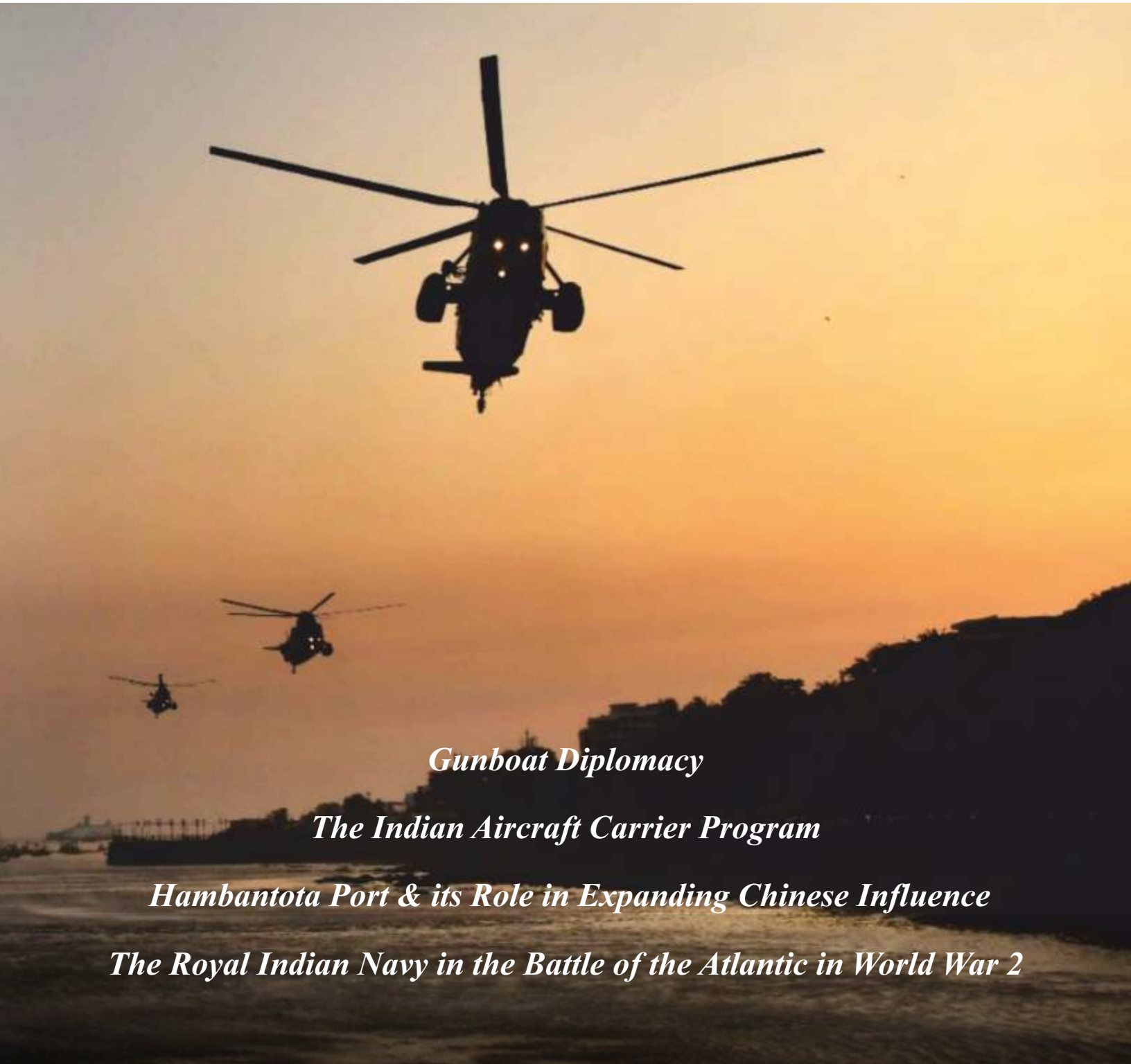
SEAGULL

The Journal of the Indian Maritime Foundation

Feb 2024-April 2024 VOL. 28 No. 116



Gunboat Diplomacy

The Indian Aircraft Carrier Program

Hambantota Port & its Role in Expanding Chinese Influence

The Royal Indian Navy in the Battle of the Atlantic in World War 2

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The Sea Our Strength

Our goal is to raise awareness of our seas and to rekindle maritime consciousness and pride.

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Editorial

The past year 2023 seems epochal in many fields. It has been a trying year on the world scene, as the forces of disarray grew stronger. Ongoing wars continued, while new ones erupted. Geopolitical competition increased while global democratic recession continues. A "coup epidemic" continues in Africa while civil war wracks Sudan. Space-related efforts are fueling concerns that geopolitical rivalries will lead to the militarization of space. Artificial Intelligence burst into the public consciousness last year with the release of ChatGPT which offers both promise and peril. U.S.-China tensions continue to simmer even as apex level talks produced a few minor agreements but no major breakthroughs. Ukraine's counteroffensive gains little ground at a heavy cost. "Ukraine fatigue" has begun to emerge in the West, especially in the US as Republican lawmakers oppose sending more aid to Kyiv. A negotiated pause in the fighting in Gaza in November secured the release of hostages but fighting soon resumed with Israeli troops moving into southern Gaza. U.S. officials publicly urged Israel to protect civilians or risk "strategic defeat."

Climate change is no longer a future threat. It is the world's new reality. 2023 is likely the hottest year on record. Fortunately total investments in clean energy have soared. The cost of wind and solar power continues to fall. The first commercial ventures aimed at sucking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere are becoming operational.

The Red Sea crisis and outlook for the shipping sector has darkened considerably in recent months, with some of the largest container lines publishing significant slumps in third-quarter earnings and outlining plans for cost cutting. Some have said they fear the decline will last through 2024.

In India, November saw five states in election fever with high-octane campaigning and poll promises which set the tone for 2024 General Elections. Later in the month millions of people suffered a heartbreak when India fell short of winning the ODI World Cup despite a sterling performance in ten consecutive matches. The Diwali festive season was marred by a tunnel collapse in Uttarakhand trapping 41 workers. There was a sigh of relief when despite setbacks, the rescuers with sheer resolve, grit and perseverance reached the trapped workers.

IMF continued with Environment Protection activities like River-bank clean-ups in Punjab and locally in Pune. The Thirtieth Anniversary was celebrated on 30 Nov 23 with traditional gaiety and fervor as scores of well-wishers thronged the event.

This issue has interesting articles on Need for Third Aircraft Carrier, Gunboat Diplomacy, Hambantota Port, Role of Royal Indian Navy in Battle of Atlantic, besides other usual features.

Cdr Mukund Yeolekar

Notice Board

25 Feb 24	-	**Wreath Laying at Seafarers' Memorial (New Circuit House)**
12-14 Mar 24	-	**SIMA Exhibition of Marine Art (Bal Gandharva Kala Dalan)**
22 Mar 24	-	**Wreath Laying at Seamen's War Memorial (Bund Garden)**
May 24	-	**Release of Seagull 117**

The Royal Indian Navy in the Battle of the Atlantic in World War 2

By
Professor Derek Law

You are about to read two linked stories which tell the almost completely unknown tale of seamen from all over India and Pakistan who served, fought and died in the Battle of the Atlantic in the Second World War. My interest in this was in part sparked by the discovery of three Commonwealth War Graves in Glasgow.

The first two belong to merchant seamen who died when the liner s.s. City of Benares was sunk in the Atlantic in 1940. The third is for a seaman who died while serving on HMIS Kistna, a Royal Indian Navy sloop which was fighting a major battle in the Atlantic to protect a convoy in 1943. I believe his is the only grave of an Indian seaman from World War 2 which exists in the UK.

I researched the first story when I discovered that while a huge amount is known about the British victims and survivors of the U-boat attack on the s.s. City of Benares, almost nothing is known about the Indian crewmen beyond their names.

The second story comes from an article published by the Maritime History Society in Mumbai, in which I tell the story of six Indian naval ships built in the UK in 1939-42, which served in the Battle of the Atlantic for various periods of time before heading home to fight the Japanese.

Three of the six were awarded the Battle of the Atlantic Battle Honour, so their contribution to the battle was not small. For much of the time they were based in the West of Scotland. This story too is almost completely unknown even to Indian and Pakistani naval historians.

These are two stories of bravery, courage and sacrifice which show how the Royal Indian Navy and Merchant Navy contributed directly to the defence of Great Britain in World War 2. These men should not be forgotten.

