Indian firm said in a statement that "The Memorandum paves the way for the companies' cooperation in subsurface surveys, exploration and appraisal activities and hydrocarbons production in Russia's offshore Arctic." The parties will jointly consider forming a consortium led by Rosneft and involving other partners. Mr Sechin had visited India in March to expand ties with New Delhi. His firm had offered OVL a stake in nine offshore oil and gas blocks in the Barents Sea and one in the Black Sea. Rosneft is also looking at supplying crude oil to Indian refineries.
Moscow is courting India to counter moves by the US and Europe to isolate it for annexing Crimea from Ukraine. India does not have a firm contract to import crude oil from Russia. It gets small volumes once in a while from OVL's Sakhalin-1 project in Far East Russia. Of the blocks offered in the Barents Sea, OVL found five were not lucrative. Of the remaining four, it would like to participate in two. It will decide on the other two once Rosneft makes available data by June. Rosneft had previously offered ONGC a stake in the Magadan 2 and Magadan 3 exploration blocks in the northern part of the Sea of Okhotsk in eastern Russia, which the Indian firm is studying.

OVL has a 20% stake in the Sakhalin-1 oil and gas field in the Russian Pacific Ocean. Rosneft has a similar stake in the project, which is operated by Exxon Mobil. OVL had bought Imperial Energy, which has fields in Siberia, for USD 2.1 billion in January 2009. It is keen to get a foothold in the Arctic projects and expand in Siberia and Far East Russia. An official said that "At present, OVL is studying the preliminary data provided by Rosneft for identifying the preferred blocks for participation with Rosneft."

Source: Steelguru.com, 28th May, 2014

MH370 Searchers Rule out Indian Ocean as Final Resting Place

Investigators searching for the missing Malaysian jet have concluded an area where acoustic signals were detected is not the final resting place of the plane after an unmanned submersible found no trace of it, the search coordinator. The U.S. Navy’s Bluefin 21 finished its final underwater mission in the southern Indian Ocean on Wednesday after scouring 850 square kilometers (330 square miles), the Joint Agency Coordination Center said. “The area can now be discounted as the final resting place” of the missing plane, the Australia-based center said in a statement.

The underwater search for the airliner, which vanished March 8 with 239 people on board en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, will be suspended for a couple months while more powerful sonar equipment is brought in to search a much wider area of 56,000 square kilometers (21,600 square miles), based on analysis of satellite data of the plane’s most likely course, the center said.

That analysis has led authorities to believe that Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 diverted sharply from its flight path and flew south to the Indian Ocean. But not a single piece of the missing Boeing 777 has been found in one of aviation’s most baffling mysteries. The news comes after the U.S. Navy dismissed an American expert’s
reported comments that acoustic “pings” heard in April did not come from the jet’s black boxes.

CNN reported that the Navy’s civilian deputy director of ocean engineering, Michael Dean, said most countries now agreed that the sounds detected by the Navy’s Towed Pinger Locator came from a man-made source unrelated to the jet.

“Mike Dean’s comments today were speculative and premature, as we continue to work with our partners to more thoroughly understand the data acquired by the Towed Pinger Locator,” U.S. Navy spokesman Chris Johnson said in a statement, referring to Australia and Malaysia.

In an emailed response to questions, the joint coordination agency said it was still examining the signals, but acknowledged: “We may never know the origin of the acoustic detections.” The agency would not yet reveal the next most likely crash site, saying that “will be made public in due course.” Transport Minister Warren Truss said authorities would continue to analyze the sounds that led to the initial search area.

“We concentrated the search in that area because the pings, the information we received, was the best information available at the time and that’s all you can do in circumstances like this, to follow the very best leads,” Truss told Parliament in announcing the search’s failure. “We’re still very confident that the resting place of the aircraft is in the southern ocean and along” the course indicated by satellite analysis, he added.

Source: Indian Express, 29th May, 2014

**Government Moves to Hike Defence FDI Up To 100%**

Within two days of taking charge, the Narendra Modi government has begun work on allowing up to 100% foreign investment in defence production, in a bid to send a strong signal to global investors as well as to try and move the production base of some equipment into the country. The commerce and industry ministry has circulated a Cabinet note seeking comments from other government agencies, sources familiar with the development told TOI.

