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China-Japan Friction: How Can India Respond?

-- DS Rajan

Current trends make clear that tensions between China and Japan on political and strategic issues are increasing day by day. It is natural that Asia-Pacific nations, which have a big stake in guaranteeing regional stability and prosperity, are coming under compulsions to shape their responses to the developing situation. For that purpose, they are keeping a close watch on indicators of the future course of bilateral ties between the two Asian economic giants.

It goes without saying that China-Japan political relations remain frosty mainly due to the ownership dispute over islands, called Diaoyu by Beijing and Senkaku by Tokyo. It would be important not to ignore veteran leader Deng Xiaoping’s position that the territorial problem could be left to the future generations in the two countries for resolution. However, the issue came into the limelight in China in mid-2009, a period that saw China enforcing a foreign policy course with a revised strategic focus, giving priority to protecting what it calls its ‘core interests’ – Tibet, Xinjiang, Taiwan, strategic resources and trade routes. The result has been a new assertiveness based on the ‘sovereignty’ factor in China’s external behaviour. With respect to the disputed islands, Beijing, from this period, began emphasising that China was not a party to the treaty on the island group, approved by the post-World War II allied powers.

Two factors can be credited for the post-2009 accentuation in China’s stand on the disputed islands. The first concerns the resource factor – on the basis of increasingly available estimates, Beijing started to realise that the islands have high potential for energy deposits and that sovereignty over them would enable it to gain base lines for China’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), legitimising its exploitation of resources. The second factor is strategic, which forces China to become aggressive on the islands issue – the US position that the disputed islands are being governed by the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty which allows Washington to intervene in the event of any external threat to the islands.

Three steps taken of late by China in the East China Sea theatre need to be understood in a strategic context:

- Beijing’s declaration of an Air Defence Identification Zone over the East China Sea
- Recurring entry by Chinese ships into territorial waters in East China Sea claimed by Japan
- China’s announcement of new fishing restrictions in the South China Sea.

Japan also has made moves that have invited Chinese wrath. They include:
• Tokyo’s ‘nationalisation’ of three of the disputed islands through purchase from their private owner
• Japan’s adoption of a new 10-year Defence Strategy based on ‘pro-active pacifism’ aimed at strengthening the country’s defence capabilities, particularly in the maritime sector
• Prime Minister Abe’s visit (first such one to be made by a Japanese Prime Minister since 2006) to Yasukuni shrine that includes the remains of ‘World War II criminals"
• Holding of a drill close to the disputed islands by Japanese paratroopers in the presence of Japanese Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera, with defending and retaking of remote islands as designed goals
• Proposed introduction of draft laws by the Japanese government in late January 2014 to a national referendum on constitutional revision seeking to gradually lift the existing restrictions on the country’s military build-up.

Symbolic of the current political stand-off between Beijing and Tokyo is China’s official rejection of the Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s call to hold an official summit meeting with Chinese (and South Korean) leaders, for ‘explaining directly to them’ his visit to the Yasukuni shrine. The undiminished Chinese strategic mistrust of Japan as well as the US is well reflected in the following words of a China expert: “Tokyo’s changing security and foreign policies will bring more complexities and uncertainties to the relationships between China, Japan and the United States”- Sun Cheng, Professor of Japanese Studies, China University of Political Science and Law).

The Japanese emperor recently visited India; Prime Minister Abe will be the special guest at the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on 26 January 2014. India-Japan relations in various spheres including security are bound to progress further. But Chinese suspicions of this bilateral relationship are getting demonstrated in warnings in the Chinese media that India’s strategic cooperation with Japan “...can only bring trouble to India. There may be some tacit understanding in the strategic cooperation between India and Japan, given the long-lasting Diaoyu island dispute and China-India border confrontation. Overheated strategic cooperation with the Abe administration can only bring trouble to India and threaten its relationships with the relevant East Asian countries.” (Global Times, 30 May 2013). This being so, at a time when Beijing-Tokyo relations have soured with no immediate chances of recovery, it will be in India’s interests to not appear as ganging up with China against Japan or with Japan against China. New Delhi’s policy towards Beijing and Tokyo needs to be well-calibrated and balanced. India seems to be aware of the need. The fact that India has not taken sides on the Senkaku issue so far is evidence of this.

(The writer, DS Rajan is Director, Chennai Centre for China Studies.)

Source: South Asia Analysis Group, 14 January

India Advances in Naval Arms Race with China

-- Michael Tanchum
India regards China’s efforts to enhance its naval presence in the Indian Ocean as undermining New Delhi’s strategic position. As a response, India has beefed up its naval capabilities, increasing the likelihood of India joining the naval coalition of Australia, Japan, and the US. The Indian defence establishment commonly regards China’s efforts to enhance its naval presence in the Indian Ocean as an attempt to undermine its strategic position in India’s “near abroad.” While a minority view holds that China merely seeks to expand its commercial reach, Beijing’s actions may suggest otherwise. Its construction of deep-water ports and securing of usage agreements for naval and maritime installations along the sea lanes from China to the Persian Gulf, dubbed the “String of Pearls,” is widely viewed in New Delhi as tantamount to China’s strategic encirclement of India.

**India’s Naval Upgrades**

In response to the perceived threat, India has embarked on developing a blue-water navy, based on a strategy of building three carrier battle groups that will project power far from its shores and enable New Delhi to partner on more equal footing with Asia’s major naval powers. Thus, the scheduled arrival of India’s second aircraft carrier from Russia in late January 2014, the INS Vikramaditya, has been celebrated as the symbol of India’s growing naval power, as the new ship will make India’s navy Asia’s only fleet with two aircraft carriers. The 45,400 ton Vikramaditya is significantly larger than any Indian naval vessel, and boasts some of the most advanced combat capabilities with its ten Kamov-31 helicopters and 24 MiG 29K fighters. This addition will enable the Indian Navy to achieve a strategic goal of operating full carrier battles concurrently in its western and eastern theatres of operation.

Despite the fanfare, India’s most strategically significant advance in naval strength may actually be its acquisition of 12 P8I antisubmarine warfare (ASW) aircraft, a variant of Boeing’s P-8A Poseidon ASW aircraft developed for the US Navy. The P8I fleet – which will make India the first country other than the US to possess the sophisticated, long-range ASW aircraft – represents an important step in India’s efforts to diversify its naval acquisitions beyond its traditional Russian supplier. The new fleet will ease interoperability with US naval forces and could help India move closer to participating in the important Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD) with Australia, Japan, and the US. The Indian Navy has already successfully tested the aircraft’s ASW capabilities as well as its Boeing Harpoon Block II missiles, which can lethally strike coastal defence facilities, surface-to-air missile sites, port facilities, and ships in port. Furthermore, the P8I fleet offers India the potential to implement aspects of an Air-Sea Battle (ASB) concept to counter China’s Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities, which seek to prevent an adversary from amassing superior naval force in a location deemed important to Chinese national interests.

**Countering Regional Threats**

India’s P-8I fleet will certainly give New Delhi a distinct naval advantage over Islamabad, as Pakistan’s navy possesses only four of the much older and far inferior P-3Cs. Even more significantly, the long-range P8Is give India the potential to exercise some degree of sea control against Chinese efforts to extend its A2AD capabilities in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.
With 79 principal surface ships and approximately 60 submarines, China possesses the largest naval arsenal of any Asian nation. Nonetheless, for the time being, the Chinese navy is lacking sophisticated ASW and anti-aircraft capabilities, and thus cannot provide its vessels a reasonable measure of security in open seas. In response to this and other weaknesses vis-à-vis the US naval presence in Asia, Beijing has developed the aforementioned A2AD counter-intervention strategy. In response, Washington developed its doctrine of Air-Sea Battle (ASB) to defend the free access of international commercial sea lanes upon which global trade depends. The ASB strategy is designed to be an effective countermeasure should Beijing decide to forcefully change the status quo and establish an A2AD presence in disputed areas over which it claims sovereignty. India’s new P-8I fleet, in combination with its two carrier battle groups, will allow it to develop its own limited ASB strategy to counteract Chinese A2AD capabilities near India’s eastern shores and economic interests in the South China Sea. New Delhi may also be able to conduct larger joint ASB operations with Tokyo as part of the burgeoning Indo-Japanese naval cooperation, or in an even wider coalition with the TSD.

**Conclusion**

India’s naval upgrades enhance its ability to project power over longer distances to counteract A2AD tactics, making New Delhi more of a player in the South China Sea. Considered together with the fact that India will now be able to regularly deploy a carrier battle group in its eastern theatre of operations without fear of vulnerability in the west, India’s regional power projection has become a permanent factor in any strategic calculus to change the status quo in the Indo-Pacific.

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Source: [BESA](https://www.besa.org), 14 January

**Pakistan’s Dirty Bomb Threat**

-- Arun Kumar Singh

These are difficult times for India. To counter the growing blue water capability of the Indian Navy, China has transferred designs and expertise to enable the Pakistan Navy to introduce tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) at sea.

On November 5, 2013, the Pakistan Army’s Strategic Forces Command fired two quadruple salvos (i.e. eight missiles) of the NASR short-range (60 kilometre) battlefield ballistic missile capable of carrying a “new miniaturised” 200 kg plutonium warhead, (under development since 2011, but essentially a copy of a Chinese TNW tested in 1992 by China), thus introducing TNWs on land.

These NASR missile batteries with TNWs would be placed under local battlefield commanders (unlike strategic nuclear weapons which are under the National Command Authority, headed by Pakistan’s Prime Minister), who may use them at
their discretion to blunt a conventional Indian attack (in response to a terror attack on India like 26/11).

Thus it will initiate a nuclear war, as India would respond with a massive nuclear strike in keeping with its nuclear doctrine. It is apparent from Pakistan’s posture and Chinese border incursions that these two allies do not believe that India will follow its nuclear doctrine of massive retaliation.

Pakistani NASR is a copy of the Chinese WS-2 rocket. Since the miniaturised TNWs (one to five kilo tonnes or KTs) were reportedly tested by China in 1992, Pakistan does not have to test them.

Such TNWs would have a yield of about two KT each (the Hiroshima Uranium bomb was 14 KT, and Nagasaki plutonium bomb was 22 KT) and a damage radius (a combination of blast, heat, pressure and radiation) of below one km, depending on the height of bomb explosion.

The plutonium for the TNWs would come from the four Khusab nuclear plants gifted by China, which will enable Pakistan to make four to five plutonium TNWs annually, in addition to 10 uranium atom bombs (yield about 14 KT each) it produces annually.

Added to this is the known capability of the Pakistan Air Forces’ Strategic Forces Command to deliver airborne nuclear weapons by fighter aircraft using free fall nuclear bombs or the 350-km range (450 kg nuclear warhead) Ra’ad air launched cruise missile (also of Chinese design, and this Ra’ad will be carried by the Chinese supplied JF-17 Fighter aircraft).

On December 30, 2013, the media reported that arrested Indian Mujahideen terrorist Yasin Bhatkal had confessed to the police that he was “assured” by his Pakistani handlers that a “dirty nuclear bomb” could be made available to be dropped on Surat. The dirty nuclear bomb is a simple radiological “weapon of mass disruption” (not to be confused with an atom or hydrogen bomb, both of which are “weapons of mass destruction”), which combines available radioactive materials (including those used in medical industry or research) with conventional explosives to cause mass panic and terror against civilian populations.

It contaminates the affected area with radioactive material. This has economic consequences as it leads to industrial and tourist shutdown. And thus, arises the need for expensive decontamination equipment to cleanse the contaminated area by highly trained nuclear emergency response and support teams.

This dirty bomb threat (transported by sea in a repeat 26/11 type attack) is real and is merely an extension of the present Pakistani policy of using conventional terror. In such an alarming scenario, Pakistan would be hoping that its nuclear weapons (including ready to use TNWs) would deter an Indian response.

This article also deals with the new threat posed by Pakistan Navy, which plans to take TNWs to sea for possible use against Indian coastal cities like Mumbai, or the major oil terminal at Vadinar (Gujarat) or the Mumbai high offshore oil rigs or against the new task forces of the Indian Navy, which would be centred around the newly
acquired 44,500-tonne aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and the under construction 37,000-tonne indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant (expected to join the Navy by 2018).

In April 2011, Pakistan signed a contract with China for delivery of six Qing-class conventional submarines. Few Indians analysed the implications of this event. These Qing subs, maybe delivered between 2017 and 2022. Each one of them would have the capability to launch the 700-km range, nuclear-tipped Babur land attack cruise missile that was produced in Pakistan but was, yet again, based on a Chinese design.

In 2012, the Pakistan Navy announced the creation of a new “Strategic Naval Command” to be headed by a vice-admiral. On December 19, 2012 and December 21, 2012, the media reports indicated that the Pakistan Navy had successfully test-fired a new land attack, nuclear tipped variant of the Chinese designed C-802 anti-ship missile with 120-km range or the 700-km range Babur nuclear capable land attack cruise missile from PNS Zulfiquar (one of four Chinese designed F-22 frigates with the Pakistan Navy).

The news further stated that the Pakistani Navy Chief Admiral Mohammad Asif Sandila was present during the test firings and this would give the Pakistani Navy a “counter value” (i.e. targeting civilian population) deterrence capability against Indian coastal cities with TNWs.

India does not have TNWs. Indeed the experience of the Cold War showed that TNWs were inherently destabilising, as their inadvertent use by a battlefield commander (on land or sea) could trigger of a nuclear holocaust.

Hence, both the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation gave up TNWs and relied on large, centrally controlled nuclear weapons for strategic deterrence.

Pakistan obviously has decided that it will have TNWs at sea, where a ship or submarine commander may be authorised to launch a nuclear strike against an Indian Task Force in international waters, on the false assumption that it will not trigger a massive Indian nuclear retaliation.

Even more dangerous is the prospect of a “rogue” jihadi Pakistan’s naval ship or submarine commander launching an unauthorised nuclear strike against a crowded city like Mumbai, thereby killing thousands in a “nuclear 26/11”. Given that China poses an additional nuclear threat to India and that Pakistan is China’s nuclear-armed proxy in South Asia, what are the options for India?

Post-2014, the next government should take a fresh look at India’s nuclear doctrine of no-first use and also expedite operational induction of ballistic and cruise missile defence systems.

Our response mechanism to a dirty nuclear bomb or TNW or a strategic nuclear bomb needs to be exercised regularly with nuclear emergency response and support teams being tested and audited. Dedicated hospitals in each major city need to be
earmarked and outfitted to provide medical assistance to victims of a nuclear attack. The Indian Navy needs to factor in the new sea based nuclear threat emanating from Pakistan Navy and Pakistan-based sea terrorists, while maintaining a technological edge over deployable Chinese Navy units operating in the Indian Ocean region.

This means that the Indian Navy would need a capability to sanitise a belt of 350 miles around our coasts with a combination of intelligence, satellites, aircraft and warships, and simultaneously have enough nuclear tactical submarines to detect and destroy Pakistan Navy’s nuclear armed units as they leave Pakistan.

While strategic nuclear weapons are here to stay in the South Asia triangle comprising India, China and Pakistan, peace is not possible till TNWs and dirty nuclear bombs are abolished and dismantled under international supervision.

*(The writer retired as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command, Visakhapatnam.)*

Source: *The Asian Age*, 17 January

**South Korea Calling India**

-- Sreeram Chaulia

The state visit to India by South Korean President Park Geun-hye represents a significant opportunity to stretch New Delhi's two-decade-long “Look East” policy and cement strategic and economic relations with a major emerging power. Traditionally, India has concentrated more on Southeast Asian countries as the lynchpins of its quest to spread political influence and profit from the region’s economic dynamism. New Delhi’s relative neglect of the geographically more distant Northeast Asia, of which South Korea is a pivotal country, is gradually being redressed with a spectacular warming of ties between India and Japan.

If Japan is entrenching itself as a close strategic partner of India, can its main neighbour South Korea stay far behind? To host Park as a state guest just before Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrives for the Republic Day celebrations in India later this month is a propitious line-up of Northeast Asian powers who matter to India’s national security and economic growth. It is also a sign that India is thinking bigger, eyeing a horizon further from its own immediate neighbourhood, and seeking a broader footprint than just being a sub continental power nestled in South Asia.