Derek Law
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
19th June 2021

The stories are being covered in two parts – in Seagull 116 and 117 (Part I)

The Sinking Of The S.S. *City Of Benares*

Background

There are two Commonwealth War Graves in the Glasgow area which bear the names of World War 2 seamen from the Indian sub-continent who died in Battle in the Atlantic. These graves are to be found at Greenock Cemetery. They are for Seaman Ibrahim Balla who died on 17th Sept 1940 when the liner the s.s. *City of Benares* was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat in the North Atlantic. There is no record of where he and his family came from. In the same place is the grave of Lascar Abbas Bhickoos who was on the same ship when she was sunk. He was rescued but died two weeks later on 02 October 1940. He was 22 and the husband of Fatma Bibi, of Sangameshwar, Ratnagiri, in India just south of Mumbai.

The Battle of the Atlantic lasted for most of the Second World War. As an island, Great Britain was wholly reliant on the convoys which carried everything from food to weapons to the country. The convoys also sailed from Great Britain carrying troops, tanks, planes and supplies to the armies in North Africa, the Mediterranean and India. Without the convoys the armies would not have been able to survive.

The British Merchant Navy fleet was the largest in the world in 1939 with about one third of the world's tonnage and employing around 200,000 men and women. It proved to be a highly dangerous job - 30,248 men lost their lives during World War 2 – a higher rate than any of the armed services. Many of the seamen came from all over the British Empire, including India, Hong Kong and West Africa. Almost a quarter of the crewmen

of the British merchant navy – over 40,000 men - were Indian and played a very substantial role in keeping the Allies supplied, a fact recognised at the time, but largely forgotten since.

The Sinking of the s.s. *City of Benares*

The sinking of the *City of Benares* provides a good example of how the casualty numbers were high but the names of those who died are largely forgotten. The *City of Benares* was a luxury liner used on the England to India run. She was an 11,080-ton, 480-foot liner launched in 1935. Known for her speed, which was her best defence against submarines, she was painted a dusky brown for camouflage.

The Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB) was set up by the British government in 1940. The Board was created to manage a programme which evacuated 2,664 British children from England, so that they would escape the threat of German invasion and the risk of enemy bombing. The children were sent mainly to the four Dominion countries, Canada 1,532 (in nine parties), Australia 577 (three parties), New Zealand 202 (two parties), and South Africa 353 (two parties), but also some to the USA. But some were to die on the ships carrying them to safety. On Friday, September 13, Convoy OB-213 composed of twenty merchant ships and three naval escorts sailed from Liverpool for Quebec and Montreal, with the s.s. *City of* Benares as the flagship of the convoy. On board were 191 passengers, 90 of whom were child evacuees under the CORB programme, along with 216 officers and crew. Late in the evening of 17 September, the convoy was sighted by the German submarine *U-48*, which launched a torpedo attack. One torpedo struck the ship in the stern, causing her to sink within 30 minutes, 253 miles west-southwest of the uninhabited islet of Rockall. Fifteen minutes after the torpedo hit, the vessel had been abandoned, though there were difficulties with lowering the lifeboats. The destroyer HMS *Hurricane* arrived on the scene 24 hours later, picked up 105 survivors, and landed them at Greenock.

The death toll was high after the sinking. The standard Wikipedia entry tells us that in total, 260 of the 407 people on board were lost. Out of the 260, 134 were passengers, 77 were child evacuees. Only 13 of the 90 child evacuee passengers embarked survived the sinking. What does not get recorded is that 105 of the crew members who died were Indian, and of those, eighteen were boy sailors aged 14 to 17. So the death toll of children is very much higher than that reported in the popular histories.

One of the most remarkable tales is that of Lifeboat 12 which was one of the only s.s. *City of Benares* lifeboats not to become waterlogged after launching and, although this helped protect its occupants, it meant that the boat drifted far further away than any of the others. By the time help arrived, the lifeboat's course had led it outside the search pattern of the rescuing destroyer. Given the awful weather conditions, it was believed that Lifeboat 12 simply hadn't lasted the night and its occupants were at first listed amongst the dead. Though this was by no means the case, the 46 people aboard the lifeboat were in an unenviable position. Thirty-seven crewmen, six evacuee children with two of their adult escorts, and one private passenger, were sharing an open boat about 8met long. They were in the middle of the Atlantic, roughly 600 miles from land and, though fairly well provisioned with food, there was only sixteen gallons of fresh water on board. Seeing no signs of rescue they had no choice but to head for land, a journey which would take perhaps eight days.

On 26 Sept 1940, with their situation steadily worsening and water nearly gone, the occupants of the lifeboat spotted a Sunderland Flying Boat. It was flying low, on the look out for U-boats, and it spotted Lifeboat 12. Signaling that they were going to get help, the plane left and returned a few hours later with the destroyer HMS *Anthony*. Of the 46 people in the lifeboat, 45 survived to be rescued . Of these six were evacuee boys, who

recovered from their ordeal and four of them even went on to join the Navy later in life. Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that while the names of the British survivors appear in many books, the names of the Indian survivors are not generally recorded.

The eighteen boy sailors who died in the sinking are recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and are listed in the War Memorials at Mumbai and Chittagong. Sadly, only the first names of four of the boys are known - Roshan, Panchu and two boys named Sulaiman. Boy sailors were officially aged fourteen to seventeen years old, but some were probably younger having lied about their age in order to get a job at sea.

Much of the story of the sinking is well known and several books have been written about it. Typically, the story of the British survivors is fully covered, but very little is said about the shared suffering of the merchant seamen and the fact that some of them were boys is mentioned nowhere.

About the author

Derek Law is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Strathclyde and a Vice-President of the Society for Nautical Research. He has written regularly about the naval battles of World War Two, including the Battle of the Atlantic and has always had an interest in the smaller navies who fought there, whether Polish, Norwegian, Dutch, French or Belgian. But although he has visited the countries of south Asia several times, it was only in the last eighteen months and quite by chance he discovered that the Royal Indian Navy had also fought in the battle. When it became clear that almost nothing was known about this he decided to spend the time of covid lockdown in discovering what really happened. The result has been the publication of several articles on the subject and a wish to ensure that these stories are widely known.

Obituary

Mrs Rooma Dubey

We were all deeply disturbed to learn that Rotarian Rooma Dubey had passed away. Rooma was a friendly and very fine person and supported her husband Rtn. Ajay Dubey during his Presidency two years back. She was our Chief Guest in 2014 at The Society of Indian Marine Artists (SIMA) at the Annual Exhibition of Seascapes when she was the President of the Inner Wheel Club of Pune Central. Rooma Dubey was actively associated with a number of Rotary Projects connected with women's empowerment like self-help workshops for women, health and hygiene awareness for young and adolescent girls, creation of separate toilets for girl students, and adult literacy. In her address to the gathering, Mrs Rooma Dubey praised the work of the artists that was on display, and wondered how they had managed to 'capture the moment', especially since the sea was such a dynamic entity, constantly changing its character. She encouraged



Rooma Dubey in centre with Cmde Rajan Vir (third from left)

members of SIMA by buying three paintings for her personal collection. Rooma's gracious presence at SIMA exhibition was a day to remember for all of us. We shall miss Rooma being amongst us and May God rest her in peace.

Cmde Rajan Vir,
Former President of SIMA, Pune

President's First Fleet Review

By
Shri Swaroop Anand

The first Review of the Fleet by the President of India was held in 1953. Dr Rajendra Prasad reviewed the fledgling Indian Fleet at Bombay.

The President of India, the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces, reviews the Indian fleet as Head of the Republic. The fleet salutes the President and displays its commitment to the him/her and thus the nation. In turn, the President reaffirms faith in the fleet and the ability to defend the nation's maritime interests. Each President reviews the fleet once during their tenure.



The Presidential Yacht P3110 steams between the lines of ships at anchor

By 1953, India had her first capital ship - INS *Delhi*. She had the R-class destroyers which formed the 11th Destroyer Squadron - INS *Rajput*, *Ranjit* and *Rana*. She also had the Hunt-class escort destroyers of the 22nd Destroyer Squadron - INS *Godavari*, *Gomati* and *Ganga*.

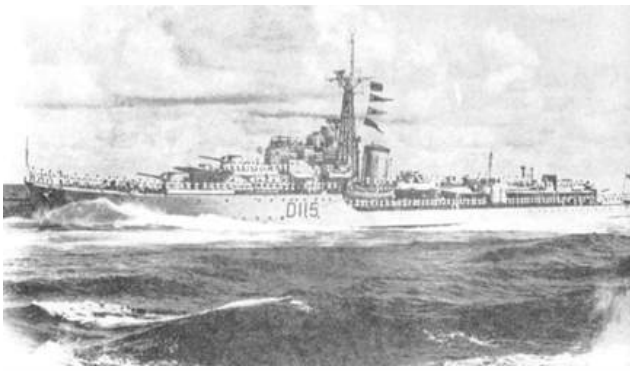


The sloops and minesweepers inherited from the RIN after the Partition formed the rest of the fleet. Sloops were - *Jumna*, *Kistna*, *Cauvery* and *Sutlej*, Minesweepers - *Bombay*, *Bengal*, *Madras*, *Konkan*, *Rajputana*, *Rohilkand*, Frigate - *Tir* , Survey Vessel – *Investigator* and LST – *Magar*.