The ministry is also readying other proposals to allow FDI in sectors such as railways, where the list of areas where investment will be allowed is being expanded, according to sources. Earlier, the government had planned to allow FDI in high-speed train systems, suburban corridors, high-speed tracks and freight lines connecting ports and mines. Similarly, there is a proposal to ease FDI norms in
construction. On Tuesday, Arun Jaitley had spoken of the government's intent to hike the FDI cap in the sector to 100% from 26% at present — a move that has been resisted by the defence ministry for years. With Jaitley holding both the finance and defence portfolios, opposition may be muted this time. In any case, during his election campaign Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced his support for greater private participation in the defence sector. The commerce & industry ministry has suggested a graded foreign investment ceiling. It has suggested a cap of 49% FDI for companies that do not transfer technology, while in ventures where the foreign partner is willing to transfer knowhow, the government intends to allow up to 74% FDI, and there will be no cap (100% FDI) for companies engaged in manufacturing state-of-the-art equipment and machinery or those undertaking modernization projects.

The cap on foreign investment will include funds routed through FDI, portfolio flows (FII) and investment by non-resident Indians, said a source, who did not wish to be identified. To ensure security compliance, sources said, all proposals will be routed through the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) which has representatives from the home ministry and other security agencies. While the UPA government too had said that the FDI cap in defence would be raised there was no actual movement on the ground and the rules remained vague. On May 23, TOI had reported that the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) in the commerce & industry ministry is ready with proposals to ease the FDI rules for defence, railways and e-commerce. The government is keen to ease foreign investment rules to send a signal to global industry that it is truly open for business now.

Source: TOI, 30th May, 2014
China: Billion Dollar-Fund for Maritime Silk Road

China had set up a 10 billion Yuan ($1.6 billion) fund to take forward its ambitious “maritime silk road plan” to build ports and boost maritime connectivity with Southeast Asian and Indian Ocean littoral countries. The 10 billion Yuan (around Rs.10,000 crore) fund will support infrastructure projects under the umbrella of the silk road plan. The deal for the fund was signed on Monday in coastal Fujian province, one of three key regions tasked with pushing the Silk Road plan.

The maritime Silk Road plan has become a key initiative of President Xi Jinping’s government, first mooted when the Chinese leader was on a high-profile trip to Southeast Asia in October. Releasing first details of the plan last month, state media reported the project will prioritise building ports and infrastructure in strategically important littoral countries in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region, including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

China is also keen to set up free trade zones to link its coastal areas with countries in Southeast Asia and in the Indian Ocean, attempting to revive the ancient “maritime silk road” that connected China with the region. So far, countries ranging from India and Sri Lanka to Malaysia, Singapore and Gulf countries have been sounded out about the initiative.

The report last month said the project would focus on “infrastructure construction” in countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, where China is already involved in port projects in Gwadar, Hambantota and Chittagong respectively. However, a map of the plan published earlier this month on the website of China’s official Xinhua news agency earlier this month did not show Gwadar on the plan. It did show Kolkata and Colombo as cities with which China wanted to build closer trade linkages.

Officials in Fujian said the 10 billion Yuan fund would be supported by the China Development Bank (CDB) and the China-Africa Development Fund.

Source: Hindu, 20th May, 2014
IMO Approve New Safety Regulations for Polar Navigation

The Danish Maritime Authority (DMA) informs that the United Nations’ International Maritime Organization (IMO) has approved global binding regulations intending to enhance safety of navigation in polar areas. This means, inter alia, new requirements for passenger ships.

The IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) has approved a new set of regulations on navigation in Arctic waters. Thus, the IMO has taken a decisive step towards making the so-called ‘Polar Code’, internationally binding. The entire palette of navigation in polar areas is covered by the Polar Code – from ship design and construction, crew training and navigation to improved coordination of search and rescue operations. The Polar Code will apply to passenger ships and cargo ships with a gross tonnage of more than 500 tonnes.

The IMO Maritime Safety Committee is expected to adopt the new regulations in the autumn of 2014. The environmental provisions in relation to navigation in polar areas will also be adopted by the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) in the autumn of 2014. Deputy Director-General of the Danish Maritime Authority Francis Zachariae commented that “Denmark has been active in placing the Polar Code on the IMO agenda. Therefore, I am extremely pleased that – with the Polar Code – we will now enhance the safety of ships navigating Arctic and Antarctic waters. Denmark has especially been striving to enhance the safety of especially cruise ships navigating Greenland waters.

"The new internationally binding regulations will also introduce a number of important measures to be taken when navigating icy waters, such as requirements for life-saving appliances and training of the crew. This is in line with the national regulations on cruise ships around Greenland that the Danish Maritime Authority is working on."