South Korea boasts a technologically advanced and cost-effective military industrial complex that could help India diversify its list of defence suppliers and R&D partners. South Korean missile and naval combat systems are internationally accepted as state-of-the-art and are on offer for India to acquire. Before departing for India, Park mentioned that she would be treating her visit as the beginning of her “sales diplomacy toward the world’s new growing economies.” As a conservative politician
whose father was a former military dictator of South Korea, she has the full backing of her defence establishment to woo India as a buyer.

But as in the case of other partners in the defence sector, India would like to transcend the dependence of a buyer-seller equation and move towards joint development of weaponry. Recently, India’s defence companies chose the South Korean capital Seoul to display their indigenously manufactured weapons for sale at an Aerospace and Defence Exhibition (ADEX-2013).

Defence sector cooperation leading to co-production of hi-tech weaponry and joint exercises of the two navies is gathering momentum. The joint references to “safety of the sea lanes” that India makes with South Korea have a signalling intent towards China, which has been riling its neighbours with assertive naval manoeuvres in both Northeast and Southeast Asia.

Despite being a treaty ally of the United States and a target of Chinese ally North Korea’s destabilising behaviour, South Korea has a complex relationship with China, reflect a cultural affinity and a shared history of Japanese imperialism. When Abe visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in December, South Korea condemned it as vehemently as China did.

Beijing’s trade and investment with Seoul have also expanded enormously. South Korea’s economic vitality and rise has been aided by closer regional integration with China. The common front that the US desires amongst all its allies in East Asia (South Korea, Japan and Taiwan) to pressure China often fails to materialise because of these new economic realities.

Still, it is a fact that China is wary of India’s growing strategic dealings with South Korea and Japan. China would naturally prefer Asia’s other powers to remain divided. For instance, China’s state-owned Xinhua news agency was no doubt pleased to report in the aftermath of Abe’s December Yasukuni visit that Indian Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid had urged Japan “to humbly accept the criticism of the shrine visit by China and South Korea.”

India’s Defence Minister, AK Antony has described South Korea as an essential component of India’s vision of the “emerging East Asian architecture.” Park’s visit to New Delhi offers a fillip to this concept and the implicit meanings it contains. Unlike Japan, South Korea is not inclined towards overtly countering Chinese power in the Asia Pacific. Seoul’s more ambiguous approach towards Beijing may fit New Delhi’s own misgivings about being drawn into an American-constructed phalanx to keep China in check.

Regional troublemaker North Korea, a cantankerous ward of China and a mortal threat to South Korea, has also ruffled Indian feathers through illicit nuclear and missile commerce with Pakistan. As a trust enhancer, New Delhi should propose naval interdiction arrangements with Seoul to monitor and halt suspicious North Korean ships. In 2009, India detained a North Korean vessel, the MV San, in the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and frisked it for radioactive cargo.
With the Indian Navy now bolstering its capabilities and taking part in simulated exercises with its South Korean counterparts, it is conceivable that the two countries could work to a plan to tackle North Korean smuggling across an arc stretching from the Arabian Sea all the way to the Yellow Sea. This kind of concrete contribution to South Korean national security could cement the bilateral relationship.

India’s ambassador to South Korea, Vishnu Prakash, has highlighted the potential for cooperation in space technology between New Delhi and Seoul.

South Korea’s ambitions of becoming a spacefaring power match India’s advanced capabilities in satellite launching. Only in the rarest of scientific fields can India claim to be somewhat ahead of a technological innovator like South Korea. Space is one such area where the two nations can develop a win-win partnership and India could earn valuable foreign exchange.

Trade between India and South Korea has surged under the overarching framework of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Seoul chose to sign this free trade agreement with India in 2009, its first with a BRICS country, given the complementarity of the two countries’ goods and services.

Seoul is keen to build civilian nuclear plants in India to power the latter’s electricity generation projects. Apart from defence, this is another big-ticket area where many countries view India as a market. But stringent liability laws have kept foreign corporations away, and South Korea may find entry into this field is neither quick nor easy.

Attracting more South Korean investment in India’s manufacturing and infrastructure sectors remains a keystone of the relationship. However, the interminable struggle over South Korean steel company POSCO’s mammoth $12.1 billion investment in the eastern Indian state of Odisha has been a dampener.

POSCO has already been frustrated enough to withdraw a $5.3 billion steel sector investment from the southern Indian state of Karnataka in 2013, following delays in securing raw materials and local opposition to land acquisition. Like Japanese firms, South Korean companies are wary of the political minefield that awaits foreign direct investment in India.

The decision of the Indian environment minister Veerappa Moily, to finally green-light POSCO’s Odisha venture on the eve of Park’s visit is a confidence booster that could bring in more South Korean capital to meet India’s vast financing needs.

Booming ties with South Korea will strengthen India’s ability to be a potent player in East Asia, which remains the place to be for all great powers of the 21st century. As a highly contested space where regional and extra-regional powers are converging with the ambition of shaping and controlling economic and military trends, East Asia has both space and appetite for India. It is up to New Delhi to creatively fashion substantive relations with nations like South Korea and make its East Asian presence felt.
Troubled Waters: China and Japan Face Off at Sea

-- Toshi Yoshihara

Japan and China have been staring each other down in the East China Sea for well over a year now. Since Tokyo nationalised the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in September 2012, Chinese “maritime law enforcement flotillas” have been making the rounds in the disputed waters near the islands. China insists that the regular patrols are routine and normal. Japanese Coast Guard vessels have been working overtime to monitor and trail every Chinese intrusion, lest Tokyo concede Beijing’s jurisdictional claims.

Before this so-far low-decibel crisis began, it seemed unlikely that China would be willing to contest Tokyo’s sovereignty over the uninhabited islands—islets is actually a better term to describe them—and administrative control over surrounding waters for as long as it has. And even fewer thought that Japan would be straining for an appropriate response. It is a testament to changing assumptions about China’s growing ambitions that this protracted test of wills has gone largely unreported in the Western press. This cat-and-mouse game has seemingly become the new normal in maritime Asia.

This simmering confrontation is typically attributed to conflicting sovereignty claims and competition over hydrocarbon resources and fishing rights. But the strategic value of the geography, an emerging power imbalance at sea, and competing conceptions of regional order have raised the stakes. These issues not only prolong the struggle, but also enlarge the scope and meaning of the conflict, which now involves nothing less than the future place of Japan and China in maritime Asia. So far, Japan seems to be on the losing end of this rivalry. Understanding the underlying causes of this competition and assessing the strategic choices available to the Japanese are therefore crucial for Tokyo and, because of our close relationship, for the US as well.

Japan and China are locked in an awkward embrace—a land power and an island nation in close quarters, each astride the other’s access to the seas. A glance at a map shows that a long chain of islands—which runs southward from Japan to the Philippines—lies just offshore of China’s coastline. The Japanese archipelago encloses the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea, with its southernmost island located only eighty nautical miles from Taiwan’s east coast. For China, the stark geographic reality is that the most direct routes to the Pacific high seas pass through choke points formed by the Japanese islands. To many Chinese strategists, Japan is
an island barrier obstructing China’s entry into the oceanic thoroughfare, restricting their nation’s rightful maritime ambitions.

As China’s rapidly modernising navy extends its reach, it has become commonplace for Chinese naval flotillas to sail through Japanese-held narrow seas and cruise along Japan’s eastern coast. Beginning just five years ago as sporadic forays into the Pacific, these expeditions now take place regularly year-round. In July 2013, a surface action group steamed through the Soya Strait (the first time the People’s Liberation Army Navy, or PLAN, units had conducted such a transit), circumnavigated Japan, and circled back to port by way of the international strait between Okinawa and the Miyako Islands. Chinese early-warning aircraft, bombers, and unmanned drones have also begun to fill the skies over the East China Sea. To make matters worse, Beijing unilaterally declared an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over that body of water in November 2013 that requires all foreign aircraft entering the zone to submit flight plans to Chinese aviation authorities. The destabilising move was designed in part to enhance Beijing’s own ability to operate over disputed sea areas while keeping others at bay. The Chinese zone also pointedly overlaps with the Japanese ADIZ and extends to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Given that China is committed to making this increased activity the new status quo, frequent run-ins between Chinese and Japanese forces within the relatively confined spaces of East Asian seas will likely be the norm in the coming years.

In the early 1990s, no Chinese destroyers, frigates, or submarines qualified as “modern” by Western standards. By the mid-1990s, however, the Chinese Navy began to metamorphose as a series of near-state-of-the-art vessels entered service in succession. The following decade witnessed a particularly large influx of new warships of all types. Between 2000 and 2010, China’s fleet of modern attack submarines increased more than six fold, while the number of newly commissioned destroyers and frigates tripled and doubled, respectively. These high-end vessels were all built to stay in service for twenty to thirty years, promising a decades-long presence in Japanese waters.

Japan will have a hard time keeping up. Beijing’s defence budget has enjoyed double-digit growth for more than two decades, a trajectory that continues despite signs of a slowing economy. By contrast, Japan’s defence spending declined for eleven straight years until Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reversed the downward slide in 2013. But while it was important symbolically, the increase he instituted—less than one percent—was not a serious competitive bid. Short of a dramatic reversal in Japan’s fiscal fortunes, an unlikely prospect at best, Japan cannot hope to out-build Chinese sea power.

The growth of the China Coast Guard (CCG), the newly unified surveillance and law-enforcement service entrusted with safeguarding Beijing’s maritime claims, is the point of the Chinese trident. While the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) is no pushover, China’s paramilitary service is bulking up on a steady diet of new cutters. An aggressive construction program that commenced a few years ago will reportedly launch more than thirty vessels by 2015. In August and September 2013, China launched Haijing 3401 and Haijing 2401, both weighing in at an impressive four
thousand tons. This infusion of new hardware assures that Beijing can maintain a visible presence in waters where it chooses to assert sovereign jurisdiction.

The build-up is paying off. By the first anniversary of the Senkaku/Diaoyu crisis, Chinese vessels had engaged in fifty-nine patrols in the disputed waters. With each intrusion, the Japan Coast Guard had to scramble its ships to warn off the Chinese, testing the maritime service’s physical endurance as well as its resolve. China’s growing capacity to exert such unremitting pressure compelled the JCG to forgo plans to decommission aging vessels ready for retirement. It remains to be seen whether the JCG’s recent plans to acquire more ships and personnel will slow the tilt in the balance of power toward China.

The durable nature of China’s new maritime prowess telegraphs a clear message: Tokyo must learn to live with Chinese sea power. To reinforce this point, even as its naval assets throw their weight around in the East China Sea, Beijing regularly issues public statements suggesting that this is merely business as usual. In September 2013, for instance, a Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman asserted, “For Chinese military ships and aircraft to proceed to the related waters of the western Pacific to carry out routine training is in accord with international law and international practice. No party should overreact to the normal and legitimate activities of the Chinese military.” The iron fist inside this velvet glove was clearly gesturing toward Japan.

Whenever the China Coast Guard sends its patrol ships to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, the dispatch is announced on government websites and dutifully reported in the Chinese media. An official bulletin released in September 2013 commended a Coast Guard formation for “continuing patrols in our country’s territorial seas of the Diaoyu Islands while safeguarding rights and enforcing laws according to our nation’s relevant regulations and laws.” In December 2012, after a Chinese surveillance aircraft flew over the islands, a Foreign Ministry spokesman insisted that what Japan regarded as an airspace violation was “completely normal.” Government mouthpieces also repeatedly defended the ADIZ, arguing that the zone was in accord with international and Chinese domestic laws.

Such public statements signal Chinese resolve. But, by framing the Senkaku/Diaoyu standoff as a matter of domestic law enforcement, Beijing raises the stakes. An internal matter is simply non-negotiable. Playing its role in this denial, Japan for its part refuses to recognise that a dispute even exists. Neither Japan nor China can back down from such irreconcilable positions. Anything short of complete victory would be seen as an intolerable concession for either side. Without a diplomatic breakthrough, the patrols and counter-patrols around the islands will likely continue, forcing both sides to settle into a constant but low-level confrontation. China can afford to play such a waiting game, knowing that it is actually winning the contest because trend lines in material power are so greatly in its favour.

Yet more worrisome than Beijing’s message that Tokyo had better get used to China’s seaward turn is growing Chinese discontent with Asia’s maritime order and Japan’s role in it. Railing against Western liberal internationalism, powerful voices in China’s military and political establishment distrust US stewardship of the seas and want Beijing to revise the order in favour of Beijing. If such a worldview takes firm
control over the policymaking process, then the latest maritime confrontations involving China may be a harbinger of things to come. The views of those pushing for Chinese superiority have gained traction in the wake of Chinese provocations in the East China Sea.

Some of these hard-line public intellectuals have trained their crosshairs on Japan as a surrogate in the struggle for mastery in maritime Asia. Ye Hailin, a scholar at the prestigious Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, argues that the resolution of the island dispute would not only settle the sovereignty question, but it would also determine the long-term “strategic status” of China, Japan, and the United States. He contends:

*If Japan ultimately forces China to abandon its claims to sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands with US support, then the American-led Asia-Pacific order underpinned by the US-Japan alliance would undoubtedly be reaffirmed. At the same time, China’s realisation of its dream of transforming from a continental nation to a maritime nation would not be realised. On the other hand, if China successfully fulfils its sovereign claims over the Diaoyu Islands, then it would mean that the era of the United States dominating the Asia-Pacific maritime order according to its interests and even its preference will end on the spot. China will then become an important participant in the development and maintenance of the Pacific maritime order.*

While Ye’s argument suffers from hyperbole, he clearly sees the tussle over the islands as shadow boxing for a larger great-power rivalry. If this argument becomes official policy in Beijing, then the Senkaku/Diaoyu spat could transcend the territorial contest, and Japan’s submission to Chinese strategic use of the East China Sea may be only the prelude of a larger drama.

A decade ago, indifference, if not condescension, characterised Japanese attitudes toward Chinese sea power. Then, the conventional wisdom was that Japan would continue to enjoy a nearly insurmountable qualitative superiority over China for the foreseeable future. Not so today. Successive editions of the Japanese Defence Ministry’s most recent annual defence white papers have devoted more and more pages to the Chinese Navy. Since 2011, the Defence Ministry’s internal think tank has published annual reports on China’s security policy, paying special attention to Chinese maritime activities. Retired admirals, too, have joined the fray, warning about China’s assertiveness at sea in the popular press as well as military journals. A sense of urgency now animates Japan’s strategic community, which is belatedly gearing up for a long-term maritime competition with China.

First, Tokyo is pivoting away from its northward orientation toward Russia—an anachronistic Cold War legacy—to its southern flank. Japan has thus shifted its attention and resources to the South-western or Ryukyu Islands, a six-hundred-mile-wide chain stretching from Japan’s Kyushu Island to Taiwan. Tokyo plans to deploy more air and naval units as well as garrison ground troops on the islands. It believes that by beefing up defences along the Ryukyus, it might be able to exploit a permanent geographic advantage in that the island chain gives Tokyo the option of closing off Chinese access to the high seas—much as Japan’s Home Islands once
did against the Soviet Navy they bottled up in the Sea of Japan—and provide a form of strategic leverage.

Secondly, Japan is addressing the deterioration of its maritime assets. In 2010, Tokyo began expanding the size of its formidable submarine fleet from sixteen to twenty-two boats. This move leverages a longstanding strength of the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force while exploiting the current weakness of the Chinese Navy’s anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capability, an area that PLAN commanders have neglected for years. To compensate for this vulnerability, Beijing would have to devote far more attention to submarine hunting than it has in the past. Increased spending on ASW might in turn diminish the resources the Chinese Navy would have available for the construction of submarines and other offensive weaponry. More Japanese submarines, therefore, forces hard choices on Beijing.

Thirdly, the Japanese position can be strengthened if Tokyo, Washington, and other stakeholders continue to publicly underscore the importance they attach to defending the current maritime order. A straw in this wind came on October 3, 2013, when the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee reaffirmed its commitment to maritime security.