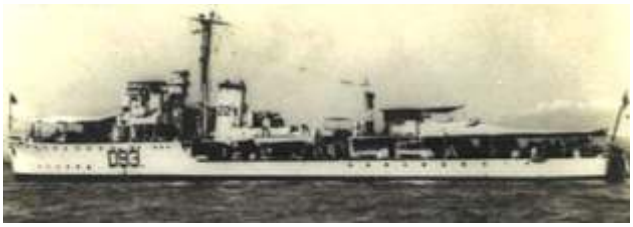


Earlier in the year, the President had presented the Colours to the Indian Navy, the first of the three services to receive the President's Colours. Then Lieutenant MP Awati received the Colours at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai.

On 10 October 1953, Dr. Prasad embarked on the Presidential Yacht P3110, commanded by Commander JS Mehra. He received a 21-gun



INS Rana 1953



INS Gomati



Admiral Sir Charles Thomas Mark Pizey

Bharatkumar, Fishing Trawler *Ashok*, Dredger *Cachelot*, Oil Tankers *Chilka* and *Sambhar*, Hopper Barge *Nirmal*, Tug *Elephanta*, Water Boat *Acqueduct* & the Floating Crane *Python*.

The recently acquired Short Sealand aircraft, based at INS *Garuda*, took part in a fly-past. They flew over the fleet and dipped their wings in salute to the Supreme Commander. One of the Sealands, piloted by Lieutenant Commander YN Singh (the first Indian aviator) with Lieutenant MK 'Micky' Roy (first Indian observer) as crew, successfully carried out a landing on water.



Sealand Aircraft 1953

salute. The Presidential Yacht then ceremoniously steamed down the lines between the ships at anchor off the Gateway of India. The Fleet was commanded by the Flag Officer (Flotillas) Indian Fleet (FOFIF) Rear Admiral N V Dickinson, DSO & Bar, DSC with INS *Delhi* as his flagship. *Delhi* was commanded by Captain AK Chatterji. The other vessels & yard craft were: IMMTS *Dufferin*, SS *Janeta*, SS *Jalamayur*, MV *Jag Ganga*, SS

The President Dr Rajendra Prasad and the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expressed their admiration for the efficiency with which the fleet review was carried out to the Commander-in-Chief, Indian Navy Admiral Sir Charles Thomas Mark Pizey. The C-in-C wrote to the Navy - “The appearance of the ships and the way they were manned was most impressive. The turn-out of the men, both afloat and ashore, particularly the President's Guard of Honour, was very creditable...." Grand finale was Beating the Retreat by the Central Band of the Navy.11 more Presidential fleet reviews would follow, including 2 International Fleet Reviews. The IFR 2001 in Mumbai and IFR 2016 in Visakhapatnam were much bigger, grander and spectacular.

Shri Swaroop Anand, a Mechanical Engineer and post graduate in Management is a Start-up entrepreneur. He is also a Maritime enthusiast, an avid reader and has done research on Naval history.

Letter To The Editor
Merchant Navy Medal



As a matter of fact, more personnel in the merchant marine died of enemy action in the two wars than the naval combatants. In the two war years, 36,749 merchant seamen lost their lives, which was a higher figure than any sea going branch of the armed forces. The Indian Maritime Foundation has built a war memorial in 2008 dedicated to the seamen of Indian merchant marine who died in action in World Wars I and II.

Indian Seamen Lost : World War I : 1841, World War II : 6114. A Wreath Laying ceremony is performed every year in remembrance of the seamen. At the end of the Second World War, on 30th October 1945, the British House of Commons and the House of Lords, passed identical resolutions, which read :- Quote "*That the thanks of the House be accorded to the officers and men of the Merchant Navy for the steadfastness with which they have maintained our stocks of food and materials, for their services in transporting men and munitions to all the battles over all the seas; and for the gallantry with which, though a civilian service, they met* and fought the constant attacks of the enemy."

Unquote Earlier, Gen Eisenhower, speaking in London in 1944 after the landings at Normandy said, "When final victory is ours there is no organization that will share its credit more deservedly than the merchant marine". And Gen Mc Arthur said about the merchant marine, "They brought us our lifeblood, and paid for it with their own." We recommend that the Government of India institutes a M**erchant Navy Medal** for those who perform extraordinary meritorious service in all aspects of the Indian merchant navy. We must remember that the Indian Merchant Marine carries 95% of goods in international trade 'to keep our homefires burning.'

Yours faithfully,
Cmde. R. Vir President Emeritus IMF


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Book Review - 'Guardians of the Seas'

By Cmde Srikant Kesnur VSM (Retd)

There was good news on the occasion of Navy Week 2023. **I am happy to inform about the launch of a new book on the Indian Navy & its role in the 1971 war - 'Guardians of the Seas'.**

Published by Rupa Publishing, the book is remarkable for many reasons. At one level it is a gripping account of the 1971 War at Sea which gave the Indian Navy its finest hour.

Importantly, this book recounts actions in the Bay of Bengal and those undertaken on board INS Vikrant. Recent renditions of 1971 Naval Operations have tended to focus on the Arabian Sea & Karachi attacks. This book brings to life naval campaign in the East.

Second, the authors R Adm SK (Gigi) Gupta & Cmde Gurnam Singh not only took part in the war but also covered themselves with glory. Gigi was decorated with the Maha Vir Chakra & Gurnam with the Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) for their pivotal role in the conflict.

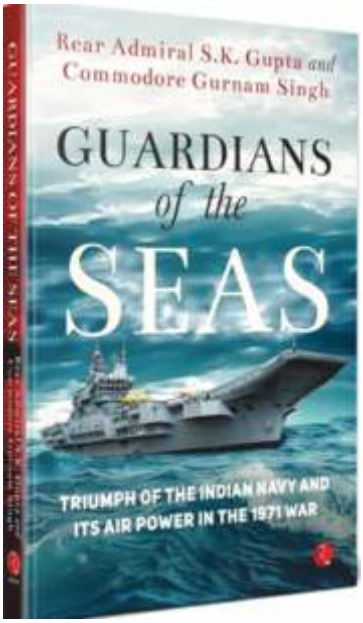
Third, it also offers a bird's eye view of the growth of the Indian Navy, especially its Aviation branch, thereby adding texture and detail to our understanding of the outcome of 1971.

This is a work that will interest the scholar and layperson alike; it's a rich addition to the slim inventory of books on the Indian Navy, which has contributed in a handsome, if understated, manner to India's rising power quotient since Independence.

A book by living legends, war heroes, which gives an eyewitness account is bound to make for compelling reading.

While a must read for those associated with or interested in the Indian Navy in any way, it should also be very interesting to a lay reader curious about India's military campaigns or wars.

While it's going to hit the book stores soon, it's also available on Amazon.
https://amzn.eu/d/8CKXed0



About the authors :
Rear Admiral Santosh Kumar Gupta, was born on 21December 1936 in Dehradun. He was commissioned in 1958 and joined the fighter stream of the Indian Navy prior to the commissioning of the squadron INAS 300, the White Tigers.

He commanded the White Tigers in the 1971 war while embarked on INS *Vikrant*. For his display of leadership and bravery, Lt Cdr Gupta was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. During his service, he commanded four ships, two air squadrons and the Naval Academy. After retirement as ACNS (Air) in December 1990, he headed Breach Candy

Hospital in Mumbai till 1998. He has now settled in Bengaluru with his family.

Commodore Gurnam Singh was born in Amritsar, Punjab, in 1941. At the time, his father was serving in the British Indian Army and was posted on the Eastern Front. He was commissioned in the Indian navy in 1967.

He is a qualified maritime and aircraft engineer. He was awarded the Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) for his contribution to the 1971 war. After retiring from service in 1995, he has pursued his interest in languages and has written 10 books in Punjabi.

Commodore Srikant Kesnur had held several important appointments in the Navy. He is an avid writer and has done extensive research in Maritime History.

Comments by Vice Admiral S.K.K. Krishnan (Retd)

Rarely does an Engine Room Dept gets a chance to prove their mettle so demonstratively. Very often, men who run the machines are taken for granted and seldom get an adulatory attention beyond the gangway of a ship. A limping *Vikrant* gave us a chance to show off our skills and bravery.