Source: Marinelink, 21st May, 2014

Dighi Port in Talks with IPCL to Handle Shipments

Dighi Port, the first non-major private sector seaport in Maharashtra, is in discussions with Mukesh Ambani-run IPCL to handle ethylene shipment, which is being currently managed from the JNPT near Mumbai. “We are in negotiations with Reliance Industries logistics partner Aegis to handle its subsidiary Indian Petrochemicals' (IPCL) ethylene shipments at our facility.
"If it works out this will majorly boost our volumes which crossed 1.1 million in FY14," Vijay Kalantri, Chairman and Managing Director of Balaji Infra Projects, the holding company of Dighi Port, told PTI during a visit to the facility in Raigad district over the weekend. The Rs 2,500-crore first phase of Dighi Port is being developed by Balaji Infra in partnership with IL&FS and state Maritime Board. Balaji Infra holds 69 percent stake in the project and IL&FS 21 percent, while the remaining is with Maritime Board, which has not invested anything so far.

The company has raised Rs 1,300 crore debt till date and the work on the second berth is progressing well. When fully developed by 2020 in two phases with a total investment of Rs 5,500 crore, the Port will have a capacity of over 70 million tonne per annum with 15 berths. The 30-mt first phase is slated to be completed by 2015 with five berths, two on the south bank and the rest on the north bank, Kalantri said. The south bank facility will cater to non-clean cargo like coal, bauxite, LNG and crude oil, while the northern berths will handle clean cargo, he said. The project has all clearances in place up to the second phase, while some approvals are pending for the 35-km, Rs 800-crore rail link to Roha (on Konkan route) that will connect the port with the main railroad heads, Captain B R Pathak, President (operations), said.

As of now, the Port, located on the banks of Rajapuri Creek in Raigad, over 150 km from Mumbai, has one operational berth with a keel-length of 650 meters that can accommodate three large ships, including the Panamax types, at a time. The Port currently has 8-10 customers, including Posco Steel, which is its largest client importing steel coils, and coal and bauxite traders. Kalantri said the Port has commitments from Uttam Galva Steel from next month, while talks with other steel mills like Essar and Bhushan are in advanced stage.

Source: Business Standard, 25th May, 2014
Putin: Russian Oil Companies Best on Safe Arctic Drilling

Speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Vladimir Putin praised the technology Russian oil companies are using in the Arctic. Quoted by The Moscow Times, the Russian President said “Our companies (working on the shelf) utilize the very best technology to protect the surrounding environment. I can say with pride that (Russian) companies are head and shoulders above their overseas partners.”

In the same speech, Putin suggested that Russia might ease applications from foreign companies wanting licenses for resources exploration. “Russia may simplify the application process for resource exploration licenses by foreign investors,” Putin said. Truls Gulowsen with Greenpeace Norway says to Barents Observer that the statement by the Russian President seems unsupported by evidence. In his view, no oil companies are prepared to operate safely in the icy and remote Arctic Ocean.

“We have no evidence that suggests Russian oil companies are better equipped to operate in the offshore Arctic than their Western competitors, rather the opposite,” says Truls Gulowsen. “Rosneft and Gazprom have extremely limited offshore experience, and the regulatory framework for Arctic operations on the Russian shelf is even more fragmented than for example the Norwegian side. As an example, oil spill contingency plans are not made public in Russia, and there are no requirements to be able to drill relief wells, neither within 12 days, as in Norway or within the season as in Canada,” Gulowsen says.

Quoting Interfax, The Moscow Times reports that the Russian government will operate under the maxim that companies investing money into exploration will receive an extraction license on the site.

In 2011, Russia’s state-own Rosneft signed a comprehensive cooperation agreement with ExxonMobil, according to which three huge Kara Sea structures are to be explored. In the northern part of the Barents Sea, Rosneft has teamed up with Statoil for possible joint exploration.

Source: Barents Observer, 23rd May, 2014

Marine Paints Shed Commodity Status on Environment Concern

The ever-growing fleet of ships carrying people and goods from one port to another is the primary pollutant of sea water and disrupter of fragile marine life. While fuel emissions by ships contribute to global warming, anti-fouling paints, applied on the
hulls of ships to fend off growth of organisms, have also been found to be a significant offender. This is because of the rampant application of tributyltin (TBT), a dangerous ingredient of anti-fouling coatings.

In September 2008, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) banned the use of TBT-based antifouling coating on ship hulls. This followed environmentalists researching and documenting the harmful effects of TBT on sea water and marine life. Application of TBT-based coatings was first stopped on small vessels, owing to their harmful effects in inshore areas. In 2001, proof of identical TBT effects on open waters led IMO to adopt an international convention on the control of harmful antifouling systems on ships. After a global ban on the use of TBT was first proposed, why did it take about eight years for IMO to implement the ban? This was because till then, leading global paints manufacturers considered marine coatings a commodity. As a result, the sector felt no compulsion to invest in research and development (R&D) to make environment-friendly coatings.