Without naming China, the committee identified “coercive and destabilising behaviours in the maritime domain” as one of the “challenges to international norms.” It also reiterated the goal of encouraging China “to adhere to international norms of behaviour.” The following day, the United States, Japan, and Australia issued a startlingly blunt trilateral statement that “opposed any coercive or unilateral actions that could change the status quo in the East China Sea.” The three seafaring nations in effect defined existing arrangements as future reality. More importantly, this like-minded coalition signalled a resolve to prevent the erosion or rollback of the current maritime order.

Finally, Tokyo is countering China within the framework of the US-Japanese alliance. In an unprecedented move in June 2013, Japanese ground, air, and naval forces participated in a major amphibious exercise with their American counterparts on US soil.

Prime Minister Abe has also pressed his country to lift the self-imposed ban on the right of collective self-defence, which forbids Japan from coming to the aid of US forces under attack. Among the scenarios used to support Abe’s initiative, one involving naval action stands out. Imagine if a Japanese warship were in a position to assist an American naval unit under enemy assault, but took no action in due regard to constitutional constraints. The alliance might not survive such inaction. Japan’s newfound inclination to act alongside the US military would shore up allied deterrence.

Such signals have not been lost on the Chinese. These early steps suggest that Japanese policymakers are beginning to recognise, albeit reluctantly, that Japan will become progressively weaker than Beijing if it does nothing. Sanguine assumptions of the past about the Chinese being satisfied to be a formidable land power are no longer valid. Tokyo has finally understood that it has only two alternatives—
accommodates Beijing or responds nimbly and stays in a high-stakes game that promises to be a long one.

*(Toshi Yoshihara is a professor of strategy and the John A. van Beuren Chair of Asia-Pacific Studies at the US Naval War College. He is the co-author, with James R. Holmes, of Red Star over the Pacific: China’s Rise and the Challenge to US Maritime Strategy.)*

Source: World Affairs, 25 January

**Peace is the Only Answer in China-Japan Island Dispute**

-- Zachary Fillingham

The East China Sea territorial dispute between China and Japan figured prominently in various geopolitical risk forecasts for 2014, and with good reason. Neither side shows any sign of standing down, and with every new military deployment near the contested area comes an increased risk of a small-scale military incident spiralling into war.

Anti-Japanese sentiment in China runs deep, fuelled by memories of Japan’s brutal invasion and occupation during World War II. These feelings have been strengthened by the Chinese education system and state-controlled media, along with frequent examples over the years of half-hearted and waffling contrition on the part of the Japanese government. They have even been absorbed into the national narrative of China’s rise, such that China will only receive the official stamp of superpower Dom once Japan has been fully eclipsed in East Asia – politically, economically, and militarily.

As architect of China’s rise and self-professed redeemer of the Chinese nation, the Communist Party of China (CCP) needs to take these feelings into account. To neglect to do so would contradict the Party’s own carefully-crafted national mythology, and consequently erode the legitimacy of its one-party rule.

The dispute over the Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku in Japanese) is one issue where the CCP is prisoner to its own logic; thus, we shouldn’t expect any dovish overtures from Beijing, especially so long as the Abe administration insists on rattling the cage.

Though the underlying motivations may differ, Japan appears just as intent on not backing down. The resurgent nationalist vein that helped propel Shinzo Abe into power maintains that Japan has apologised enough for its militarist past, and it should now stand shoulder-to-shoulder with other major powers in international society as a “normal,” aka not abashedly pacifistic, democratic country.

Japanese politics seem to be at a crossroads, one with any number of disconcerting historical parallels (interwar Germany for one). After decades of deflationary economic malaise and ringing condemnations from its neighbours, a political force has arrived promising a reason for Japanese people to hold their heads high again. The elixir of Abenomics has already worked its magic on the economy – at least for the time being. Now all that remains is the question of Japan’s role in East Asia: Will
it be a passive pole of US military power, or an assertive regional player that actively leans into China’s expanding capabilities?

This is a question that Prime Minister Abe would happily answer if given the chance, and with his oft-stated dream of amending Japan’s pacifist constitution and incendiary visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, it’s no great secret what form his answer would take. Whether or not the Japanese public will allow him to do so is another story. Although recent polls have shown a troubling anti-China trend (over 90% of the Japanese public have an “unfavourable” impression of China), Japan’s pacifist worldview is still largely intact, with 57% of the population opposing a government push to reinterpret Article 9, which would allow the Japanese military to participate in collective defence operations with the United States.

With both sides stubbornly insisting on the righteousness of their cause, the Diaoyu dispute stands as a serious problem with no easy solution. Both governments know that war would be economically disastrous, with annual two-way trade between China and Japan in excess of $340 billion, yet war remains a distinct possibility if the present course is maintained.

The US Diplomatically Side-lined

It follows that if peace is to reign in the East China Sea, an outside mediator might be needed to defuse tensions and foster some kind of constructive dialogue between China and Japan. At first glance, the United States appears to be the most likely candidate. Armed conflict between Japan and China is about the last thing Washington wants to see in the Asia Pacific region, especially since it would be legally obligated to join in under the terms of the US-Japan security treaty. These concerns were echoed at a recent high-level defence meeting in Seoul, where Admiral Samuel Locklear, the head of US Pacific Command, urged a diplomatic solution to the East China Sea dispute, warning that it would take just one miscalculation from an inexperienced naval officer on either side for a full-blown crisis to break out.

Yet while it’s certainly true that the United States has a lot to lose in any conflict over the Diaoyu Islands, the Americans are not viewed as an impartial party in the eyes of the Chinese leadership. To Beijing, the enduring US military presence in the Asia Pacific – which itself hinges on the US-Japan security treaty – is a cold war anachronism that has been quietly repackaged into a containment strategy aimed at China. This perception of a pro-Japan bias hampers the US government’s ability to step in and broker a deal to end the dispute, leaving it with the single and thus far futile recourse of pressuring its ally in Tokyo to stand down.

The Taiwan Factor

There is another party embroiled in the East China Sea dispute, albeit one that is frequently absent from the headlines. Taiwan maintains its own claim to the islands, and it is geographically closest to the tiny archipelago. The Ma Ying-jeou government has also displayed some diplomatic flexibility vis-à-vis the obstinence on display in Beijing and Tokyo. In April of last year, Taiwan and Japan agreed to a fishing accord granting Taiwanese fisherman access to Japan’s exclusive economic
zone around the disputed area. The deal stands as a positive example of mutual economic benefit beating out the short-term political expediency of a populist line.

The Ma government in Taiwan is also promoting a more comprehensive diplomatic solution to the conflict in the form of its East China Sea Peace Initiative (ECSPI). The plan calls for a peaceful resolution to the dispute that: avoids antagonism; promotes dialogue; abides by international law; establishes a code of conduct; and allows for joint exploration and development of resources in the disputed area. Though it's unlikely the Taiwanese plan will be accepted at face value by China, which views the self-governing island as its own province and thus lacking in the authority to engage in multilateral diplomacy, the ECSPI is the best attempt so far at taking this precarious regional flashpoint and transforming it into an economic boon for all parties involved.

Moving Forward

Like so many other disputes past and present, it doesn't matter so much which party is “right” on the Diaoyu Islands, but that the issue is resolved in a peaceful manner. Doing so will require an act of faith from both Japan and China. Abe may already be attempting, however feebly, to atone for his recent shrine visit, declaring that “no heroes rest at Yasukuni” in a Davos speech that was roundly panned by Chinese and South Korean diplomats. It will take a lot more than that to reopen the regional lines of communication, and the task might fall to the Japanese people, who need to send a message to Abe that his dream is not a shared one.

A diplomatic opportunity lies in Japan’s self-marginalisation if Beijing is willing to seize it. If the Chinese government can transcend the bitter history involved and take the lead in implementing the spirit of Taiwan’s ECSPI plan, it would go a long way in proving that Beijing is a responsible force in the region. This would serve Chinese interests in a wider sense, from defusing tensions in the South China Sea and sapping regional support for a greater US military presence, to even accruing some of that much sought-after soft power. When viewed in this light, the cost of serious, though ultimately passing popular dissatisfaction might be worth paying in order to shore up longer term strategic considerations. Given what’s at risk – the lives, wealth, and legacy; not just in East Asia but the world – the decision to seek a peaceful solution should be a no-brainer.

(Zachary Fillingham is a contributor to geopoliticalmonitor.com)

Source: Eurasia Review, 27 January

Why Ignore China’s Aircraft Carriers

As someone who has made a career of tracking China’s latest defence technologies, let me clue you on a little secret: Beijing’s new carrier, supposedly being built in Dalian, is no military threat for the foreseeable future. In fact, don’t even waste your time reading about whatever rumour comes next. There is a lot of Chinese
hardware that could challenge US primacy in the Pacific — but carriers are not one of them. Before I get into why, a little background is in order.

China has been researching, thinking about, and studying carrier technology for decades but is just now building its own flattops. PLAN Admiral Liu Huaqing, who most scholars consider the founder of China’s aircraft carrier research program, believed that Beijing’s maritime doctrine should evolve through a two stage effort with carriers being a big part of such a plan. Step one would be “a ‘green-water active defence’ that would enable the PLAN to protect China’s territorial waters and enforce its sovereignty claims in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.” While scholars can argue the point, in many respects, China seems close to achieving such a goal. The second part would be to “develop a blue-water navy capable of projecting power into the western Pacific.” As noted back in 2004 in the US Naval War College Review (USNWCR), “aircraft carriers were needed to protect China’s sovereignty and maritime resources, especially with regard to Taiwan and the South China Sea; guard China’s sea lanes of communications as the country industrialised and increasingly became a major trading power; enable China to keep up with regional powers such as India and Japan; and give the PLAN a decisive edge in future naval warfare.”

Here the plot thickens, moving from talk to action. Beijing began purchasing old carriers to learn their secrets. In a seldom discussed episode, China in 1985 purchased the Australian carrier HMS Melbourne for scrap — or so it was thought at the time. As noted in the above piece from USNWCR, “the flight deck of the Melbourne was kept intact and used for pilot training in carrier take-offs and landings (though a static flight deck would, of course, have been of limited utility, since it could not replicate the pitch and roll of an aircraft carrier at sea).” Years later China would purchase three ex-Soviet carriers in an effort to increase its knowledge, with the refurbished incomplete Varyag carrier being reborn as the PLAN carrier Liaoning and finally commissioned into the PLAN on September 25, 2012.

So now that you have an idea of the timeline when it comes to China’s aircraft carrier history, some readers might be wondering why I argue you should stop clicking on the latest and greatest China aircraft carrier article. Simply stated: such a plan — sinking billions of dollars into carriers and all the goodies to make them a viable weapon — is not worth it for Beijing, and chances are over the long haul China will realise it.

As recent media coverage has shown here in the US, carriers are big investments. Modern CVs are something one does not just throw in the water and expect military dominance. China took 27 years from the purchase of the Melbourne to launching a refurbished carrier that is not even ready for combat operations. Many pieces are needed to make a carrier a true weapon of modern war. Years are needed to develop aircraft to perform on the decks of such a carrier in times of combat — not an easy task. Chinese naval aviators will need to perform in the wildest of conditions with carriers operating in the toughest of seas and against potentially some of the world’s best navies who have decades of experience. Also, a carrier battle group must be assembled to supply and defend the most costly of capital ships — again, certainly not an easy or cheap task. China’s first carrier is nowhere near the capabilities of America’s CBG’s, and I would assume would take decades to reach
such anything close to that level of competency — let alone another additional three as some reports are suggesting. Such an effort, if reporting is accurate (note: some reports have already been taken down), would be a massive undertaking which would take decades to achieve any sort of strategic edge.

Also, one must consider China’s own A2AD strategy, which seems bent on relegating carriers into the dustbin of history — something that is achieving real results much faster than China’s own carrier investments. Beijing is pouring resources into ever more sophisticated cruise and ballistic weapon systems to push carriers and other advanced surface combatants away from its coastline. Nations like Iran and even non-state actors have noticed and are emulating such a strategy. Many have made the argument that such weapons, which in various forms have been around for decades, are slowly making carriers obsolete. Heck, they don’t call ‘em “carrier-killers” for nothing. So why would China invest in a weapon system that it is effectively trying to push into the history books and which has limited military utility for the foreseeable future?

Raw military might not be the reason behind China’s carrier push — in fact, it’s not. Beijing has other motivations beyond just pure power projection. Nothing says “great power” like an aircraft carrier and the fleet of vessels that accompany it — just like battleships did many decades ago. And not all nations of the world are arming themselves to the teeth with A2AD missiles and systems — at least not yet. There is a certain prestige in being in the carrier club. And as long as China has the economic resources to plow into a project that does more to increase Chinese prestige than military prowess, there is some small utility in such a move — at least for now.

Yet, economics and a changing strategic environment could press China to change its tune. For at least a decade, Beijing has poured tremendous resources into its armed forces and increasingly more and more into its Navy. Thanks to a combination of a booming economy and a weakened Russia, China’s good fortunes on land have created the conditions to invest in stronger forces at sea. There is no guarantee both of those conditions are forever static. If money needs to be diverted to propping up a slowing economy or balancing against a threat from the north, it may be hard to justify billions in aircraft carrier development that will take many years to prove fruitful in combat—if ever.

“China will never build an aircraft carrier,” a senior Chinese official told a group of foreign visitors in the early 1970’s. “Aircraft carriers are tools of imperialism, and they’re like sitting ducks waiting to be shot.” For modern day China, carriers could end up being a source of pride and a shining example of its rise, just don’t expect much else.

(Harry J. Kazianis serves as Managing Editor for the National Interest.)

Source: The Diplomat, 28 January
China Building Second Aircraft Carrier

China is building its second aircraft carrier, which is expected to take six years, and the country aims to have at least four such ships, Chinese and Hong Kong media reports said. After two decades of double-digit increases in the military budget, China's admirals plan to develop a full blue-water navy capable of defending growing economic interests as well as disputed territory in the South and East China Seas. The country's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning - a Soviet-era ship bought from Ukraine in 1998 and re-fitted in a Chinese shipyard - has long been a symbol of China's naval build-up. Successfully operating the 60,000-tonne Liaoning is the first step in what state media and some military experts believe will be the deployment of locally built carriers by 2020. In comments carried on Chinese news websites, Wang Min, the Communist Party boss of the north-eastern province of Liaoning, where the first carrier is based, said the second carrier was being built in the port city of Dalian.

Its construction would take about six years, and in future China would have a fleet of at least four carriers, Wang told members of the province's legislature, the reports added. Dalian is the port where the existing carrier was re-fitted for use by the Chinese navy. Some of the reports about the new carrier were apparently later removed from the Internet, as links to the stories did not work. Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, citing unnamed military sources, said the reports may have been removed either because the government wanted the construction to be low profile or because Wang did not have the authority for such an announcement. The Defence Ministry did not respond to a request for comment. The Liaoning successfully executed more than 100 tests, including those of its combat systems, during drills in the disputed South China Sea last month. The exercises off the coast of Hainan Island marked not only the first time China had sent a carrier into the South China Sea but the first time it had manoeuvred with the kind of strike group of escort ships US carriers deploy, according to regional military officers and analysts.

Source: The Maritime Executive, 19 January

India Will Buy 15 Amphibious Aircraft From Japan: So What?

-- Ankit Panda

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to India as chief guest at its Republic Day celebrations yielded some important advances in India-Japan relations. Notably on the security front, the two resolved to consult on national security matters between their two national security apparatuses (Japan’s national Security Council having been formed recently). Additionally, the two will conduct a bilateral naval exercise in the Pacific Ocean in a move that is sure to draw China's attention. The
pending sale of the ShinMaywa US-2 amphibious patrol aircraft—a topic of interest for India since 2011—also inched forward. Abe and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreed that India and Japan would follow up on the sale in March with a joint working group meeting. Indian Defence Minister AK Antony is set to visit Japan at some point this year (presumably before May, due to the general elections in India) to finalise the deal.