It might be difficult for the current generation used to better technology and touch type controls, to imagine what we went through in the mind-numbing heat of the Engine Rooms, with so many uncertainties of operating boilers, which could have burst at any time. Those moments of danger and elation could only be felt and not described. So, today, when some youngster asks me what we did on the Vikrant during the war, I just reply, "***Oh ! We put the screws on***."



The Indian Aircraft Carrier Program – Strategies for 2024 and Beyond

By
Cmde CP Srivastav (Retd)

There have been three long term, significant and welcoming decisions by MoD, in the nation's maritime domain, which would drive the navy's vision of an 'aircraft carrier centric fleet structure'.

The first is the approval to construct the second Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC 2), similar in design and capabilities to the 40,000 ton INS Vikrant, IAC The second decision is to continue with the ongoing work on the design and development of the next generation 65,000 ton Vishal Class aircraft carrier. The third decision is to continue with the development of the indigenous SSN's, under Project 75 Alpha, thereby putting to rest the 'either Aircraft Carrier or SSN' debate.

These decisions are poised to positively influence the indigenous aircraft carrier program, well into the next decade and even beyond.

IAC2- Sister Ship of the INS *Vikrant* Class

The decision to approve the construction of IAC 2 as a sister ship of the 40,000 ton *Vikrant*, is a commercially sound and operationally pragmatic. This will essentially keep the yard infrastructure and workforce active and augment the nascent and fragile vendor eco system. It will also ensure that the platform is delivered within about 7 years and therefore, by 2030, the IN will have a minimum of two carriers available for deployment.

Need for a 3rd Carrier of the *Vikrant* Class

The prevalent Indian maritime doctrine envisages a three carrier fleet structure. This ensures that IN can simultaneously deploy two CBG's, one each on the Eastern and western seaboards. However, the current geopolitical realities and its predicted trajectory, merits a recalibration of our maritime strategies. We may need to consider the possibility of a third battle ground, the 'south Indian Ocean'. This may, in fact, be the crucial 'killing ground' of the next Sino- India conflict, or a US-Sino-Taiwan standoff.

Indian Ocean- China's Achilles Heel. 90% of China's crude oil requirement is transported via sea route. Of this, about 60 % is sourced from the Persian Gulf and remaining 40 % from Africa and Brazil. During the period Dec 22 to Nov 23, about 515 million barrels crude, bound for China transited through the Indian Ocean, south of India and Sri Lanka.

This translates to around 100 plus China- bound large tankers, transiting the Indian ocean every day. Add to this the non- fossil fuel traffic of primarily, food grain, soya bean (crucial for animal feed), raw material and finished goods, the traffic may be as high as **roughly 200 China - bound ships transiting thro' the Indian Ocean, south of the Indian peninsula, every day. In all future conflict, these 200 odd ships would be the 'prize to be threatened, disrupted, captured or sunk'.**

India's Southern Seaboard- An Emerging Geo-Strategic Reality. The Navy would therefore need to deploy adequate assets on the 'Southern Seaboard'. This new 'battlefield' may be as far south as 300 to 500 NM of the traditional shipping routes, south of Sri Lanka.

At such large distances from the mainland, only a Carrier Battle Group can provide the operational and combat capability which is 'credible and sustainable. Since the existing two CBG's would continue to operate on the western and eastern seaboards, this emerging geopolitical reality dictates the requirement for a third CBG.

IAC 3- Proposed Third Carrier of the *Vikrant*

Class. It may therefore be prudent for the defence planners to bite the bullet and approve construction of the IAC 3, as the third sister ship of the *Vikrant*. The commercial advantages of a three- ship IAC order on Cochin Shipyard, will be substantial. Further, such a program would provide a massive fillip to the indigenous defence manufacturing industry. More importantly, an early decision would provide the Indian Navy with a**n operational capability of 'strategic significance'.**

The Proposed 65000 Ton *Vishal* Class - A Next-Gen Aircraft Carrier

Along with the decision to construct 'at least' one more carrier of the 45000 ton Vikrant class, the MoD has also indicated that the work on the design and construction of the next gen, 65000 ton Vishal Class carrier, would continue.

There are major technical and operational advantages of a larger 65,000 ton carrier vis a vis the 45000 ton *Vikrant* class. Some of the critical design and operational limitations, which stem from the size and displacement of an air carrier, are enumerated in the succeeding paragraphs.

Aircraft Launch and Recovery System

STOBAR Vs CATOBAR Aircraft Launch and Recovery System. INS *Vikramaditiya* and *Vikrant,* being of similar deck length and displacement, about 230 mts and 40,000 ton, respectively, have a ski jump and use the **'Short Takeoff But Arrested Recovery (STOBAR)** aircraft launch and recovery system**.** The STOBAR system, however, does not permit operations of heavier aircraft such as fixed wing AEWAC's and Anti Surface strike & Anti-Submarine aircraft (ASW).

The under design *Vishal* Class, on the other hand, will have a longer and through- deck design (approx. 300 mts long, with no ski jump) and will displace about 65,000 to 70, 000 tons. This will permit the installation of the **Catapult Assisted Take Off but Arrested Recovery System (CATOBAR), for launch and recovery of aircraft**. This system traditionally uses a steam operated catapult to launch the aircraft and an 'aircraft tail hook- on deck arrester wire' recovery system.

9. The more contemporary and modern CATOBAR systems use the lighter, compact, and more efficient **Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System, EMALS,** instead for the steam catapult. The proposed *Vishal* class will have the EMALS and arrested wire recovery system. This will permit launch of heavier twin engine fighters, fixed wing ASW/ AEW aircrafts as well as deck launched UAV's/ UCAV's/ drones.

Types of Aircraft and Size of Air Wing

Limitations of Size - 45000 Ton Vikrant Class. The *Vikrant* Class has an air wing of about 36 airframes. This consists of 24 Fixed wing, (Mig 29 K/ Rafale, Naval Tejas) and 12 rotary wing air frames (a combination of KA 31, MH 60 R and ALH). However, on an average, 70 % of its air assets will be deployed for own air defense. Many therefore, consider the 45000 ton, *Vikrant* Class carrier as an 'Air defense carrier', with limited 'air early warning, control, and surveillance' (AEWACS) capability and only a 'lean and slender' power projection capacity. Since STOBAR does not permit operations of fixed wing AEWAC's and Anti Surface strike & Anti-Submarine aircraft (ASW), these functions are then performed by lighter, slower, and less capable rotatory wing aircraft. The follow-on sister ships of the *Vikrant* Class (IAC2 and beyond) however, may provide some surveillance, air early warning and limited cargo deliver capability by deploying small to mid-size deck-launched UAV's.

The Next Gen Aircraft Carrier- 65000 Ton *Vishal* Class. The 65, 000 to 70,000 ton vessel under design will have a longer deck (approx. 300 mts) and more hangar space. It will have an air wing of about 35 fixed wing and 20 rotary wing airframes. These would include twin engine high performance fighters, fixed wing AEW/ASW aircrafts and advanced autonomous UAV's/

UCAV's/drones for surveillance, strike and cargo carrying. Its ability to provide air cover to the CBG and also project power to influence battle ashore, will therefore be substantial.

Smaller Carriers- Limited Financial Savings and Reduced Ops Capability

Comparison of the US F*ord*-class and French Navy *Charles de Gaulle* aircraft carrier (loosely comparable to INS *Vikramaditya* and INS *Vikrant*), shows that smaller carriers provide **only a fraction of financial savings, approximately 22%, but at 'extreme costs' in terms of reduced operational capabilities; a 53% decrease in embarked aircraft, 225% less aviation fuel storage, and 383% less munitions storage**.

While theoretically the Navy could make up for the reduced ops capability by deploying more of these smaller carriers, unfortunately, operational capabilities do not scale linearly. Therefore, t**wo 40000 ton *Vikrant* Class cannot replace a 65000 ton *Vishal* class.**

Countering Adversary's Anti Access and Area Denial Threat

The Anti Access and Area Denial Threat. The most potent threat to aircraft carriers is posed by the enemy's Anti Access and Area Denial, A2/ AD capability. In simple terms, Anti Access (A2) is the action/capability to build the 'wall' to prevent or defer enemy power projection assets from reaching their 'weapon release line'.

Anti Denial (AD), on the other hand, is the intervention required to neutralize the assets once the A2 wall is breached. A2 assets generally consist of long range, land based Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles, ASBM (the 1500km Chinese DF- 21D) and anti-ship missile armed aircraft.

These however need to be supported with a long range surveillance and target tracking network, a precision weapon guidance network, consisting of Low Orbit Satellites (LOS) and Over the Horizon Radars, and finally a robust 'Command, Control and Communication' network; to sew all these together. Anti Denial (AD) asset, against a CBG, are primarily submarine launched Anti-ship missiles (SLAM's).