Now, however, under unrelenting pressure from governments (led by those in the European Union) and environmentalists, leading paints manufacturers---from AkzoNobel and Nippon Paint to Jotun---are investing heavily to periodically introduce new-generation marine coatings. What is proving good for China and India is global paints leaders, especially AkzoNobel, have decided to use the two countries as important R&D hubs. AkzoNobel is set to allocate 15 per cent of its global paints R&D budget to China by 2015. India, too, will be a major beneficiary of European groups progressively shifting R&D work to Asia. This is in conjunction with their expanding production base in select Asian countries that have come to dominate the world shipbuilding and ship-repairing sectors. An increase in the preference for eco-friendly products is an important development in the global marine coatings market. As new coatings are increasingly proving to be environment-friendly, these are allowing vessels to encounter lower friction in negotiating sea waters. This is helping shipping companies save up to 40 per cent on the fuel front. Thanks to significant improvements in coatings, ships are now emitting less carbon. An official in the shipping sector says, "Marine coatings are required to be designed with particular functional properties to adequately protect vessel surfaces. At the same time, coatings manufacturers are increasingly being required to offer products that contribute to saving fuel and don't foul the marine environment. As is the case with governments and environmentalists, ship owners have become a pressure point for paints producers. Ships on sail remain on watch."

Under pressure from multiple centres, the sector is now quick in replacing compounds in paints that harm the environment. This was seen when copper-based coatings were introduced as replacements for TBT compounds. But soon, concern was raised about dissolved metals in bays and basins. It did not take much time for paints manufacturers to release new sets of biocide-free coatings. The state of the global shipping sector, which is finally showing signs of a revival, decides the fortunes of marine coatings producers. In a recent report, Moody's said the prospects
for global shipping in the next 12-18 months would be raised from negative to stable, the first time since 2011. The report, however, cautioned the outlook could turn negative in case vessel supply exceeded demand by more than two per cent.

The improvement in shipping is on two counts: First, most Western economies and Japan have faring doing better. Second, in attempts to shed overcapacity, which has kept freight rates low, shipping companies have started postponing or cancelling new building contracts, idling vessels and scrapping inefficient vessels. "We are mildly enthused by the forecast of World Trade Organization economists that this year, global trade will grow 4.7 per cent, against the average growth of 2.2 per cent in the past two years. Trade growth is forecast at 5.3 per cent next year. For us, everything boils down to the volume of vessel space requisition by shippers for transporting goods across the globe," says a paints sector official. A report by Dublin-based business intelligence agency Research and Markets says coatings demand is to grow at a compound annual rate of 11.29 per cent till at least 2018. One of the key factors to contribute to this high demand growth is the likely expansion of the oil and gas sector. Most are saying the dry bulk market is set for a recovery in the next few weeks, aided by an improved balance between demand for shipping space for new vessels, firm grain trade out of the US and South America and low iron ore prices, boosting buying by China. The container segment, however, remains in the dumps.

Source: Business Standard, 26th May, 2014

**Scientists link Melting of Arctic Ice to Plastic Pieces in Oceans**

The frozen water of arctic contains an unusual component with an incredible density. The component comprises tiny plastic beads and fibers. It is collectively called as micro plastic and the melting of the ice will release them into the ocean. Researchers studied random samples and came to the conclusion that most of the ice in the area contains a similar density of micro plastics.

If the melting of the arctic ice happens then as much as a trillion pieces of plastic will enter the ocean. The issue has become a serious concern for scientists because alarms have been already raised about a quickly melting sheet of Antarctic ice known as the West Antarctic Ice Sheet.

If findings of one report are to be believed then melting has now become an unstoppable chain reaction. This will certainly raise global sea levels by as much as 2 or even 3 meters in near future.

The pieces of plastic in frozen ice are made of rayon, polyester, nylon, and a few other common materials. However, scientists have not discovered any evidence as of now to prove that these particles have harmful ecological effects. Also, they have
not noticed any kind of deformity in baby animals because of the ill effects of the particles.

But, many scientists have claimed that release of plastic into the ocean in abundance will certainly cause some sort of harm to biology. The size of grains is capable of breaking into extreme small particles to even pass through the counting filters used to find them. Researchers warn that these small pieces can be easily taken up by animals and held captive in living tissue.

Source: News Tonight, 27th May, 2014