The deal is significant for a variety of reasons. On the surface, it's another indicator of burgeoning cooperation between India and Japan on security matters. The deal is doubly significant in the context of India’s relations with Japan because once India clinches the deal, it will become the first country to purchase defence equipment from Japan since the latter’s self-imposed ban on defence exports began in 1967. The deal is important for Abe as it would open up Japan’s defence industry for additional contracts with foreign partners and stimulate Japan’s defence industry. It should be noted that negotiations on the US-2 deal began in 2011 under the Democratic Party of Japan, first under Prime Minister Naoto Kan and then under Yoshihiko Noda.

According to Reuters, the US-2 deal could result in a $1.65 billion tab for India, which is looking at purchasing 15 of the amphibious patrol aircraft. The deal is essentially a fait accompli (cleared politically at the highest levels in both countries) and the joint working group will iron out certain details including important modifications that would allow Japan to export the aircraft to India without violating its self-imposed defence export restrictions. A Reuters report notes that the modifications will include the removal of a friend or foe identification system. Another point of discussion for the two sides is whether India will be permitted to assemble the aircraft indigenously, giving it access to Japanese military technology.

Strategically, the US-2 is important for India beyond its relationship with Japan. The US-2 has a more than modest range of 4,500 km and India’s 15 aircraft will be stationed in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. The US-2 is a versatile aircraft for search and rescue operations as well, partly owing to its short take-off ability. According to an anonymous Indian military source interviewed by Reuters, the US-2 will allow India to support military and civilian ships deep in Southeast Asian waters. The military source notes: “You are sailing further and further away, and ships break down at sea. You can either wait for reinforcements to arrive by sea or bring in an amphibian right next to the stricken ship.” Procurement of the US-2 additionally directly counters Indian fears of China’s burgeoning “string of pearls” strategy in Southeast Asia.

Overall, expect an India-Japan US-2 deal in the near future—possibly before India’s general elections. The US-2 deal will serve as a gateway for India and Japan to explore additional cooperation on defence technology. The joint statement coming out of Abe’s visit to New Delhi noted that India and Japan are seeking to cooperate on advanced technologies more generally. Prospects for increased defence cooperation remain positive as long as Shinzo Abe remains at the helm in Tokyo; revising Japan’s guidelines on defence technology exports is a strategic priority for Abe and man happens to be quite the Indophile.
A looming consequence of the US-2 deal will be increased Chinese scepticism that the strategic convergence between India and Japan is anything other than a bulwark against China’s ambitions along the Asia-Pacific rim land. Additionally, the deal would in essence move Japan more in the direction of military normalisation; allowing Japan to export its defence know-how and technology freely across Asia could prove deleterious to China’s interests.

For the moment, Indian and Japanese diplomats and leaders remain careful to omit any mention of China during their bilateral meetings. So far, all bilateral military exercises between India and Japan have occurred under the premise of promoting freedom of navigation in Asia’s crowded sea lanes and combating piracy. A day may come when New Delhi begins to back Tokyo in its disputes with Beijing and Tokyo returns the favour, but a variety of political factors still inhibit that sort of openness in this important bilateral relationship between Asia’s largest and richest democracy. A US-2 deal won’t supercharge the positive momentum in the India-Japan relationship, but it won’t hurt either.

(Ankit Panda is Associate Editor of the Diplomat.)

Source: The Diplomat, 29 January

India Set to Acquire Japanese Military Aircraft

Before leaving for Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said that his India visit was a successful one as the two countries have come closer to each other. Abe also announced that New Delhi has become the most important development partner of Tokyo in recent times. According to him, India will soon become the first country since WWII to purchase a military aircraft from Japan. The visiting Japanese leader welcomed India’s decision to purchase the Japanese-built aircraft, saying that he had decided to dismantle the ban on weapons exports in an attempt to help his country’s defence contractors reach foreign markets. Meanwhile, the Indian Defence Ministry said in a statement that New Delhi agreed to sign a deal, worth USD 1.65 billion, with ShinMaywa Industries in the near future for purchasing amphibious aircraft from the Japanese company. According to the statement, officials of the Indian ministry and the Japanese company will finalise the deal in March ahead of joint production of the aircraft in India. India is planning to purchase around 15 such planes at a price of USD 110 million each.

Commenting on the issue, a senior Indian Defence Ministry official said: “It’s a strategic imperative for both sides and it has been cleared at the highest levels of the two governments.” The official also said that Tokyo would export the stripped-down civilian version of the US-2i plane to India first before selling it to others. Indian defence experts are of the opinion that acquisition of the military aircraft will help the South Asian country get access to Japanese military technology. The plane, with a range of over 4,500km, will certainly increase India’s reach to South-east Asia from its Air Force base in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, according to them.
Meanwhile, the Indian Navy has decided to use the Japanese-built aircraft to support its vessels especially on long range missions. It means that the Indian Navy can easily step up its activities across the Indian Ocean in order to counter China with the help of Japanese technology. “You are sailing further and further away, and ships break down at sea. You can either wait for reinforcements to arrive by sea or bring in an amphibian right next to the stricken ship,” said a Navy officer while describing their current problems. However, the acquisition of Japanese-built aircraft will change the scenario, he told the media.

Source: In Serbia, 29 January

**Conflicting Claims: China, Japan, Taiwan on Edge**

-- Joel Brinkley

Almost everyone has heard of the South China Sea debate, the enduring argument between China and most every other state that has a coastline on that waterway. From Indonesia to the Philippines, every state is angry with China over its claim that it maintains full ownership rights to nearly all of the sea’s islands and resources.

That argument seems to be irresolvable. Well, a similar disagreement, less often discussed but even more intractable, hangs over another nearby patch of water: the East China Sea. There, Taiwan, Japan, and China each hold tenacious views about ownership of several islands and their surrounding waters.

This small group of islands is known as the Diaoyu if you speak Chinese or Senkakus if you’re Japanese. In August, I attended a conference in Taipei known as the East China Sea Peace Forum—perhaps an oxymoron. People from the region routinely call these islands by shorthand, the DSS.

Various surveys suggest that the area is a rich source of untapped oil, natural gas, and coal—as well as fish and other seafood. For example, Sheng-Chung Lin, chairman of the CPC Corporation, a Taiwanese energy company, said passive explorations have discovered between one and two trillion cubic meters of liquefied natural gas. And the US Energy Information Administration estimates that “the East China Sea has between sixty and one hundred million barrels of oil in proven and probable reserves.” So, not surprisingly, China, Taiwan, and Japan are locked in bitter, intractable disputes over ownership.

China argues that it owns the entire area, just as it does the South China Sea, and will brook no argument over that. Japan counters that any efforts to negotiate are pointless because its ownership is irrefutable; there’s no reason even to discuss it. Speaking at the United Nations in late September, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe refused even to acknowledge the dispute, saying the “Senkakus are an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law.”
Japan already occupies several of the islands. At the same time, Taiwan also contends that the islands are part of its historical territory.

The bigger problem is that all these states dislike each other, to put it mildly. China hates Japan, and vice versa—a legacy of Japan's brutal occupation of China during World War II, when Japanese troops are said to have killed at least ten million Chinese, devastating the nation. The two states also vie for political and economic relevance. After all, China and Japan have the world’s second- and third-largest gross domestic products, after the United States.

Adding to the dilemma, China does not recognise that Taiwan even has the right to exist as an independent nation—much less the authority to negotiate over territorial disputes. In fact, at times China has said it would be pleased if Taiwan won possession of the contested islands because Taiwan is part of China anyway.

And then there’s Japan’s relationship with Taiwan—virtually non-existent. Like most of the world, Japan does not maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan—but for different reasons. Most states, including the United States, are concerned they will irritate China by officially recognising Taiwan. Japan unofficially recognises Taiwan as the Republic of China, the government that ruled China during the Japanese occupation and until the Communist revolution in 1949. Today, that’s how Taiwan sees itself as well. Many Taiwanese believe they remain the rightful rulers of what they now call Mainland China, and they make the same claims to the South and East China Seas as the mainland does. As Ambassador Bruce J. D. Linghu, a director general in Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told me: “We claim all the islands in the South China Sea. It’s a historical claim for us.”

The genesis of this debate took place in 1946, just after World War II. That’s when the West pushed China to clarify any regional maritime claims. So, the Republic of China, the mainland government at that time, issued an official map showing its claim to nearly all of the South China Sea. It came to be known as the “eleven-dash” map because whoever drafted it drew a line of dashes along the seas’ coastlines, which dip down to Indonesia and back. Few paid attention then. As Linghu puts it, “Nobody opposed it at the time.”

Perhaps that was because, three years later, after a long civil war, the Chinese Communist Party defeated the nationalist Kuomintang party that had governed the Republic of China and seized full control of the country. The former government took up residence in Taiwan, kept the name Republic of China, and still claims to be the mainland’s legitimate government.

As for the South China Sea, the longstanding status quo remained in place until 2009. But then the time came for the nations of the world to give the UN documentation of their claims to any maritime territory, as part of the Law of the Sea treaty. In an unacknowledged historical irony, the Chinese government officially submitted that 1946 map—the one its former enemy, now resident in Taiwan, had drawn up—and asserted that nearly the entire sea and adjacent waters are “an inherent part of Chinese territory.”
This was the first time China had brought the subject up since the Nationalists did in 1946. And that’s what started the conflict in both the South and East China Seas. It has led to numerous seaborne clashes that, thus far, have stopped just short of shooting and killing.

So far, the most violent hostilities have been water-cannon fights between Japanese and Taiwanese Coast Guard ships facing off with Chinese surveillance vessels—the most recent of them in mid-September. No one has been hurt seriously, but some in the Taiwanese government told me they hoped to deploy what they called “more powerful” water cannons.

China sends patrol boats through the islands frequently—almost daily. It also utilises its vast array of fishing boats, thousands of them, as an advance fleet. Small fleets of these boats sail into contested areas to see if they face a challenge. And more than once in 2013, Chinese ships “painted” Japanese naval vessels with weapon fire-control radars—a clear threat. So far, the Chinese have not fired any actual weapons, but the situation remains tense.

At the Asia-Pacific Economic conference in Bali, Indonesia, in mid-October, Chinese President Xi Jinping is reported to have actively “snubbed” Prime Minister Abe of Japan. As Chris Nelson of Samuels International’s Nelson Report wrote: “For China, of course, everything has to be run through the filter of strategic one-upmanship, as Beijing tries to discomfit Tokyo in hopes that Abe will at some point ‘blink’ so China’s aggressive pursuit against the Senkakus” islands “status quo will eventually bear fruit.”

Meanwhile, the US Air Force is stationing ever more fighter planes, drones, and stealth bombers in Thailand, India, Singapore, and Australia. In China’s view, that seems to betray the Washington mantra: The United States will not get involved in regional territorial disputes. Yet, in fact, the United States administered those islands, along with Okinawa, until 1972, when America returned them to Japan. All the debate then was about Okinawa. Hardly anyone even mentioned the DSS islands.

The current dispute leaves the region almost permanently on edge, never sure when these threatening feints will evolve into an actual battle—largely because, as President Ma Ying-jeou of Taiwan has put it, China “doesn’t want to sit at the table with Japan and Taiwan.”

Meanwhile, many in the region warn that a mistake or mishap could lead to war. As Richard C. Bush, director of the Brookings Institution’s Centre for East Asia Policy Studies put it in a speech during the Taipei conference: “Small conflicts can easily turn into major clashes. There is the risk that clashes can easily get much worse, and everyone suffers.” And Valérie Niquet, a China analyst at the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research, told the Christian Science Monitor magazine that a naval collision or even an accidental sinking “could start something that would be difficult to stop.” The same issue of the magazine also offered a photograph showing Japanese and Chinese Coast Guard vessels passing within yards of each other.
As a further indication that it is serious about expanding its maritime territory, the maps the Chinese government prints in its passports now include the South and East China Seas. Because of this, Vietnam, for one, is no longer accepting those passports. Its border agents refuse to put a stamp in them and stamp a separate piece of paper instead.

Japan is not merely sitting back and watching. The country is actually building up its military, even though the Japanese Constitution drawn up just after World War II renounces war and military preparedness. But Prime Minister Abe seems to believe that the times have changed, and Japan can no longer survive as a pacifist nation. So he has started with small increases in the military’s budget but says the Constitution needs major revisions.

He plans to launch a campaign for that. He also wants to manufacture or purchase surveillance drones, anti-ballistic missiles, and other weaponry. And he says he intends to recruit a marine force that can carry out counterattacks on remote islands, including the disputed islands in the East China Sea. In a government white paper last summer, Japan accused China of continually intruding on Japan’s territorial waters and its airspace, using “high-handed tactics that are inconsistent with international law.” China, it added, is guilty of “dangerous actions that could lead to unintended consequences.”

In 2012, the Japanese government actually purchased some of the DSS islands from private owners as a further assurance of sovereignty, infuriating China. Right away, Beijing sent several naval frigates into the waters around the islands, and the vice chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission publicly urged the ships’ commanders “to be ready for any possible military combat,” according to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

Today, Chinese Coast Guard boats still patrol the seas around those islands almost all the time. And in the summer of 2012, Japan arrested more than a dozen Chinese activists who landed on one of the DSS islands, where they paraded around and planted Chinese flags.

The only small bit of rapprochement evident in recent months was a fisheries agreement between Taiwan and Japan, signed in April 2013. The two states’ fishing boats were intruding into areas both sides claimed. So last year they negotiated an agreement that allowed both sides to use the waters—for fishing.

“Japan made the first-ever concessions with that fisheries agreement,” said Dennis Hickey of Missouri State University. That was particularly significant for Taiwan because it “needs Japan more than Japan needs Taiwan,” said Stephen S. F. Chen, a Taiwanese national security official.

But even with this diplomatic token, the two states had to negotiate that fisheries agreement through NGO surrogates because they do not have official diplomatic ties.

President Ma of Taiwan has stepped into the broader debate in hopes of defrosting this seemingly intractable East China Sea dispute. In 2012, he proposed what he
called the East China Sea Peace Initiative, an effort to postpone the sovereignty debate. As he put it, “The Republic of China, the People’s Republic of China, and Japan all have important claims of sovereignty over” the DSS. “People will never give in on sovereignty. It's very difficult to resolve these issues.”

“Even if we submit this for arbitration at the International Criminal Court,” Ma added, “some will not be satisfied with the result. I repeat, sovereignty cannot be divided, but natural resources can be.”

Now, more than a year later, he and his aides point out that the plan has received a lot of positive publicity. As Linghu, the Foreign Ministry official put it: “We’ve received high-level support from some members of Congress, scholars, and opinion makers” in the US and around the world.

President Ma added that “we have seen tremendous media coverage around the world,” while Foreign Minister David Y. L. Lin pointed out that the proposed treaty “is being widely discussed; there have been two thousand articles in the international press.”

By almost all accounts, Ma’s is a good, innovative idea. It reflects well on Taiwan, a diplomatically marginalised little island. But it doesn’t seem to have even a chance of working, for reasons both historical and contemporary.

Since China’s 1949 revolution, mainland China has continued to assert that Taiwan is actually a Chinese province, despite Taiwan’s longstanding sovereignty claims. Threats of invasion have diminished as Ma has strategically engineered closer relations with the mainland. More than eighty flights a day now carry tourists and businessmen back and forth between Taiwan and China.

Thousands of Chinese students study in Taiwanese universities. And most of Taiwan’s own manufacturing industry is located in China, where labour costs are lower.

Nonetheless, almost immediately after taking office, China’s new leader, Xi Jinping, insisted that he will never bargain over his nation’s “core interests”—including its continuing claim that Taiwan is part of China. So, why would China sit down and negotiate with Taiwan over oil and mineral rights in the East China Sea?

As China sees it, that would be like the United States negotiating sea rights with Hawaii. Given all of this complexity—a Rubik’s Cube of conflicting claims and counter-claims, short-term strategies and long-term interests, the prospect of winning power and the danger of losing face—will these three countries really sit down together and negotiate reciprocal rights over all those rich resources in the East China Sea any time soon? Not a chance.