Mitigating A2/ AD Threats to the CBG The most effective counter to enemy A2/AD threat is the **Carrier Group's own robust, comprehensive, and more importantly, organic, A2/ AD assets**.

The CBG should therefore have suitable resources to 'erect' its own A2 wall, to prevent ingress of enemy asset, and adequate AD wherewithal to neutralize those enemy platforms or weapons launched at the CBG.

Anti A2/AD and Power Projection Capabilities- Vishal Class Large Aircraft Carriers.

A Carrier Battle Group, attempting to project power on a distant enemy coast, would be centered around a Vishal Class, 65000 ton carrier. Other components of the CBG would include, diverse types of multi role surface combatants and in-support SSN's, nuclear attack submarines. In addition, there would be space based assets assigned to the CBG, in the form of either, a Low Orbit satellites (LOS), or a High Altitude Pseudo Satellite (HAPS.

The Carrier's air wing would comprise of deck operated long range surveillance UAV's, high performance multi role combat and strike aircraft and fixed /rotary wing AEW and ASW aircrafts. These, coupled with the under development Next Generation Destroyers, NGD (with a 144 plus diverse extended-range missile inventory), **would provide the CBG with the stand-off range to operate outside or at the fringes of the enemies A2/AD arc, and influence the battle ashore.**

Deployment Pattern- Medium size *Vikrant* Class and Larger *Vishal* Class CBG's

Therefore, ***for force projection in an aggressive and omnipresent A2/AD threat environment, large aircraft carrier, such as the 65000 ton Vishal Class, remains the only option.***

However, in areas where the A2/AD environment is less demanding, and their ops area is within range of our land based air assets (Western, Eastern and now emerging Southern sea boards), a CBG centered around the *Vikrant* Class, would provide the forces at sea with the ability to monitor and control the sea lanes of communications and deny the enemy freedom to conduct maritime operations, in our areas of interest.

Approval of Third Aircraft Carrier Without Impacting Ongoing SSN And Other Projects

The third decision of significance was the MoD's approval to construct the follow-on of , IAC2 and continue with the larger *Vikrant Vishal* Class, **without impacting** the ongoing program to construct six SSNs, under Project 75 Alpha.

Unfortunately, in 2021, the then CDS advised the Government that SSN Program takes precedence over the third Aircraft Carrier and the IAC2 program should be kept on hold.

Aircraft Carriers Vs SSN. Comparing carriers and SSNs is like comparing oranges and apples. The roles of the two platforms are entirely different, with only a minor overlap of capability- SSNs too can launch a limited number of land attack missiles.

Luckily prudence and strategic maturity prevailed and the defence planners approved the third aircraft carrier **with no linkages to the ongoing SSN program**.

This decision has put to rest, hopefully in perpetuity, the irrational hypothesis- 'EITHER Aircraft Carrier OR SSN'.

Conclusion

The aircraft carrier can transport an air wing's strike capability across the world's oceans–three-quarters of the Earth's surface. It can deliver air power without the need for diplomatic arrangements of land-based alternatives.

This provides the military and political leaders with valuable options for responding to both, region as well as out of area crises.

The current and evolving geo-strategic calculus prophesies a likely scenario wherein the Indian Navy would require the capability to deploy three CBG's simultaneously; in the western, eastern, and southern seaboards.

In addition, as our global aspirations, influence and responsibilities proliferate, the Navy will be called upon to project power and to influence events ashore, even in distant battlefields.

An assured IAC program of say, three carriers of Vikrant Class, in addition to meeting the operational requirement of having a three- CBG deployment capability, has many economic, social, and intellectual spin-offs.

These would include job creation, skill development, infrastructure development, creation of a vibrant MSME eco system and providing impetus to the R & D efforts.

As far as aircraft carrier are concerned, size matters. While we may not yet be in the league of the 100,000 ton super carriers, we certainly can make in India, large carriers, in the region of 65000 ton displacement.

Our current and predicted economic growth trajectory, affords to our defence planners the fiscal freedom to invest in long term military capability, which mirrors our national aspirations.

The current political dispensation displays strategic vision and has thankfully, shed the decision making lethargy /aversion it inherited.

Cmde CP Srivastav a veteran submariner, on retirement is a Managing Partner, Intellectual Resource and Consulting Firm.

Is "Gunboat Diplomacy" Compatible with the Principles of "Freedom Of Navigation"[1] and "Innocent Passage" ?

By
Minoo Daryanani

"Gunboat Diplomacy" is likely to have originated during the late nineteenth-century high noon of imperialism. Whenever traditional diplomacy failed, war fleets of the larger more powerful nation would suddenly appear randomly maneuvering off the coasts of the smaller countries.

This veiled threat of brutal strength, although through a "peaceful" display of military force, was sufficient to bring about capitulation, gain concessions, force the cooperation, even subjugation, of a hostile entity or an unfriendly foreign government without a drop of bloodshed. Undoubtedly, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982 UNCLOS) is universally acknowledged to be an integral part of international law. It contains clear delineation of maritime regimes including their rights, entitlements and obligations. Nonetheless several States, the United States in particular, continue to employ gunboat diplomacy as a powerful instrument for the safeguard of its global interests. The presence of the US Navy in about 450 naval bases (* including foreign ports that give access by agreement for re-fuelling, repairs, etc) around the world is eloquent testimony to the use of this gambit as the primary thrust of US foreign policy.

U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt famously said that his foreign policy formula and diplomatic motto was to "speak softly and carry a big stick". This meant that the nation had to be ready to back up words with strength. In 1903, President Roosevelt sent a flotilla of warships to support Panamanian rebels fighting for independence from Colombia. Although not a single shot was fired, Panama gained its independence and the United States acquired the right to build and control the Panama Canal. In 1904, President Roosevelt's **"Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine"** officially made the threat of military force a handy tool of United States foreign policy. Adding ten battleships and four cruisers to the U.S. Navy, Roosevelt's objective was to establish the United States as the dominant power in the Caribbean and across the Pacific.

Soon thereafter on December 16, 1907, Roosevelt demonstrated the global reach of America's growing naval power when his famed "Great White Fleet" of 16 gleaming white battleships and seven destroyers set sail from Chesapeake Bay on a voyage around the world. Over the next 14 months, the Great White Fleet covered 43,000 miles while implementing Roosevelt's "Big Stick" agenda including 20 port calls on six continents. This voyage is generally hailed as one of the U.S. Navy's greatest peacetime achievements.

By the mid-1950s, the post-World War II US naval bases in Japan and the Philippines had grown into a global network of more than 450 bases to counter the Cold War threat of the Soviet Union and the rapid spread of Communism. The former United States Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger had pragmatically declared **"An aircraft carrier is 100,000 tons of diplomacy."**

Amidst considerable media attention, on December 10, 1971 the US 7th Fleet (Task Force) centered around aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* sailed into the Bay of Bengal patently to intimidate and deter India from invading Pakistan and capturing Karachi. The Indian Navy was tasked with confronting the US Navy battle group, while the erstwhile Soviet Union rushed its nuclear submarines to support New Delhi. Nearly 50 years after the US President had ordered the aircraft carrier into the Bay of Bengal in the face of India's imminent victory over Pakistan, Washington recently sent the nuclear-powered

super-carrier USS *Nimitz* to the same waters in a show of solidarity with New Delhi amid tensions both countries face with China[2].

In November 1988 registering it's presence as a naval power the Indian Government, following the overthrow of Dr. Abdul Gayoom the President of Maldives by a coup d'etat engineered with the help of mercenaries, responded to the request for assistance by dispatching the Indian naval ship *Godavari* to Male. The naval operation code-named 'Cactus' succeeded in foiling the coup, sank the ship carrying the fleeing mercenaries, rescued the hostages and arrested their captors.

Since the onset of the 21st century, gunboat diplomacy has continued to evolve and thrive. Navies have attained a technological edge and speed with faster ships, cruise missiles, torpedoes, drones, sophisticated radar and surveillance systems. Countries have realized the benefits of gunboat diplomacy in attaining national objectives against the far more costly alternative of going to war. In a largely unipolar world, United States foreign policy relies overtly upon the quintessential symbol of gunboat diplomacy - the large scale deployment of carrier battle groups, rather than negotiated treaties and principles of international law[3]. In 1998, the U.S. attacks on terrorist camps in Sudan and Afghanistan with Tomahawk cruise missiles, launched from warships stationed hundreds of miles away at sea, introduced a completely new dimension to the use of limited force in gunboat diplomacy.