*(Joel Brinkley is a professor of journalism at Stanford University and a Pulitzer Prize–winning former foreign correspondent for the New York Times.)*

Source: World Affairs, 30 January
LPDs Lead India’s Push to Boost Sealift, Amphibious Capabilities

The Indian Navy’s plans to add four landing platform docks (LPDs) underscore its long-term goal to boost lift capabilities throughout the vast Indian Ocean territory. These vessels, at a cost of more than $3 billion, will join the US-built Jalashwa, acquired in 2008. In addition to the Jalashwa, the Navy has five landing ship tanks. “The Indian Navy is in dire need of modernising its amphibious capacity and enhancing its sealift capability,” said Probal Ghosh, senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, based here. “Given its large island assets and the fact that India is emerging as a security provider and guarantor in the Indian Ocean region [which has many island nations], the need of amphibious assets cannot be understated. The addition of four LPDs is hence an instrument in the fulfilment of India’s growing strategic role.”

Defence analyst Anil Jai Singh said the Navy’s lift requirement would be about a brigade (3,000 troops), which should be adequately addressed with the induction of four LPDs. But a follow-on program would need to be initiated soon after to maintain that capability. In early December, the Navy floated a $2.6 billion domestic tender for construction of four LPDs with bids sent only to domestic shipyards Larsen & Toubro, Pipavav Defence, Offshore Engineering and ABG Shipyard. The proposal is to build two LPDs at the selected private-sector yard and another two at the state-owned Hindustan Shipyard. It will mark the first time India has constructed a more than 20,000-ton LPD. For their bids to build the ships in India, Larsen & Toubro has tied up with Spain’s Navantia, while Pipavav Defence and Offshore Engineering has teamed with France’s DCNS, and ABG Shipyard with US company Alion.

Navy officials say in private that the service’s strategic lift capability is inadequate and must be improved to compete with that of China. “As the geostrategic drivers in the Indian Ocean region gather intensity, Indian naval assets, especially in ... littoral warfare will need to be enhanced considerably,” Ghosh said. “We not only need large LPDs but new landing craft utility squadrons and other smaller crafts, landing ship tanks and hovercrafts or hydrofoils to have a balanced littoral inventory. Most importantly, we need highly trained marine troops ... to carry out littoral operations.” A Defence Ministry official said blue water capabilities remain essential to prevent enemy vessels, including submarines, from reaching Indian coastal regions. This includes thwarting enemy offensive submarine activities and associated sea-based logistic support systems. “Presently, we have a credible sea-denial capability, but the delay in the modernisation of the submarine arm could lead to a critical deficit in the near future, which would become increasingly difficult to bridge if not addressed urgently,” Singh said.

Source: Defence News, 14 January
Indian Navy Set to Boost Presence in Indian Ocean Region

The year 2014 will see the hosting here of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit, the focus will be on the key element of maritime security cooperation between the neighbours separated by the Indian Ocean, the key waterway for trade between the West and the East. Besides India’s growing economic engagement with Africa, maritime security and naval capability are of crucial importance for a globalising India increasingly dependent on external markets and natural resources, as well as on global employment opportunities. Pointing to this global context, where India is an emerging power, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told a conference of navy commanders that “as we strive to realise our due place in the comity of nations. It goes without saying that the realisation of our goal lies in widening, deepening and expanding our interaction with all our economic partners, with all our neighbours, with all major powers.”

The Indian Ocean region is home to more than a quarter of the world’s population, and its waterways carry half of the world’s cargo ships and two-thirds of the world’s oil shipments. India has, in recent years, sought to expand its sphere of influence in the western Indian Ocean facing the coast of eastern Africa, with the primary driver of the maritime security initiative being the operations to tackle piracy off Somalia. The navy's efforts in the region have borne fruit in the maritime cooperation with island nations like Mauritius and Seychelles, besides significant initiatives involving some continental countries. “On the premise that the Indian Ocean is a natural area for us, the entire African coast facing us is important. In fact, island countries like Mauritius and Seychelles are absolutely vital for us,” Arvind Gupta, director-general of the defence ministry-funded think-tank Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), said. As an instance of maritime cooperation, he pointed out that India had sent a naval ship to Mozambique to provide security for the 2003 African Union summit in capital, Maputo. This was followed by India’s dispatch of two patrol boats for assisting in security during a World Economic Forum, leading to the signing of the 2006 MoU by which the navy engages in regular patrolling off the Mozambique coast.

Source: Oman Tribune, 14 January

Turkey Steadily Builds Its Coastal Muscles

Turkey is expanding its coastal defences to counter conventional and nonconventional security threats, primarily in the Aegean and Mediterranean, including massive illegal emigration. Tens of thousands of immigrants from Turkish soil end up at the shores of EU member Greece’s eastern Aegean islands every year. But on Dec. 16, Turkey and the EU signed a treaty that will allow EU member states to return illegal immigrants to Turkey. In return, Turkey hopes the EU will ease visa restrictions on Turkish nationals in the next three years. “The new circumstances prompt us to better safeguard human trafficking on the Aegean Sea,” a senior naval officer admits. “We are planning to upgrade surveillance kits and
equipment” to combat the problem. “Turkey’s geographical features naturally make most naval programs feature littoral warfare specifications,” the official said. “The Turkish Navy has no ambitions for open-seas operations, so its primary role is littoral defence.”

Turkey is bordered by the Black Sea to the north, the Mediterranean to the south and the Aegean to the west. In the northwest, there is also the internal Sea of Marmara, between the straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, important waterways that connect the Black Sea with the rest of the world. The Turkish coastline is 4,474 miles, excluding islands. In August, Turkish defence electronics specialist Aselsan won what defence analysts view as an ambitious contract to design, develop and produce strategic, multi-mission phased-array radar known by its Turkish acronym, CAFRAD Faz-1. The CAFRAD radar will be similar to the ALPHA multi-mission M-2258 advanced lightweight phased-array naval radar developed by Israel Aerospace Industries and Elta for blue water and littoral warfare support. Aselsan, Turkey’s biggest defence firm will work on CAFRAD with state scientific research institute TÜBİTAK. The first phase will see development of illumination radar and a nonrotating identification friend-or-foe system. The second will involve the development of long-range surveillance and multifunctional radars. Aselsan officials said the CAFRAD demonstrator will define the primary antenna mast architecture for the TF-2000, an air defence frigate Turkey has been developing, and for the vessel’s combat management and area air defence missile systems. They say the work would focus on more sophisticated tests and development after 2014.

“Turkey’s geography makes it a must to devise and build strong littoral warfare architecture,” the senior naval officer said. “Several [Navy] weapon programs feature a two-pronged approach to handle conventional and nonconventional threats.” This two-pronged approach requires fast boats, patrol boats, coastal radars, landing ships, maritime patrol aircraft, corvettes, submarines and other amphibious platforms, as well as support units such as electronic and command-and-control systems designed to fight terrorist attacks. For instance, the government in 2013 signed a deal with military software specialist Havelsan for the procurement of coastal surveillance radars for the Coast Guard. While Turkey’s frigates and submarines sail in open waters, a general lack of supply and support ships makes it difficult for the Navy to conduct long-term blue-water missions, so its naval defence concept is primarily littoral-based. Turkey announced in late December it had awarded a contract for the country’s first landing platform dock (LPD) to local shipyard Sedef, which is partnered with Spain’s Navantia. The vessel will have a primarily littoral mission.

The planned amphibious assault vessel will carry a battalion-sized unit of 1,000 troops and personnel, eight utility helicopters, three UAVs and 150 vehicles, including battle tanks. A ski jump at the front of the deck can be used to launch fighter aircraft. If contract negotiations with Sedef conclude in a deal, estimated between $500 million and $1 billion, Turkey will be the third operator in the world of this ship type after Spain and Australia. In a separate effort last January, Turkey’s decision-maker on procurement, the Defence Industry Executive Committee, awarded a corvette contract for six vessels to RMK Marine, an Istanbul shipyard owned by the country’s biggest business group, Koc Holding. The government later scrapped that decision after an inspection body found that some rival shipyards had
not been invited to bid. The bidding has been renewed. Procurement officials have said two of a total of eight Milgem corvettes would now be built by the military shipyards, and the remaining four (the first two had been delivered by the military shipyards) would be commissioned to the winner of the new race. Each vessel would cost Turkey $300 million to $350 million, the officials said. Turkey plans to use the experience gained in the Milgem project to develop its first national frigate, the TF-2000, in the 2020s. Turkey’s development of naval UAVs also is designed to ensure coastal security. Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) has been developing and testing the Anka, a medium-altitude, long-endurance drone. Such UAVs may operate for 24 hours at an altitude of 10,000 feet. Turkish procurement and TAI officials say they are working on a program to add satellite communications capabilities to the Anka. In later years, TAI also will develop a naval version of the drone.

Source: Defence News, 14 January

'West Coast Free From Piracy'

The threat of piracy has been wiped out from the country’s West Coast through the combined efforts of the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard, Vice Admiral Anurag G Thapliyal, Director General, Indian Coast Guard, has said. Vice Admiral Thapliyal stressed on the need for the entire length of the country’s coasts to be free from vulnerability to piracy. “The number of piracy incidents has come down. With incidents of piracy spreading to the Arabian Sea, more merchant vessels are plying closer to the Indian coast. Some of these vessels have armed guards on-board for their security. “For the last two years, piracy has been declining. We have asked for a rollback of the longitudinal markings off the high-risk areas for piracy,” the vice admiral said, while addressing media on-board ICGS Samrat after the Indo-Japan Coast Guard exercise. Vice Admiral Thapliyal said the demand is to roll back the longitude from 78 degrees to 65 degrees. When asked if the demand was made in the backdrop of the ‘Enrica Lexie’ incident of 2011, he replied in the affirmative. “The reason why the high-risk area was moved from 65 degrees to 78 degrees does not exist now. There are no incidents of piracy along the Indian coasts now,” he said, adding that the incidents of piracy have moved to the African coast.

It was following incidents of piracy as near as Lakshadweep that the industry bodies working with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) decided to move the longitude marking off the high-risk area in the Arabian Sea from 65 degrees to 78east. One of the fallouts of this classification was an increase in the insurance premium of vessels plying in areas with a high risk of piracy. With piracy coming down, India has been demanding a rollback of this international guideline, designating seas close to its western coast as being under high risk to piracy. “We need a multi-pronged approach in this regard,” Vice Admiral Thapliyal said. He added that efforts were being made to get the move approved by various agencies. There are a lot of issues associated with this, like that of international merchant vessels coming closer to the coast. A coordinated effort with the Ministry of Shipping, the IMO and other shipping related agencies is needed for the same.

Source: The New Indian Express, 14 January
US Navy to Replace Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carrier in Japan

The US Navy has announced that it would deploy the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan to Japan in the summer of 2015 to replace USS George Washington. USS Ronald Reagan, commissioned in 2003, will be moved from San Diego to the Yokosuka Naval Base as part of the Pentagon's efforts to bolster combat readiness in the Pacific region where tensions have flared in recent months over a tiny Japanese-controlled island chain also claimed by China. 'The security environment in the Indo-Asia Pacific requires that the US Navy station the most capable ships forward,' the Navy said in a statement. The Pentagon has said the US-Japan defence treaty covers the disputed island chain, known as the Senkakus in Japan and as the Diaoyus in China. Under the treaty, the US is required to come to Japan's aid if it comes under attack. Washington has urged China and Japan to resolve the dispute peacefully, but tensions increased in November when Beijing declared an 'air defence zone' in the East China Sea, requiring all planes to identify themselves before entering the zone. The George Washington carrier will move to Norfolk, Virginia to complete a multi-year nuclear refuelling and overhaul. Most of the crew of the George Washington will transfer over to USS Reagan, "so there will be no mass movement of families overseas," Jon Nylander, a Navy spokesman in Japan, said. The US Navy currently has 10 aircraft carriers with one usually under maintenance.

Source: [Global Security](https://www.globalsecurity.org), 15 January

Maritime Watchdog: Piracy Falls to Six-Year Low

An international maritime watchdog says piracy at sea fell to its lowest levels in six years in 2013, due in part to a significant drop in incidents off the coast of Somalia. [The International Maritime Bureau (IMB)](https://www.imb.org) says there were 264 attacks last year, including 15 incidents off the Somali coast. The IMB says there were 75 incidents near Somalia in 2012. The IMB says a number of factors have contributed to the decline in piracy incidents off the Somali coast, including a use of armed security teams and the role of international navies. The group also credits increased stability in Somalia's central government. The IMB says piracy in West Africa made up almost one-fifth of attacks worldwide last year. Many of those involved Nigerian pirates and armed groups. In October, the IMB said the attacks had made West African waters among the most dangerous in the world.

Source: [Voice of America](https://www.voanews.com), 15 January

INS Vikrant Has Completed Operational Life, Best to Dispose It: MoD to HC

Justifying its decision to scrap INS Vikrant, the Union Ministry of Defence today told the Bombay High Court that the ship has completed its operational life and it would be in the best interest of the naval services to dispose it instead of preserving it. "INS
Vikrant's hull is over 70 years old. It was decommissioned on completion of its operational life. It would be in the best interest of the naval services to dispose of such ships as expeditiously as possible. At a certain stage, ships can no longer be economically refurbished or repaired. Maintenance and berthing of such ships requires heavy expenditure of public funds," the MoD said in an affidavit. The affidavit was filed in reply to a public interest litigation demanding that INS Vikrant, India's first aircraft carrier, to be preserved and converted into a maritime museum. The PIL sought a direction to the Union government to not auction off the ship as scrap.

The Union ministry in its affidavit further said that the Indian Navy has been actively involved in preserving and maintaining INS Vikrant until now. According to the affidavit, the Navy has till now spent Rs 22 crore for repairs and dry dockings of the ship. "Considerable amount of expenditure has been incurred in maintaining the ship pending its conversion to a museum as the Maharashtra government had proposed to the defence ministry in 1998," said the affidavit filed by Admiral Shankar Mathur, chief staff officer of the Western Naval Command. "Since then the state government has neither arranged an alternate berth for the ship nor did they accept the responsibility of safety of the ship. It has also been unable to convert the ship into a museum. The Navy has given their full and active support to the government but the same has not yielded any desired results," the affidavit said. It added that the ship is now in a dangerous position and needs to be disposed of urgently. A division bench of Chief Justice Mohit Shah and Justice M S Sanklecha has posted the petition for hearing on January 18. The petition has sought quashing of the tender issued by the ministry inviting bids for scrapping the ship. The auction is scheduled to be held on January 29.

Source: The New Indian Express, 16 January

**British Explore Maritime UAS from Ships**

The UK Royal Navy (RN) deployed its first maritime unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), when an Insitu Scan Eagle system was added to RFA Cardigan Bay, which is supporting the EU anti-piracy patrols off Somalia. The service is also planning a rotary-wing UAS trial on a ship later this year, having contracted with Agusta Westland for a concept capability demonstration (CCD). Boeing’s Insitu subsidiary is providing two Scan Eagle systems equipped with EO/IR video sensors to the Royal Navy under a contractor-owned, contractor-operated contract signed last June, and lasting through March 2015. The Navy is providing the tasking and sortie generation, said Cdr. Bow Wheaton, the maritime aviation capability officer at RN headquarters. He told AIN during a media briefing that the Scan Eagle would be launched and recovered on the ship’s helicopter platform. The Navy hopes to exploit the endurance of the UAV to extend the ship’s surveillance coverage, he added. Insitu will provide 600 hours of
flight per month under the contract. The second system will be deployed on HMS Somerset, a frigate.

The rotary-wing UAS CCD contract was issued to Agusta Westland by the UK Ministry of Defence six months ago and is worth just over $3 million. The company is modifying a PZL SW-4 light helicopter for the trial. It has already flown at PZL’s Swidnik base, but with a safety pilot. Agusta Westland bought the Polish company in 2010, having previously held a minority share and tasked it to provide fuselage structures for the AW139. Before securing the MoD contract, Agusta Westland had already embarked on its own technology demonstration of optionally manned helicopters, named Project SOLO and using the SW-4. Cdr. Wheaton said that land-based trials of the unmanned helicopter in the UK would start this summer, followed by deployment to sea on a Type 23 frigate. “We want to investigate the control software that is key to safe operation, and explore the trade-offs between lighter and heavier payloads, and the helicopter’s endurance,” he told AIN. An Agusta Westland spokesman told AIN that in addition to surveillance, other potential applications include maritime surveillance and hydrography. The CCD would provide a technology roadmap and a whole-life cost model, to assist with a potential future acquisition program.