It is noteworthy that in 2017 the U.S. National Security Strategy declared: "The U.S. military and other operating agencies will take direct action against terrorist networks and pursue terrorists who threaten the homeland and U.S. citizens regardless of where they are." This codified sanction to use of force against States in response to charges of terrorism appears to be increasingly tolerated, if not condoned. The deadly spawning of terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hamas, etc. has reinforced concerted adoption of punitive measures. Steadily it appears that the global community might formally claim an entitlement to a right of reprisal for terror, genocide, crimes against humanity. Some have concluded that the United States is, in fact, actively promoting the idea of legalizing armed reprisals in international law[4].

However, a re-calibration of maritime strategy has been triggered by the grisly events of 7th October 2023. Hamas' brutal attack on Israel, the prompt no-holds barred, full-force Israeli retaliation have set off geo-strategic repercussions that is threatening to spill over to all corners of the globe. **The Biden administration dispatched 2,000 marines to the region along with Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (Thaad) and Patriot air defense systems.** The deployment of a massive two-carrier task force in the Mediterranean and the quick dispatch of military aid[5], followed by the Presidential visit, are testament to strong, unquestionable, unwavering support for Israel. Such concerted gunboat diplomacy is also to deter any country's reckless adventurism to get involved in the conflict. Iran, despite the western economic and trade embargoes since 1979 has evolved into a military power in the region, is suspected of being the mastermind behind the Hamas attack.

"This military deployment is a double-edged sword," states Joe Cirincione, a Washington national security analyst and former staff member of the congressional armed services committee. "The administration needs it to deter others from joining the attacks on Israel. But if they are indeed used, they could become part of the very escalation of the conflict that the United States fears." Notwithstanding the prohibition against the Use of Force contained in the UN Charter and the fundamental basis for the comity of nations to be governed by the Rule of Law; the blanket-ban on the punitive use of force faces further erosion due to the Oct7th 2023 Hamas' murderous onslaught on Israel, prompting the bloody

retaliation and the subsequent grim repercussions. Prof. C. R. Terry explains that due to the increased use of gunboat diplomacy: "The result is a return to an increasingly lawless 19th century-like rule of the powerful, accompanied by anarchic tendencies within the international community. As the attacks in Syria in 2017 and April 2018 (for the Syrian government's alleged violation of the ban on chemical weapons was justified), both generally supported in the West, illustrate, the West is increasingly prepared to completely ignore international law when resorting to the use of force." Prof. Terry ominously concludes that "Gunboat diplomacy seems to be resurgent. The question remains whether the West will not live to regret being the main initiator of this development."[6]

1. According to Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum "Freedom of navigation is one of the oldest and most recognized principles in the legal regime governing ocean space. It may safely be said that – since it was enshrined ... (by) Hugo Grotius ... this principle constitutes one of the pillars of the law of the sea and was at the origins of modern international law."

** As of July 2021, the US operated military facilities at around 750 sites beyond its national territory. While this is only about half as many as at the end of the Cold War, the number of countries hosting US bases has doubled from around 40 to 80 since that time.*

2. Chidanand Rajghatta Times of India July 21, 2020.
3. LAW, FORCE & DIPLOMACY AT SEA. By Ken Booth. Winchester, Mass.,: Allen & Unwin, 1985, 231 pp.
4. "Gunboat diplomacy seems to be resurgent" by Patrick C. R. Terry Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Public Administration in Kehl, Germany. .
5. An armada of American ships and dozens of aircraft are hovering around Israel, including two aircraft carrier groups — the USS Gerald Ford and USS Dwight D. Eisenhower — with roughly 7,500 personnel each. The USS Carney, intercepted three missiles over the Red Sea that were potentially aimed at targets in Israel.

6. "The Return of Gunboat Diplomacy: How the West has Undermined the Ban on the Use of Force" By Patrick C. R. Terry.

Minoo Daryanani has done LL.M from IMO IMLI, Malta

Global Maritime India Summit 17-19 Oct 2023 at Mumbai

Global Maritime India Summit (GMIS) 2023 is a flagship event aimed at propelling the Indian maritime economy by promoting global and regional partnerships and facilitating investments.

It is an annual meet of the Indian and International Maritime community to address key industry issues and exchange ideas to bring the sector forward. Driven by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, GMIS 2023 brings together global maritime players, policy makers and regulators, key opinion leaders and industry leaders through a series of engaging dialogues, forums and knowledge exchange platforms. The event included an investor summit and an international exhibition to facilitate interaction and collaboration among the Indian and international maritime companies, policy makers, investors, and other stakeholders.

In order to encourage dialogue and cooperation among key industry leaders, the event featured a Global CEOs' Forum. Further, to recognize partners that have made outstanding contributions to India's development as a leading maritime center, the event hosted a Maritime Excellence Achievers' ceremony. The 3-day event was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and attended by the globally renowned industry players.

Ref : https://maritimeindiasummit.com/

IMF 30th Anniversary Celebration

By
Capt Anand Dixit

IMF celebrated the 30th anniversary of its founding on 30th November 2023. Founded in 1993 by a small group of Indian Navy and Merchant Navy Officers, IMF has risen to become a unique organization where retired officers of the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and Merchant Navy work together towards common objectives. IMF membership is open to all- seafarers and non-seafarers, men and women, and all those interested in the sea are welcome. The 30th anniversary celebration was held at Central Park Hotel in Pune. The occasion was graced by the presence of Commodore Rajan Vir, the Founder President of IMF who, at the age of 93 years, attended the anniversary function and took enthusiastic part in the celebration. The event was intended to be a get-together of IMF Council members, past and present. Besides the council members, IMF members and others associated with IMF over the years were also present.

The programme began with the singing of the National Anthem. Capt Anand Dixit, President IMF, in his welcome address narrated the history of IMF and the told the audience about the various activities undertaken by it. Cmde Vir gave an inspiring talk and narrated some interesting anecdotes about the early days of IMF. Cmde Ajay Chitnis. Vice President IMF and Dr Vikram Nabar paid tribute to Cmde Vir and the work he had done.Cmde PK Malhotra in his talk narrated an interesting episode not known to many in the audience; In 1971, Capt Vir who was the Naval Advisor at the Indian High Commission in Singapore, while also performing the role of a naval attaché at the Embassy in Djakarta, overheard a conversation among the US naval officers at a gathering. He learned that they were attached to the US 7th fleet led by USS *Enterprise* and were heading for the Bay of Bengal where India was engaged in a war for the liberation of East Pakistan. Cmde Vir Promptly alerted the Naval Headquarters in New Delhi with this valuable piece of information. With the talks over, it was now time for the high point of the day's programme- Kathak dance recital by Ms Gayatri Kunte, granddaughter of Mrs Nalini Kunte, who is a long standing member and former Secretary of IMF. The dance recital performed in 'Kathak' began with a 'Ganesh Vandana' which is traditionally performed to invoke the grace of Lord Ganesha, the Lord of beginnings. The composition reflected a deeper and higher connection of the dancer to the higher power through movements depicting compassion, virtue and gratitude. The dancer manifests inner devotion and faith in the Lord for his auspicious form. The second composition was a 'Jugalbandi' which represented a dialogue between the percussionist and the dancer performed in 'Nritta' or pure dance. The composition comprised varied hand movements and high-speed footwork.

The third composition was a 'Sargam' in raag Malhar which is associated with the monsoons. The composition comprised dance movements and footwork that depicted the onset of the rains, the thunder, a river and the dancing peacock. The highlight of the composition was represented through 'chakkars' or the rhythmic twirls akin to Kathak. Gayatri's performance held the audience spell bound. Her grace and fluidity of movements was amazing. The audience showed their appreciation with a warm applause for the excellent performance. The day's programme was compered by the senior Council member and Rotarian Mr Yezdi Batliwala who proposed the Vote of Thanks and requested the audience to proceed for refreshments. The High Tea was sponsored by Cmde Rajan Vir. The chefs of Central Park Hotel lived up to their reputation and presented a wide array of delicious dishes which were enjoyed and appreciated by all.

Capt Anand Dixit is the President of Indian Maritime Foundation.



Capt Anand Dixit addressing the gathering



President Emeritus Commodore Rajan Vir, speaking to the audience.