Source: [AIN Online](http://www.airforces industri.com), 16 January

**China’s Maritime Value Expected to Reach 5.4 Trillion Yuan**

The gross product value generated by China’s marine industry in 2013 is expected to reach 5.4 trillion Yuan (893.4 billion US dollars), up 7.9 percent year on year, according to a national maritime work conference. China finished a survey of the country’s islands, identifying a total of 11,933 islands, with 3,481 of them newly named. It compiled a list of standard names and an atlas of the islands, according to the conference. In 2013, China also established a monitoring system for the islands and set up a database of information about them. Last year, Chinese vessels continued patrols in the territorial waters surrounding the Diaoyu Islands to maintain the country’s maritime rights and achieved effective management and control over Huangyan Island. Since August 2013, Chinese ships have carried out patrols in the territorial waters around Beikang Ansha and Nankang Ansha, according to the conference.

Source: [East day](http://www.eastday.com), 16 January

**Indonesia Increasing Maritime Security Due to Australian Navy**

Indonesia will increase maritime patrols after what it called deplorable territorial violations by Australia’s navy as it tried to turn back asylum seekers, worsening an already bitter dispute between the two neighbours over the issue. Earlier, Australia apologised for a number of recent incursions into Indonesian waters as part of Canberra’s controversial policy.
of pushing back boats carrying would-be asylum seekers entering its side of the sea. "Indonesia...will intensify its maritime patrols in areas where violations of its sovereignty and territorial integrity are at risk," the political and security coordinating ministry said in a revised statement. It withdrew an earlier statement which had used a softer tone. The revised statement called the incursions deplorable, demanding formal diplomatic clarification and assurances that such incidents would not be repeated. Australian Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said he had been told earlier about the "inadvertent breaches" on multiple days and immediately informed the Indonesian navy.

The latest spat comes as often tense relations between the neighbours touched their lowest since the 1990s after allegations late last year that Australia had spied on President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and other senior Indonesian officials. Indonesia downgraded its relations with Australia in November as a result of those allegations, suspending intelligence and military cooperation, including over asylum seekers. The increasing strain on ties has serious economic implications. Indonesia is a major importer of Australian agricultural products such as wheat and live cattle. Australia is Indonesia's 10th-largest export market. Morrison's office also said Foreign Minister Julie Bishop had sent a letter to her Indonesian counterpart. Morrison said Australia "deeply regrets" the breaches of territorial sovereignty but at the same time maintained Australia's right to protect its own borders. "We have offered the apologies, we have been very clear about what has occurred both with Indonesia and here today," he told reporters. "But we won't let this setback get in the way of the job we were elected to do, which is stop the boats," he said.

The number of refugees involved pales in comparison with other countries but is a polarising political issue in Australia and stokes tension with Indonesia over border policies that have been criticised by the United Nations and international human rights groups. Prime Minister Tony Abbott's conservative government came to power partly because of its tough campaign against asylum seekers after an easing of border policies by the former Labour government that resulted in a rise in the number of boats. Its policies include offshore detention centres that hold thousands of asylum seekers, many of whom have fled conflicts in Afghanistan, Darfur, Pakistan, Somalia and Syria.

CONCERNS OVER SECRECY

Abbott's government is also coming under fire at home over the secrecy surrounding its "Operation Sovereign Borders" asylum policy, which he recently likened to a war. He has said secrecy is important to prevent "the enemy" receiving information. Morrison moved to restrict access to information even further as he touted the operation's success, refusing to confirm reports that the navy had forced the return of a number of boats to Indonesia. The UN refugee agency has asked for information from the government, warning that Australia could be breaking international law if it is forcing boats back to Indonesia without proper regard for refugees' safety. Graeme McGregor, a spokesman for Amnesty International, called "absurd" Canberra's continued refusal to provide greater information about the policy to the public in the wake of an incursion that he says threatens to derail the regional framework on refugee resettlement. "I think the public have a right to know how their money is being spent, and I think the current government's policies of secrecy and masking
that information are not helpful," he told Reuters. Many trying to reach Australia pay people-smugglers in Indonesia to make the perilous journey in often unsafe boats.

Source: The Maritime Executive, 17 January

Dubai Sets Up New Maritime Safety Policy

The Dubai Maritime City Authority (DMCA) is proceeding with the implementation of its Maritime Safety Policy as part of the first-of-its-kind maritime sector strategy’s initiatives for developing, organising and promoting Dubai’s maritime industry. The new policy reflects the commitment of local government authorities to providing all forms of support to consolidate Dubai’s position as a leading global maritime hub. It will promote maritime development and safety by requiring higher levels of operational performance and advanced, highly-efficient infrastructure capable of ensuring the safety of workers, passengers, and visitors.

The Maritime Safety Policy comprises a set of regulations, guidelines and initiatives focusing on the three vital areas of marine vessels and cruise ships, marine operations and passengers. A key contributor to Dubai’s World Expo 2020 hosting preparations, the Policy’s series of unified standards comply with international maritime benchmarks. It serves as a foundation for supporting the national economy by attracting foreign investments to the local maritime sector and developing industry components while promoting Dubai’s regional and international maritime competitiveness.

Amer Ali, executive director, Dubai Maritime City Authority, said: “DMCA believes that establishing a comprehensive policy and unified guidelines for ensuring high levels of maritime safety is instrumental to achieving the ultimate objective of raising the bar in maritime activities and ensuring safe navigation. This initiative will enhance the operational performance of Dubai’s maritime sector and further boost the development of the national economy; it will facilitate meaningful maritime contributions to economic diversification via the creation of new growth opportunities.”

“The Maritime Safety Policy approved by the Dubai Executive Council’s Health and Safety Committee reflects DMCA’s commitment to establishing an integrated approach to maritime safety aimed at developing, organising and promoting the local maritime industry. It will raise the sector’s competitiveness to expedite Dubai’s transformation into a leading international maritime hub,” he added.

Ali also noted that the ongoing economic successes of both recreational- and business-oriented maritime events have encouraged DMCA to lay down safety-related regulations and legislations to complement the ongoing efforts of government authorities and maritime-related entities to develop Dubai’s maritime infrastructures with an eye towards establishing a safe and vibrant maritime industry. He further
emphasised DMCA’s commitment to sharing technical expertise and research; coordinating with local and regional partners to uplift and monitor the levels of maritime safety in Dubai; promoting the quality of local maritime services; and harnessing industry’s vital contributions to economic growth.

The Maritime Safety Policy is the result of mutual cooperation between DMCA and a number of government authorities and industry-related entities in Dubai. The latter include DP World, the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, Dubai Municipality, the Roads and Transport Authority, the Department of Finance, the General Directorate of Civil Defence, Dubai Police, the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs, Dry docks World, and Dubai Customs, among many others.

Source: The Maritime Executive, 18 January

China’s ‘Maritime Silk Road’ Initiative Key to Enhance ASEAN Ties

Cambodian experts have voiced their supports for China’s initiative of a “Maritime Silk Road” in cooperation with the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), saying this plan would bring better connections and closer maritime cooperation if it became a reality. “This initiative is very good since China and ASEAN are neighbours and have good cooperation in all fields,” Mao Thora, secretary of state at the Ministry of Commerce, he said. “This expresses China’s strong commitment to build a region of peace, development and prosperity.”

“If such project comes to a reality, it will further enhance the relations and cooperation between China and ASEAN in economy, trade, investment, tourism and so on,” he said. It will be easier to exchange goods between China and ASEAN and among ASEAN countries themselves.” He said for Cambodia, it really needs more investment in port infrastructure development. The idea of a “Maritime Silk Road” was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Indonesia last October and also by Premier Li Keqiang during the 16th China-ASEAN leaders meeting in Brunei the same month. Ros Chantrabot, advisor to Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, said Beijing’s vision of reviving the “Maritime Silk Road” showed China’s good intention to help develop maritime infrastructures in ASEAN. “This approach, if happens, will bring better connectivity between ports and maritime cooperation will further develop stronger economic, political and security relations between China and ASEAN,” he said.

However, he said disputes on the South China Sea could be a major obstacle to such ambitious project. “If the spats on the South China Sea have not been solved out peacefully, they will be still a major challenge for the initiative,” he said. Nguon Meng Tech, director general of Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, said the vision of “Maritime Silk Road” was an ambitious approach, but it could be achievable if all sides are willing to build it.

Source: Live Trading News, 19 January
Russia and China to Hold Joint Exercises in Mediterranean

The Russian Ministry of Defence reports that Russian and Chinese sailors taking part in the international operation of providing safe transportation for Syrian chemical weapons may carry out joint tactical exercises in the Mediterranean Sea. The Russian Ministry of Defence reports that a group of commanders of the Russian Navy permanent contingent in the Mediterranean Sea who are stationed aboard the heavy nuclear-powered missile cruiser Pyotr Veliky has visited the Chinese patrol ship Yang Chen. According to the report, aboard the Chinese patrol ship the Russian sailors and their Chinese colleagues discussed the prospects of joint tactical exercises in the Mediterranean Sea. They agreed that such exercises can be carried out in the near future to raise the level of operative compatibility between Russian and Chinese ships during joint operations in the eastern Mediterranean. The main elements of the exercises will be training operational teamwork, combatting the current terrorist threat and carrying out joint rescue operations at sea, the Ministry of Defence specifies.

Source: Eurasia Review, 19 January

Navy Gets Ready to Start Vikramaditya Flying Ops

The Indian Navy has launched preparations to start flying operations from aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. The MiG-29K fighter aircraft have started taking off from the ski-jump and making arrested landings. Having finished training in Russia, 10 top naval pilots have returned home to operate from INS Vikramaditya, which is berthed at Karwar naval base. Sources said the newly created Shore-Based Test Facility (SBTF), which is a replica of an aircraft carrier's flight deck on the ground, has now become fully operational. After gaining confidence, the pilots will move on to operate on the floating flight deck of INS Vikramaditya. Once the MiG-29Ks are fully integrated with the carrier, the 45,000-tonne ship will become part of the Western fleet. Apart from the MiG-29Ks, the maritime version of Light Combat Aircraft will also be tested on the facility. The officials said the integration of MiG-29Ks with INS Vikramaditya will take around a month or so. Till now only the Russian pilots had operated from the ship during the trial runs of the carrier. Only a handful of Indian pilots had got the exposure during the trial process.

Source: Daily Mail, 22 January

French Navy Vessel Rescues 11 Indian Sailors from Suspected Pirates

According to a media release of the Embassy of France in New Delhi, the rescue operation took place on January 18 off the coast of Oman. The embassy release further revealed that the French Landing Platform Dock (LPD) Siroco, a flagship of the EU Naval Force Atalanta, released the 11 Indian crew members of a dhow that had been attacked by suspected pirates at the mouth of the Gulf of Aden. A boarding
team from the Sirocco arrested five suspected pirates who were holding the Indian crew hostage, the embassy release stated. The release said that the headquarters of EU Naval Force Atalanta on the LPD Sirocco was alerted, via the global maritime information exchange network, of the attack of an oil tanker, the Nave Atropos, sailing under the Marshall Islands flag.

Late in the evening, at least one skiff opened fire while approaching the oil tanker. The on-board armed security team immediately returned fire, forcing the pirates to sail away from the merchant ship and to cease their attack. Relayed to all ships and military assets in the area, the incident started off a prompt international coordination operation carried out by the Atalanta headquarters. All the information gathered and regularly updated, with the support of other counter-piracy forces near the attack area, helped to zero in on the location of a dhow suspected of having served as the attackers' mother-ship. The Sirocco, then situated around 200 nautical miles (less than 400 km) from this dhow, undertook to intercept it. A maritime patrol aircraft from other counter-piracy forces and the Sirocco's own helicopter pursued the dhow for several hours before it was intercepted by the LPDs on January 18. The French crew visually identified the dhow as the Shane Hind, for which they had been on the lookout since the oil tanker attack.

Source: News Track India, 22 January

**Calls for Maritime Border with East Timor**

Prime Minister Tony Abbott is being urged to negotiate with East Timor to establish permanent maritime boundaries with Australia’s northern neighbour, determining clear ownership of valuable oil and gas fields. The Timor Sea Justice Campaign has called on Mr Abbott to show goodwill and draw a divide that gives East Timor fair ownership of resources close to its coastline. "He needs to sit down in good faith with his Timorese counterpart and show that he's ready to talk about a permanent boundary," Campaign spokesman Tom Clarke said. "No more of these temporary deals that simply short-change East Timor." The campaign has been launched as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) hears arguments from both countries about Australia’s alleged seizure of documents in 2004 during the formation of an oil and gas treaty that East Timor wants annulled. The case continues. An open letter to Mr Abbott from the Timor Sea Justice Campaign asks that an equitable boundary be determined in accordance with international law. “Timor is not asking for charity, they are only asking for what they are legally entitled to, no more and no less,” Mr Clarke said. Without such a boundary East Timor would lose billions of dollars in oil and gas revenue, he said.

Source: Nine News, 22 January

**Iran Naval Fleet Sets Sail for Atlantic Ocean**

The 29th Fleet of the Iranian Navy has headed to the Atlantic Ocean in line with the country’s policy to safeguard naval routes for its vessels. The flotilla, which comprises Kharg helicopter carrier and Sabalan destroyer, left Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas for the Navy's first-ever mission in the Atlantic Ocean. The fleet will travel some 25,000 kilometres during its three-month mission to get to the
Atlantic. In a ceremony to deploy the fleet, Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said that the 29th Fleet is sent on a mission to provide safety to Iran's shipping lanes in international waters and to provide training for the new recruits. Sayyari said that Iran is among the important countries that safeguard naval routes for vessels in the pirate-infested Gulf of Aden and Bab al-Mandab Strait.

Deputy Commander of the Iranian Army Brigadier General Abdolrahim Mousavi also said in the ceremony that Iran sends naval fleets to international waters with the aim of conveying a message of peace and friendship to world countries and displaying its defence capabilities at sea. In recent years, Iran's Navy has increased its presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for merchant vessels and tankers. In line with international efforts against piracy, the Iranian Navy has also been conducting patrols in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008 in order to safeguard merchant containers and oil tankers owned or leased by Iran or other countries. Iran's Navy has managed to foil several attacks on both Iranian and foreign tankers during its missions in international waters.

Source: Global Security, 22 January

Indian Navy Gets Its Third Saryu-Class Patrol Vessel

India's navy has taken delivery of its third Saryu-class Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessel, the indigenously designed and built Sumedha. The 345-foot ship is the 200th vessel built by Goa Shipyards on India's west coast, the Times of India reported. The 2,300-ton Sumedha is one of the largest Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessel class of the Indian Navy and the largest ship constructed by Goa Shipyard, The Times reported. The first ship, the Saryu, was handed over to the navy in December 2012 and the second ship, Sunayna, was handed over in September last year. Cdr Anand Kulkarni, Commanding Officer-designate of the Sumedha, accepted the vessel on behalf of the navy during a ceremony at the shipyard, the Times reported. Saryu-class vessels have a crew of 108, two SEMT Pielstick diesel engines and can reach more than 25 knots with a range of 6,000 nautical miles.

The ships have a 76mm Ottomelara gun, two 30mm close-in guns and six chaff launchers for self-protection. Saryu vessels also have a helicopter landing deck for light helicopters and have two rigid inflatable fast motor boats. The handover comes as the navy hopes to replace its aging fleet of 12 Pondicherry and Karwar class minesweepers. Defence analysts Janes Defence Weekly reported in October India had signed a $1.2 billion contract with South Korean shipyard Kangnam for eight minesweepers. The Hindu newspaper reported in 2011 that the proposed deal with Kangnam Corp. calls for building only two of the vessels at the shipyard in Busan, South Korea. The other six will be manufactured by Goa Shipyards after a transfer-of-technology agreement.

India's 200-foot long Pondicherry-class ships were built for the Indian Navy by the Soviet Union from 1978 to 1988 and are modified versions of the Russian Natya-class minesweepers. Later Pondicherry-class vessels often are referred to as Karwar-class ships because of upgrades and the addition of surface-to-air missiles. The Indian government also is looking to build four Landing Platform Docks, but
side-lined the Cochin Shipyard in December when it announced the list of private firms that could be building the vessels.

The Times of India quoted sources as saying the navy had sent bid documents to three private shipyards: ABG Shipyard, Larsen & Toubro and Pipavav Defence and Offshore Engineering. The government already has chosen state-run Hindustan Shipyard to build two of the landing platform docks and the winning company among the three private shipyards will build the remaining two. "We understand that some rethinking is going on with them [navy] in exploring the possibilities of including CSL in this deal," a senior Cochin Shipyard official told the Times.

Source: UPI, 23 January

**PACOM Keys Capabilities to 21st-Century Asia-Pacific**

America’s rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region is on track, and US Pacific Command is staying on top of the growing sophistication of today’s weapon systems in what PACOM commander Navy Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III calls “the most militarised region in the world.” Locklear briefed the press at the Pentagon this morning on PACOM’s progress in leading the Defence Department’s rebalance to the Indo-Asia-Pacific and the United States’ relative dominance in the region with such systems heading into the 21st century. “The rapid technological advancement of warfare capabilities and the proliferation of these capabilities across the globe will challenge us in the future,” Locklear said. “We must also ensure that we invest in the proper mix of defensive and offensive capabilities for our ships,” he added, “… and that the [ships’] capabilities are both lethal and dominant.”

The security push in the region comes with the growth of economies and because of the increasing defence requirements of Asia-Pacific nations. “They’re buying … 21st-century weapons. They’re not the same weapon systems we dealt with 30 years ago … so it stands to reason that our relative dominance in those technologies and weapons systems will have diminished over time,” the admiral said. “That’s not something to be afraid of,” he added. “It’s just something to be pragmatic about.” Discussing country-by-country highlights of ongoing operations, Locklear began with PACOM’s contribution to the multinational Operation Damayan, established to help the Philippine government with the deadly aftermath of November’s super-typhoon Haiyan.

“There was a quick transition in that operation to the armed forces of the Philippines and ultimately to the government of the Philippines to be able to continue that recovery,” Locklear said, adding that the operation “demonstrates the value of working together on [humanitarian assistance/disaster response] –related training and initiatives so we can respond more quickly and more effectively” during natural disasters. Locklear also travelled to Thailand and Vietnam. In Thailand, which is experiencing political unrest, “it’s important to highlight that the Thai military has responded favourably in support of their government, a democracy that’s working through these challenges,” Locklear noted. “In my time talking with the government
and the military leadership, they highlighted their efforts to maintain peaceful
democratic processes and we wish them all the best,” he added.

Locklear’s recent trip to Vietnam was the first visit by a PACOM commander since
last July, when Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang and President Barack
Obama met at the White House for the first bilateral meeting. Afterward they
announced the establishment of a new Comprehensive Partnership to increase trade
and commerce, military-to-military cooperation, multilateral work on issues like
disaster relief, and scientific and educational exchanges. “We’re working closely with
the Vietnamese military and we’re looking for opportunities to expand and grow our
partnerships, especially when it comes to humanitarian [and] disaster relief
operations,” Locklear said, adding that the second PACOM-sponsored disaster
management centre opened in Vietnam while he was there. In answer to a question
about the December South China Sea incident in which the US Navy guided-missile
ship Cowpens took evasive action to avoid colliding with Chinese Navy ship
Liaoning, Locklear described an evolving environment.

“As we look at the growing number of navies that are operating and the growing
number of security concerns in this region, we have to expect militaries are going to
have to encounter and operate around each other,” he said, including the US and
Chinese navies. “This highlights to the [People’s Liberation Army] and the US
military,” the admiral added, “that we have to do better at being able to communicate
with each other in a way that allows us [avoid] a miscalculation that won’t be
productive in the security environment.” Locklear said PACOM has had defence
officials in Beijing for the past two days. “We have a mechanism in place with the
Chinese where we meet routinely to talk about maritime incidents and how we
interact with each other,” the admiral said, adding that he hopes “we will … continue
to learn to interact and progress in the professional manner that we exhibit toward
each other. This is the best way forward.” Ultimately, Locklear said, for mutual
security, China and its military must be regional leaders and coexist in its part of the
world with US allies and with US and allied militaries.

“They’re going to have to work hard to get through some of the … territorial disputes
they’re having with their neighbours. We don’t take sides on the territorial disputes,”
the admiral said, “but we do expect them to be done peacefully.” In the end, he
added, US forces in the Pacific area of responsibility will operate freely in
international waters and international airspace. “That’s the bottom line,” Locklear
stated. “We will operate there and we’ll operate professionally and we’ll operate
peacefully. That’s the message to all the militaries that operate in that region.” In
South Asia, India has a critical role in security for a peaceful Indian Ocean, the
admiral said, and the United States welcomes that role. The January 2012 Defence
Strategic Guidance directs Locklear “to develop a long-term strategic relationship
with India and we’re moving in that direction,” he said. A cornerstone of that long-
term key relationship is to determine how the countries will partner in areas of similar
interests and capabilities, the admiral said, and how to make this happen despite
radically different procurement systems. “The Indian government and military
recognise their procurement system is different than our[s] … and we’re working
through how to streamline those differences,” Locklear explained, “… so we can
move forward with some of the key technologies and key capabilities we want to
develop.”
Elsewhere in the region, Japan and the US soon will have a defence review to determine elements such as force laydown that will describe the future alliance, the admiral said, and the nations seem to be moving in a positive direction on the Futenma Replacement Facility in Okinawa. In the land domain, he added, DOD is pursuing an initiative with its Australian partners involving the Marine Corps and the Air Force, and PACOM is inspecting the shared infrastructure in each alliance country to ensure it is set for the 21st century. In response to a question about North Korea and its threatened use of weapons of mass destruction, the admiral said that nation’s continued nuclearisation and pursuit of missile technologies under the control of an unpredictable young leader make North Korea a “potentially very dangerous” place. “In the end,” Locklear said, “we must demand a total denuclearisation of North Korea. It’s in the interest of not only South Korea and the United States but of all the people in the region. And now it’s in the best interests of everybody in the world.”

Source: Eurasia Review, 24 January

Indian Ocean Cooperation is Important for India and Mozambique

Geographically positioned as a key African ally as India seeks to become a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region, cooperation between Mozambique and India is crucial for both the countries, says Mozambican Minister of Mineral Resources Esperanca Bias. "Indian Ocean cooperation is important for both our countries, as well as for other countries too," Bias told IANS in an interview here. "I know that you have a lot of expertise on that (maritime security) and we want to take advantage of it", Bias added. Maritime cooperation between Mozambique, on the southeast African coast, and India is more than a decade old since the latter sent a naval ship to Mozambique to provide security for the 2003 African Union summit in the capital Maputo. This was followed by the dispatch of two Indian patrol boats for assisting in security during an international conference, leading to the signing of the 2006 MoU by which the Indian Navy engages in regular patrolling off the Mozambique coast.

Mozambique is also part of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) that includes naval representatives from the littoral states and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). "We are taking advantage of India's expertise because we are neighbours, separated by the Indian Ocean. We have many Indian companies working in Mozambique," the Mozambican minister said. The Indian Ocean region is home to more than a quarter of the world's population and its waterways carry half of the world's cargo ships and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments. India is the 8th largest foreign investor in Mozambique, with the investment flow roughly estimated to be around $600 million. Bilateral trade crossed the one billion US dollars mark in 2012-13 and was worth $1.28 billion during the fiscal year.

Source: Two Circles, 24 January

India Invites Japan for India-US Malabar Naval War Games
Injecting some much-needed thrust to its rapidly expanding strategic partnership with Japan, India has invited the Japanese forces to take part in this year's edition of the India-US Malabar naval war games that have riled China in the past. India and Japan also decided to hold another joint working group meeting in March to discuss the sale of Japanese US-2i ShinMayva amphibious aircraft to Indian Navy, apart from ramping up defence ties through regular joint combat exercises and military exchanges as well as cooperation in anti-piracy, maritime security and counter-terrorism. Both the Malabar war games and the proposed sale of amphibious planes are crucial in the sense that they mark a departure from the past, both for India and Japan. India has largely restricted the Malabar exercise to a bilateral one with the US after China protested against the 2007 edition of the war games in the Bay of Bengal since they were expanded to include the Australian, Japanese and Singaporean navies as well.

China has always viewed any multi-lateral naval grouping in its neighbourhood as part of a grand strategy to build a security cooperation axis in the Asia-Pacific region to "contain" it. Shrugging aside such concerns this time, India, US and Japan will hold the Malabar war games off the coast of Japan in August-September this year. The joint statement issued after the Manmohan Singh-Shinzo Abe meeting, in fact, welcomed India's invitation to the Japanese maritime self-defence force to take part in the Malabar exercise. China, of course, figures high on the radar screens of both. India and Japan are wary of China's increasingly assertive behaviour, especially in the contentious South and East China Seas where it is locked in territorial disputes with its neighbours ranging from Vietnam to Japan, as well as the rapid modernisation of the People's Liberation Army.

While Japan has been quite vocal about all this, India has tried to strike a fine balance between countries like the US and Japan on one side and China on the other. India and China are also of course competing for the same strategic space in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), which New Delhi views as its own backyard. On the amphibious aircraft front, Japan is trying to end its almost five-decade-old self-imposed embargo to export military hardware and software by selling at least a dozen US-2i planes to India to set the ball rolling. "The discussions are still at a preliminary stage. But yes, India would like to acquire armed amphibious planes for their operational logistics and search-and-rescue capabilities," said an official. PM Manmohan Singh made it quite clear that the India-Japan partnership was "essential for peace, prosperity and stability in the Asian, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions". "We are working together on promoting maritime security and advancing our energy security. Together, and with other countries in the region and beyond, we seek an open, balanced, inclusive and rule-based regional architecture that fosters regional peace, stability and prosperity," he said.

Source: The Times of India, 25 January

**China Ships in Disputed Waters after Japanese PM's WWI Claim**

Chinese ships sailed through disputed waters off Tokyo-controlled islands days after Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe caused an international stir by comparing Sino-Japanese relations with the run-up to World War One. Three Chinese coastguard vessels spent around two hours in the 12-nautical-mile territorial waters off one of
the Senkakus, which China claims and calls the Diaoyus, Japan's coastguard said.

China’s State Oceanic Administration said three China Coast Guard vessels ‘continued their patrol in the territorial waters around Diaoyu Islands’, the official Xinhua news agency reported. The latest patrol came as Abe was in New Delhi, where he and Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh affirmed plans to strengthen defence cooperation, including conducting joint maritime exercises on a ‘regular basis with increased frequency’.

His three-day visit to India is being keenly watched by China, analysts say. Beijing is sometimes uneasy about what it sees as an attempt by Japan to encircle it. Beijing also has an often fractious relationship with Delhi, partly because of a border dispute that erupted into a brief war in 1962. India is keen to burnish friendships in the region to offset its neighbour's growing might. Abe was in Delhi days after he drew a comparison between Japan and China’s relations and those of Britain and Germany as they stumbled towards World War One. For its part, Beijing has sought to conjure the spectre of Nazism by urging Abe to emulate Germany’s post-war contrition. Chinese state-owned ships and aircraft have approached the Senkakus on and off to demonstrate Beijing’s territorial claims, especially after Japan nationalised some of the islands in September 2012.

**China Plans New Patrol in Disputed South China Sea**

China will set up new civilian patrols with a 5,000-tonne vessel in the disputed South China Sea, state-run media said. Beijing claims much of the waters and has put a vast swathe of it under the administration of Sansha city, in the contested Paracel islands, which also hosts a military garrison. Local authorities will ‘provide a 5,000-tonne patrol vessel at Sansha and gradually set up a system of three regular patrols’, China Ocean News reported, citing an agreement between the city and the island province of Hainan, which oversees it. The intent was to ‘safeguard national sovereign rights and benefits, develop at-sea assistance, ensure navigational safety’ among other reasons, the report said.

Even minor moves by China that appear to assert territorial claims can provoke a regional reaction, as the Asian giant is engaged in disputes with several neighbours, including an escalating row with Japan over islands in the East China Sea which has raised fears of unintended conflict. Portions of the South China Sea are also claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Earlier this month both the US and Philippines criticised a law approved in Hainan in November reaffirming an existing requirement that foreign fishing vessels obtain permission to enter its waters. China also declared in November an Air Defence Identification Zone over parts of the East China Sea - including the islands disputed with Japan - provoking vehement condemnation from Tokyo and Washington. Aircraft entering the zone were required to identify themselves and maintain communication with Chinese authorities.

**China Building Second Aircraft Carrier**

China is building its second aircraft carrier, which is expected to take six years, and the country aims to have at least four such ships, Chinese and Hong Kong media reports said. After two decades of double-digit increases in the military budget,
China's admirals plan to develop a full blue-water navy capable of defending growing economic interests as well as disputed territory in the South and East China Seas. The country's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning - a Soviet-era ship bought from Ukraine in 1998 and re-fitted in a Chinese shipyard - has long been a symbol of China's naval build-up. Successfully operating the 60,000-tonne Liaoning is the first step in what state media and some military experts believe will be the deployment of locally built carriers by 2020. In comments carried on Chinese news websites, Wang Min, the Communist Party boss of the north-eastern province of Liaoning, where the first carrier is based, said the second carrier was being built in the port city of Dalian. Its construction would take about six years, and in future China would have a fleet of at least four carriers, Wang told members of the province's legislature, the reports added. Dalian is the port where the existing carrier was re-fitted for use by the Chinese navy. Some of the reports about the new carrier were apparently later removed from the Internet, as links to the stories did not work.

Source: Global Security, 27 January

**Navy Breaths Life into Gujarat Marine Police**

The concept of marine police, which is lying dormant in a few coastal states of the country, has been enlivened in Gujarat by Indian Navy in the last two years. Many states still don't see any threat emanating from the sea even after the 26/11 attack on Mumbai and think that it is largely the responsibility of Navy and Indian Coast Guard to keep it at bay. This has been basically the reason for marine police's struggle for trained manpower and infrastructure. Gujarat had set up at least 22 marine police stations along its 1,600-km coastline and also bought over 30 fibre reinforced interceptor speed boats in the past five years. However, in the absence of training of the men posted in marine police, most of these five and 10 tonne boats were lying unused at the shores, sources said. But in the days to come, things can look up for Gujarat marine police.

Navy had been providing training to men from Gujarat marine police, Daman and Diu from 2012 onwards. So far 223 personnel of Gujarat marine police have been trained in seven batches of 35 persons each at INS Dwarka in Okha assisted by forward deployed ships. These batches also comprised a few men from Daman and Diu marine police as well. The eighth batch would start from February 10 and end on 23. The duration of the training programme is of two weeks, Indian Navy sources said.

The men from Gujarat marine police have been trained in basic marine navigation, seamanship, communication in sea, boat work, anchor work, first aid and fire damage control among other things aboard the Navy ships and police boats. There is a sea change in their attitude after the training and coordination among the forces entrusted with the job of maritime security has vastly improved in this sector, said Navy sources, adding that Gujarat may set up a marine commando unit on the lines of Marcos later.

Meanwhile, Naval Officer-in Charge (Gujarat Naval Area) Commodore B R Prakash unfurled the national flag at Naval Air Enclave, Porbandar, on the occasion of India’s 65th Republic Day. He emphasised on the need to maintain all ships, aircraft and maritime assets in constant state of operational readiness to meet any challenge in
the area. The coastal security off the entire Gujarat coast remains a big challenge for Navy and other stakeholders of coastal security, Prakash added.