Rotarian Mr Yezdi Batliwala



Gayatri Kunte with IMF Council Mmebers



Gayatri Kunte performing

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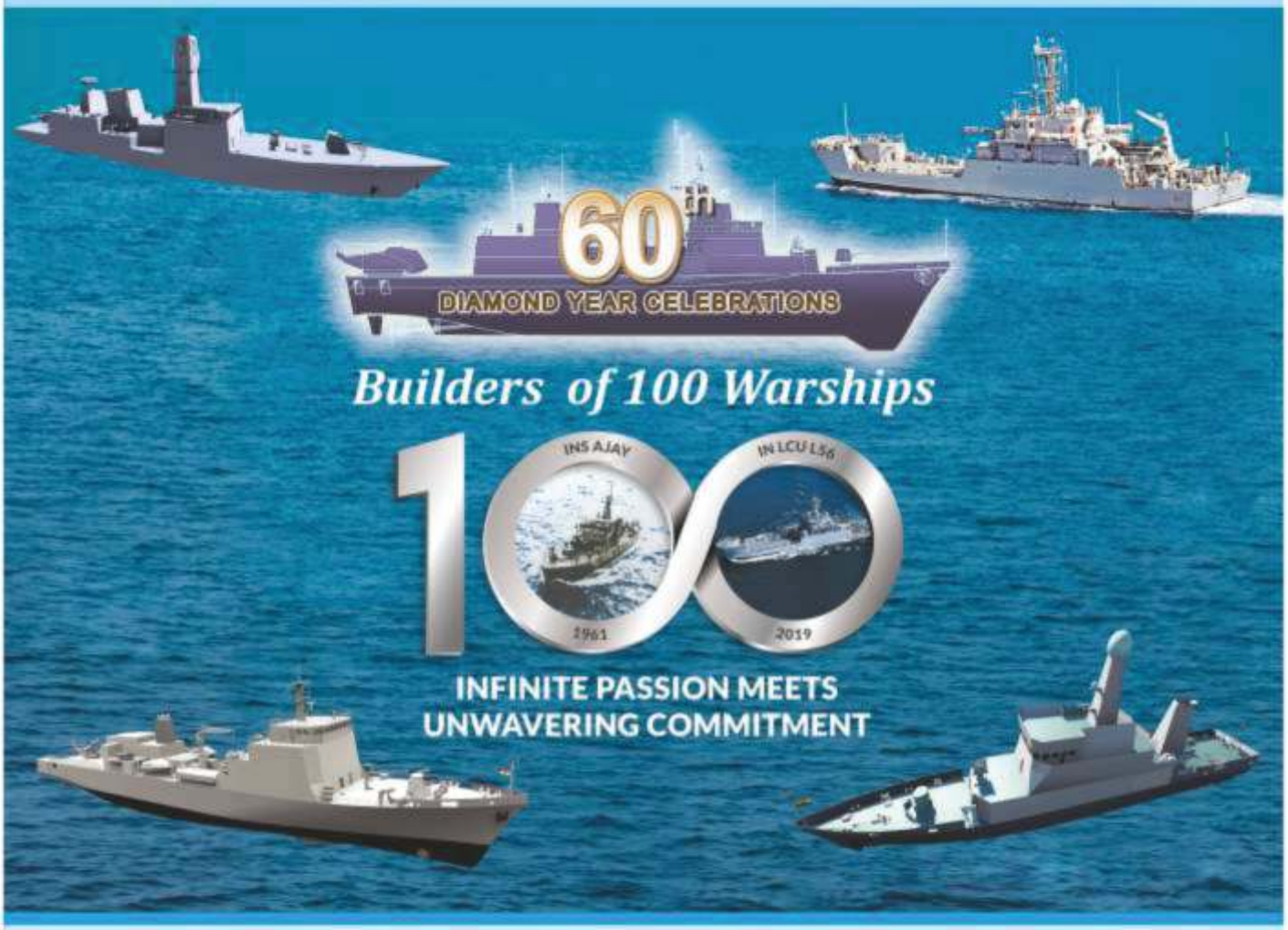
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CARAVEL

Hambantota Port & its Role in Expanding Chinese Influence in the IOR

Cmde Sanjay Tewari (Retd)

Abstract: *Hambantota Port of Sri Lanka came into the news when it was learned that China had taken over the port as Sri Lanka was unable to pay off the loans taken to build the port and other infrastructure. The visit of a Chinese spy vessel to the port in 2022 sparked further concerns in India, views that have recently been echoed by the US also. The Chinese, predictably, have sought to play down all fears with banal statements. This article seeks to analyse the events that led to the takeover and subsequent events and their implications for India's security establishment.*

Hambantota Background

The port town located towards the south-east of Sri Lanka was a flourishing port in ancient times, with links to present day Malaysia. During the 2004 tsunami, the port and surrounding areas received the full force of nature's fury with nearly 4500 casualties reported.

Hambantota also happens to be the home district of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. The port is located almost halfway between Colombo (256 Nm) and Trincomalee (279 Nm). Hambantota sits virtually astride one of the busiest sea lanes in the world, barely 10 Nm away from the East – West sea traffic route.

Hambantota - Development

Development of the harbour into a port had been on the Sri Lankan government's agenda since 2002. In 2003, a feasibility study was done by a French firm, SNC Lavallin, but the report was rejected by the government as it did not examine the effect on traffic at Colombo.

Development of the port had been one of Mahinda Rajapaksa's election promises and he got elected in 2005.[1] In 2006, another feasibility study was conducted by a Dutch firm, which gave a more optimistic assessment of the port's potential. It recommended that Hambantota Port be used for non-containerised cargo before container operations, to enable Colombo to reach its full capacity.

During that time, Sri Lanka was in the grip of a civil war that was not only a drain on its treasury but had left large parts of the country devastated. Rajapaksa was keen to reconstruct broken infrastructure and develop areas that had been hitherto ignored.

Armed with the Dutch report, he pushed for big ticket infrastructure projects in his home region – an international airport, a cricket stadium and the port. For this foreign funds were needed.

The Chinese were ready to provide the kind of funds and the expertise required for large scale infrastructure development. They had been eyeing Hambantota as a link in the OBOR.

According to a Hindustan Times report dated 17 Aug 2010, India had been offered a chance to develop Hambantota, when it was on the drawing board in 2002, but had turned it down.

Apparently, a study had found it to be a non-profitable venture. With other likely investors having turned down the proposal, the Chinese stepped in.

The Chinese have been successful in advancing their loans, often at higher rates of interest, usually in the absence of better alternatives. Another reason is that Chinese loans, while often requiring the partner to use Chinese contracts, are not as stringent in their requirements for safeguards and reforms.

There were no competing offers for the port, suggesting that other potential lenders did not see

rewards commensurate with the project's risks[2].

In 2005-06, Colombo handled 2.45 million TEUs, which though increased to 5.7 million TEUs by 2016 had yet to reach its full potential as a port. Expansion plans to reach a capacity of 35 million TEUs by 2040 were ready. The plans drawn up for Hambantota included activities that were being carried out at Colombo. Hambantota was hence competing against a well-established Sri Lankan port barely 250 Nm away.

China viewed the commercial gains as a by-product of the strategic advantage it would gain, while Rajapaksa in 2005-06 seems to have viewed development of the region for electoral rather than commercial gains.

The three projects pushed by Rajapaksa had three things in common - all had Chinese financing, Chinese contractors and Rajapaksa's name. As to their commercial viability, the international airport is regarded as the world's emptiest airport, the cricket stadium has more seats than the population of the main town and the port struggles to attract ships. With tens of thousands of ships passing by along one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, barely 10 Nm away, the port drew only 34 ships in 2012.

The Deal and How Sri Lanka Got Trapped

The first phase of port construction commenced in 2008 with a $307 million loan at 6.3% variable which was high even at that stage, advanced by the Exim Bank of China. *(Most development banks typically offer loans at rates closer to 2 or 3 percent, and sometimes even closer to zero.)* The deal stipulated that the China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) would be the prime contractor.

The first phase was inaugurated in 2010 and while the Sri Lankan Port Authority (SLPA) wanted operations to commence earning revenue before expanding further, the government decided to push ahead with expansion.

In 2012, the Sri Lankan government sought $757 million for the second phase. At that time, the CHEC and the China Merchant Ports (CMP) were to jointly run the port operations with 65% stake for 35 years after which the port ownership would revert to the SLPA. However, the Sri Lankan government was unable to return the loan as the revenue earned from port operations fell short. By 2016, the SLPA had to repay $134 million in construction fees for the port which had accumulated losses of $696 million. Meanwhile the government had also changed.

After much negotiations, the 2012 agreement was rescinded and replaced with a fresh agreement signed in 2017, wherein the China Merchants Port (CMP) paid $1.2 billion for an 85% stake in the port for 99 years. In addition, CMP demanded 15000 acres around the port to set up a special economic zone. A joint company called Hambantota International Ports Group was set up between the CMP and the SLPA, to manage the port operations and collect revenue.

When the agreement was initially negotiated, the question whether the port and surrounding land could be used by the Chinese military was left open, which India asked the Sri Lankans to explicitly forbid. This delayed signing of the agreement for some time. The final agreement bars foreign countries from using the port for military purposes unless granted permission by the government in Colombo.[3] The money collected was used by the government for other activities unrelated to the port, like repaying loans and infrastructure projects.