Source: The Times of India, 28 January

17 Maritime Forces to Participate in Biennial Milan Exercise

Navies of Australia, Singapore and Myanmar would be among 17 maritime forces participating in the biennial Milan exercise being organised by Indian Navy in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. "While 14 foreign navies participated in its previous edition, Milan 2014 is slated to be the largest ever gathering with the participation by navies and maritime forces of 17 countries," Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Foreign Cooperation) Rear Admiral R B Pandit told reporters here. Eight countries including India would be taking part in the exercise with their warships with an aim to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation in anti-piracy and human disaster and relief operations.

Milan, which was started in 1995, has now grown into an international event and encompasses participation by maritime forces from not just the Bay of Bengal and South East Asia, but the larger Indian Ocean Region. Pandit said four countries including Vietnam could not take part in the exercise due to reasons ranging from austerity measures to long distances. Navy officials said the exercise will also provide an opportunity to showcase the rich heritage and pristine natural beauty of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the foreign visitors. Asked whether India would include Japan in the bilateral Malabar-series exercise with the US, Navy officials said whenever the drills are held in the US-designated areas, it can involve a third country. India recently agreed to include Japan in the Malabar-series joint exercises with America almost seven years after it last took part in them.

Source: Business Standard, 28 January

India, Lanka Discuss Fishermen, Maritime Security Trilateral

External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid held extensive talks with his Sri Lankan counterpart G L Peiris on key bilateral issues including fishermen, India-assisted developmental project in Northern Province and prospects for enhanced economic cooperation. There was also a discussion about the satisfactory progress of the trilateral cooperation on maritime security among India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The meeting, which comes close on the heels of a visit by Sri Lankan Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Development Minister Rajitha Senaratne here, assessed "positively" the recent meeting in Chennai between the fishermen associations as a first step in the right direction and agreed to consider the proposals put forward by the fishermen associations. "It was agreed that the Governments of India and Sri Lanka will remain engaged to ensure that fishermen on both sides can continue to pursue their livelihood in a safe, secure and sustainable manner," official sources said. During the meeting, Khurshid emphasised that "India attaches the highest importance to the safety, security and well-being of Indian fishermen and thanked the Sri Lankan Minister for his personal efforts in ensuring the release of the Indian fishermen", they said.
The Ministers also discussed issues related to the progress of some of the important long-term developmental projects which are being undertaken by India. Construction of 43,000 houses under the owner driven model was underway with more than 10,000 houses already completed in 2013 in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka in the second phase of the flagship housing project by India. India and Sri Lanka along with Maldives also cooperate in the maritime security with all the three sides of the view that in the current maritime security environment in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), it was important to raise the level of maritime cooperation between them. The Ministers also reviewed the ongoing trade and economic cooperation as well as the growth in tourism on both sides, the sources said, adding in this context it was mentioned that Sri Lanka would be the partner country at the Surajkund International Crafts Mela from 1-15 February, 2014. Issues of common interest that are likely to figure in forthcoming international meetings of which India and Sri Lanka are both members were also discussed.

Source: Business Standard, 29 January

India's Goa Shipyard Delivers Two-Hundredth Vessels

Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) handed over the 105-m patrol vessel INS Sumedha to the Indian Navy and the largest ever constructed by them marking the yard's 200th ship construction delivery. The 200th vessel was handed over by RAdm (Retd.) Vineet Bakshi, VSM, Chairman & Managing Director, Goa Shipyard Limited to Cdr. Anand E. Kulkarni, Commanding Officer Designate, “INS Sumedha” in presence of RAdm Atul Khanna, VSM CSO(Tech.) Eastern Naval Command in a simple ceremony in Goa. The new warship will help meet the increasing requirements of the Indian Navy for undertaking ocean surveillance and surface warfare operations in order to prevent infiltration and transgression of maritime sovereignty. It is designed for monitoring sea lines of communication, defence of offshore oil installations and other critical offshore national assets. GSL adds that it is presently implementing a major extension plan, and is one of the few Indian shipyards equipped with an in-house design capability with an in-house product range that efficiently meets the specific requirements of clients in the defence as well as commercial sectors. Most new shipbuilding projects at GSL are based on its own in-house design – the result of intensive R&D activity carried out over the years.

Source: Marine Link, 14 January

India Wants International Shipping Channel Shifted Westward

With no major piracy reported off Gulf of Eden in the last two years, India wants the international
merchant shipping channel now running close to its coast being shifted out to the former westward limit, said Vice Admiral Anurag G. Thapliyal, Director General of the Indian Coast Guard. Addressing the media, on board ICGS Samrat, after the launch of the three-day long joint exercise of the Coast Guards of India and Japan, Adm Thapliyal said that the close running shipping channel was a hazard for fishing operations. With risk of piracy being reduced or minimised, it was high time the shipping route off Gulf of Eden be restored, he said. “We have already taken up the matter with India Maritime Organisation. But this may take some more time as other issues like continued security for merchant ships and reduction of insurance premium for ships are involved,” the admiral said. The admiral suggested that the merchant ships go for own security by employing trained guards on board ships so that the burden on national security agencies reduced. The Somali pirates who started attacking ships and kidnapping sailors for ransom off the Gulf of Eden in 2008 had been neutralised with Coast Guards of 18 Asian countries joining hands for anti-piracy operations. Many of the pirates were apprehended and others were forced to move out. “Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM) is now a permanent body and this has helped capacity building of coastal states,” Adm Thapliyal said.

Source: Deccan Chronicle, 15 January

**Shipping Line a Welcome Fillip for Myanmar Trade**

The service will provide valuable support in increasing annual bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Myanmar to $500m, which currently stands at around $100m. A new coastal shipping line is scheduled to operate from March between Chittagong, Mongla, Narayanganj and Teknaf ports in Bangladesh and Maungtaw, Pathein, Sittwe and Yangon in Myanmar. The service will provide valuable support to the target set by the recent Joint Trade Commission (JTC) meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, to increase annual bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Myanmar to $500m. Bangladesh’s annual trade with its neighbour currently stands at around $100m. This is far behind countries such as China and Thailand and represents only 0.2% of Myanmar’s total trade. The JTC talks this month have given a welcome boost to bilateral relations and provide a good platform to build mutual trade links in future.

Bangladeshi businesses and industries in sectors such as cement, electric cables and pharmaceuticals are already achieving laudable success in growing exports to Myanmar. With its newly opened up economy proving highly attractive to international investors, there is considerable scope for to grow mutual trade and cooperation much further. The new shipping service adds to the welcome move by Biman Bangladesh airlines last December, to re-establish the Dhaka-Yangon air route. Further talks are still needed to reduce trade barriers in the long term and improve overland communication links to take advantage of geographical closeness. Both countries will benefit from such talks as they may not only increase trade and investment but can also reduce dependence on other countries.

Source: Dhaka Tribune, 20 January
Shipping in the Arctic to Soon Become Regulated

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) plans to adopt a polar shipping code which will define international norms of using the Arctic space for transportation purposes. The document will describe in detail what ships and their crews, which run above the 72nd degree of North Latitude, can do and what they can't do. According to experts, Russia, which is actively developing the Northern Sea Route, is ready to fulfil very tough ecological and technical standards. The polar code, containing demands which all expedition and commerce ships without exception must fulfil, is due to come into effect in 2016. Among other things, this code will contain concrete demands to ships depending on ice types they will have to overcome. Till recently, strange as it may seem, international conventions regulating shipping in the Arctic were non-existent. And still, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea said that each state can introduce its own rules of Arctic shipping, Head of the Centre for the Law of the Sea Vasily Gutsulyak said.

"Besides, the international community can introduce clauses involving the protection of the environment in the Northern regions, which enables them to spread a number of international conventions on the Arctic. And as regards the polar code, it is intended to cover the full range of shipping-related matters relevant to navigation in waters surrounding the two poles." Vasily Gutsulyak added that Russia, which says that one of its top priorities is the development of the Arctic and giving a new boost to the Northern Sea Route, which has a good chance to become the shortest, most beneficial and popular route from Europe to Asia, is absolutely ready to observe the polar code. In fact, the national rules of navigation in the region already have the new norms.

According to the Head of the Norwegian Ship owners’ Association Sturla Henriksen, the Arctic is a cold place with a severe climate, which is immersed in darkness for a 6-month period, thinly populated and located far away from the infrastructure. "And it is the main reason for the introduction of clear-cut rules. Ecologist Mikhail Babenko points out the urgency of this measure. "The polar code is a dire necessity because due to ice thawing and the perfection of technologies, the traffic in the region has become more intense. Shipping in the southern seas does not resemble shipping in the northern seas. We are hopeful that the work on ecological demands concerning all those involved in shipping in the northern latitudes will continue."

Passions around the Arctic are not subsiding because its exact borders have not yet been defined. The Arctic Region is divided into five sectors of responsibility between Russia, the US, Norway, Canada, and Denmark. But other countries – such as Sweden, Finland and Iceland – are willing to develop the Arctic resources as well. The game is worth the candle. The richest resources of hydrocarbons - 90 billion barrels of oil alone at the minimum - are concentrated in the Arctic. Its military, strategic and transit significance can't be ignored. Therefore, the introduction of
single international rules regulating the development of the Arctic Region and the use of its transport potential can reduce the risk of emergence of thorny situations in the Arctic states.

Source: The Voice of Russia, 23 January

Russian Conquerors of the North Pole

The global race for the Arctic resources is now truly on. A Greenpeace mission has failed to storm Russia’s Prirazlomnaya oilrig, Moscow is actively developing the Northern Sea Route infrastructure, and the United States will invest $8 billion in Arctic projects. Russia appears to be particularly well equipped for the mission with its fleet of unique icebreakers.

Legacy of the past

The primary mission of Russia’s icebreakers has always been to ensure year-round navigability of the Northern Sea Route, which is used to deliver various oil and gas production equipment to Siberia and extract raw materials from the region. The first such icebreaker, the nuclear-powered vessel Lenin, was built at Leningrad’s Admiralteyskie Verfi Shipyard in 1959. An embodiment of the technical progress of her time, the Lenin comprised 70,000 parts, with the total length of welds stretching to more than 6,000 kilometer. The second nuclear-powered icebreaker in the world, the Arktika, was built at Baltic Shipyard and remained in service from 1975 to 2008. She became the first surface vessel to reach the North Pole. The icebreaker was briefly renamed after General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, but got her original name back in 1986. The subsequent Arktika-class vessels had a special polymer coating applied to their hulls to reduce friction. They could break ice by moving forward as well as backward, making it virtually impossible for them to get caught in an ice trap.

Since these vessels were originally designed to operate in the cold Arctic waters, they cannot traverse to the Antarctic: in the course of such a voyage, the temperature in some of their compartments would rise to 50 degrees Celsius even at low reactor power settings. The Arktika-class icebreakers can operate independently for up to eight months. During the 1999-2000 season, the very first such vessel set a record of independent operation by spending the entire year at sea without a single malfunction. In August 2005, the Arktika set another record by clocking its millionth nautical mile since entry into service, thus covering nearly five times the distance between the Earth and the Moon. The Arktika-class icebreakers are currently used both in support of merchant operations and to deliver relief crews to drifting Arctic science stations. Since 1990, they have also been carrying tourists on cruises towards the North Pole. Each of the vessels features a comfortable section of tourist compartments, swimming pool, 100-seat cinema, gym, library, and even a sauna.

The subsequent Arktika-class vessels — the Sibir (commissioned in 1977, decommissioned in 1992), Rossiya (1985-2013), and Sovetsky Soyuz (1989-2010) —
expedited the exploration of the Arctic region. A new milestone in the history of Arctic maritime transportation was reached with the 1988 commissioning of the icebreaking carrier Sevmorput. In a single trip she could carry enough food, clothing, and equipment to last Russia's Far Northern residents the whole year. Early this year, it was announced that the Sevmorput, which had long been moored, would shortly resume operation. She is primarily required by the Russian Defence Ministry to support the deployment and presence of military units in the Arctic, help restore the airfield and sea port infrastructure on the New Siberian Islands, Franz Joseph Land, and other Arctic territories. Another unique Russian nuclear-powered icebreaker type is represented by the shallow-draft Taimyr (1988) and Vaygach (1990) projects, built at Helsinki New Shipyard with Soviet high-strength steel and outfitted with Soviet-designed equipment, including the reactors. These vessels are intended for use in the shallow estuary waters of such Arctic rivers as the Ob and the Yenisey.

From the present to the future

After the USSR's collapse, despite all the financial hardships encountered by the country, Russia's nuclear-powered icebreaker fleet continued to evolve. The Yamal (1992) and the 50 Let Pobedy (2007, the world's most powerful icebreaker), both built under the Arktika project, remain in operation. Both these vessels are stationed in Murmansk, which is home to the Russian icebreaker fleet's managing company Atomflot. Russian engineers continue to work on new designs, and have recently laid the keel for the first vessel of the new LK-60Ya project icebreaker at the Baltic Shipyard. This variable-draft icebreaker will be capable of replacing two current types at once – the Arktika and the Taimyr. The LK-60Ya construction project costs around $1.113 billion and two more such vessels are going to be built. Russia is also developing the LK-110Ya nuclear icebreaker, which will be capable of ensuring year-round navigability of the Northern Sea Route and of supporting Arctic expeditions. The design is expected to be finalised by 2016.

Source: Russia & India Report, 28 January

White House Releases Plan to Make Arctic Shipping Safer

As Arctic ice melts away, opening the way for greater oil development and mining, the White House outlined a plan to promote safety and security in the region by building ports, improving forecasts of sea ice, and developing shipping rules. With warmer temperatures leaving Arctic sea passages open for longer periods of the year, billions of barrels of oil could be tapped beyond what is already being produced in the region. A loss of seasonal ice could also allow greater exploitation of precious minerals considered abundant in the Arctic. Extreme weather conditions, however, make the region a challenge to navigate and develop. The White House plan was released on the same day that Royal Dutch Shell cancelled drilling this year off Alaska, after a series of costly mishaps in the harsh conditions, as part of efforts to cut spending. The US Defence Department will lead an interagency effort to forecast icy conditions by launching a satellite and improving analytic methods to forecast icy conditions.
The Department of Commerce, meanwhile, will lead coordination on surveying and charting of US Arctic waters to ease shipping and improve adaptation to climate change in coastal communities. "Our highest priority is to protect the American people, our sovereign territory and rights and the natural resources and other interests of the United States," said the plan, which is part of President Barack Obama's National Strategy for the Arctic Region he announced last May. The plan can be seen at: http://1.usa.gov/1cAxE6R

In addition, the State Department will attempt to reach an agreement with Canada on the Beaufort Sea maritime boundary, and the Department of Homeland Security will lead work on developing an international code for ships operating in polar waters. Norwegian Ambassador Kare Aas welcomed the US plan and said it would help Norway and the United States identify new areas for collaboration as both countries addressed the challenges and opportunities emerging in the Arctic region. "We will continue to work with our American friends to ensure that the Arctic remains a peaceful region of cooperation and sustainable development," Aas said in a statement. The US military had been working on strategy in the Arctic before the plan was announced.

The US Navy is nearing completion of a new Arctic "road map" that lays out its approach to future engagements in the region, given increasingly open waterways. The updated document is based on the Navy's first comprehensive assessment of the near-term, mid-term and long-term availability of sea passages, due to the loss of seasonal ice. In a recent blog written for the Navy's website, Navy Oceanographer Rear Admiral Jon White said an inter-agency team made the assessment after a comprehensive review of current Arctic sea-ice projections. He said current trends were expected to continue in the near-term, with the Bering Strait expected to see open conditions about 160 days a year by 2020. The mid-term period would see increasing levels of ice melt, White said. In the long-term, beyond 2030, environmental conditions are expected to leave waterways open for longer periods, driving a significant increase in traffic in the summer months. Earlier this month, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert told a conference that Arctic ice was melting faster than predicted four years ago when the Navy published its first road map. "We need to understand, we need to take a look at it and decide what it means to us for security, maritime security, freedom of navigation, and global force management," Greenert told a conference hosted by the Surface Navy Association.

Source: Chicago Tribune, 30 January