Security Concerns

On October 31, 2014, a Chinese submarine and a warship docked at Colombo harbour for replenishment and crew relaxation. The ships stayed for five days. The visit came six to seven weeks after the visit of another Chinese submarine on long range deployment, ahead of a visit by the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, to South Asia.[4] New Delhi had noted with concern the increasing frequency of visits by Chinese submarines to the

Indian Ocean and had observed that "for the first time, Chinese submarines were being made part of PLAN fleet operations in the Gulf of Aden area of Indian Ocean Region, on anti-piracy operations, which is not a common practice".[5]

Any change in the status quo in the Indian Ocean could alter the security concern for India. And, if the change occurred due to Chinese presence, India could not afford to look the other way.

The accord of 1987 between India and Sri Lanka provided that respective territories would not be used for activities prejudicial to each other's security, prompted India to raise the issue with Sri Lanka when China docked its submarines in 2014 at Hambantota.

According to Abhay Kumar Singh of the IDSA, "establishing ports in geo-strategically important countries, including those that are located near maritime chokepoints, are 'central to Beijings global strategy.

These port linkages allow Beijing to exert political influence not only in the country hosting the port but, in many cases, in the surrounding countries as well."[6] With Hambantota at the doorstep of arch rival India, and given the port's position astride the east-west sea lanes of communication, for China the port offered tremendous military-economic strategic advantage.

By 2017, their military base in Djibouti had already been commissioned and Gwadar, where the Chinese had a major stake had also been operationalized.

Prior to signing of the 2017 agreement on Hambantota port, India had conveyed security concerns to Sri Lanka with regard to Chinese military presence at Hambantota. This became a sticky point during negotiations between Sri Lanka and China and led to delay in signing the deal by several months. The outcome was that, the final agreement explicitly stated that the port would not be used by foreign countries for military purposes and Chinese stake was limited to 70 per cent, besides, the Sri Lankan government categorically stated that its navy would be the sole in-charge of security at the Hambantota port.[7] One favourable outcome was in 2017, when China wanted to dock their submarine at Hambantota port, Sri Lanka refused.

Notwithstanding the assurances, the fact remains that Sri Lanka owes China close to $5 Billion and a powerful country like China driven by ruthless leaders can choose to change the rules of the game when conditions suit them, or, at the very least bend them to their advantage. This was aptly demonstrated by the visit of the Chinese spy ship, *Yuan Wang 5*, to Hambantota on 22 Aug 2022.

The Spy Ship Visit

Yuan Wang means "Long View" or "Far Hope", a prophetic name for the ship, considering its likely role at Hambantota in August 2022. The ship is the fifth in a series of seven vessels, all described as Space Survey Ships. Its role is tracking and telemetry of medium and long range ballistic missiles, spacecraft and satellites and to accurately determine their splashdown points, to recover warhead cones, satellite instrument data pods and spacecraft cockpits.

While the Chinese may refer to it as a research vessel, it is an undeniable fact that at the higher end of the technology spectrum, the lines between military and civilian applications of technology begin to blur.

The *Yuan Wang 5* is a classic example of dual use technology. Although the Chinese claim that the ship is under the China Satellite Maritime Tracking and Control Department and is routinely deployed to the Central Pacific and Indian oceans, in support of their manned space programs, defence watchers believe that the ships are under the command and control of the PLAN and are part of the PLA Strategic Forces.

With a length overall of 728 ft, displacing 22000 tons and with a maximum range of 18000 Nm, the ship is built to withstand winds up to level 12 on the Beaufort scale and can operate freely in seas

up to State 6, with an endurance of 120 days. Such robustness of design is usually reserved for naval ships. The ship is distinguishable by the presence of three large parabolic tracking radar antennae mounted on separate masts in the mid section.

The radar is capable of providing accurate real-time spherical coordinate information on targets 750 km away for mission operational decisions and to evaluate future performance. Given the weather conditions it is expected to operate in, and the advanced level of tracking capability required for spacecraft, it follows that the ship would have a most sophisticated stabilization system, that would enable it to fulfill its role.

The ship has a state of art communications suite, linking to other such ships and to the command centre, providing information in real time. Additionally, its signal intelligence (electronic warfare) capabilities, enable the ship to listen in on communication channels, decode and decipher coded communication. It is said to have underwater search, scan and listening capabilities as well.

Should India Be Concerned ?

According to Ling Xin writing for the South China Morning Post[8], the ship had in July 22, been deployed "on a tracking mission to support the launch of Wentian, a major component of China's space station, which is now under construction in low earth orbit"[9], and that earlier in August 22, the ship had been "in the north western Indian ocean on satellite control and research tracking and mission"[10].

The ship was initially expected to enter Hambantota on 11Aug 2022, but due to India's objections, the visit was deferred. Considering that India's primary launching sites are at Sriharikota and Chandipur, and other R&D facilities are located in peninsular India, and, with a listening ship sitting at India's doorstep, India had every reason to be guarded.

The Sri Lankans, on their part stated that there would be no crew rotation and directed the ship not to operate its research equipment in their EEZ, though how far they could enforce their directive, especially where listening equipment is concerned, is another matter. The ship eventually left Hambantota on 16 Aug 2022.

There were visits by other spy ships to the Indian Ocean later the same year, coinciding with India's missile tests, but these did not enter Hambantota. The visit of another spy ship in Nov 2022 led to the launch of a missile being postponed. Such visits are unlikely to cease in the foreseeable future.

Tailpiece

Hambantota is an example of political parties using infrastructural development for electoral gains without adequately studying the commercial viability. It is also a text-book example of China's aggressive exploitation of smaller countries by influencing the political scenario through an infusion of money and later ensnaring them in a debt-trap. Small island nations need money for development and the Chinese are ever willing to provide funds, albeit with several strings attached.

It also means that India will have to develop nimble and aggressive outreach programs to Indian Ocean littoral countries, leveraging on our economic and soft power, to prevent more ports going the Hambantota way. The Chinese are certainly going to keep the pressure on and there will be more visits by spy ships as indeed subsequent events have shown.

Since these ships are technically not warships, there is not much that can be done about their movements, other than monitor them closely. Certainly, missile and space craft launches will have to be programmed keeping this factor in mind. The Indian Navy will need to maintain its presence in the Indian Ocean Region, to let the world know that we mean business.

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Cmde Sanjay Tewari was in the Electrical Branch of Navy. An avid writer, he has authored several books. He lives in Pune and may be contacted on sanjaysmail2010@gmail.com.

Webinar
"Shipbuilding and Ship Repairs: Opportunities for Indian Industries and Manufacturing Sector"

Report by Cdr (Dr) Bhaskar Bhandarkar (Retd)

The Maharashtra State Centre of Institution of Engineers (IEI) along with Navi Mumbai Local Centre India, under aegis of Marine Engineering Division Board (MRDB) IEI, organised a webinar on the theme of " **Shipbuilding and Ship Repairs: Opportunities for Indian Industries and Manufacturing Sector".**

The Institute of Marine Engineers, The Institute of Naval Architects and Amazeng Nautical Association(ANA) were collaborating organisations. The aim of the webinar was to promote excellence in the maritime domain and create awareness amongst the Indian Industries and entrepreneurs**.**

Cdr Dr Bhaskar Bhandarkar(Retd) , the Chairman of MRDB IEI , introduced the importance of the theme to the participants. The **distinguished International personalities** , **Er Jyotisman Dasgupta**, President Institution of Naval Architects India (INA), Former CEO of L&T-VALDEL Engineering Bangalore and **Er Shobhit Kapoor**, Marine Operations Manager for South Asia West, Lloyd's Register Marine and Offshore Services India LLP , shared **their experiences and vision on the important opportunities in shipbuilding and ship repairs. Er Surendra Rai ,** Former Chairman IMEI Mumbai Br., effectively moderated the webinar bringing out the best out of the panelists and also satisfying the queries of the audience. Earlier **Er Milind Patil**, Hon Secretary MSC IEI welcomed the dignitaries and the participants. The participants were greatly benefited by the deliberations.

Dr Nilaj Deshmukh, Chairman NMLC IEI proposed the vote of thanks. The compere for the webinar was **Er Sanjeev Mehra** , Hon Secretary IMEI , Mumbai Branch and President ANA.

"*Si vis pacem para bellum*"(**If you want peace, prepare for war**)

The Future of the German Navy

By

Peter Neunhäuser

About 2 years ago, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany announced the big "WUMS". In the wake of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, a special fund of €100 million was created for the Bundeswehr, about €20 billion of which to be spent on the naval forces.

The German armed forces were completely underfunded in the years following the end of the Cold War. According to the Chancellor, the Bundeswehr has "ships that do not sail, aircraft that do not fly and tanks that do not shoot", and the Minister of Defence, Boris Pistorius, added: New global political constellation demands that the German armed forces must be made fit for war after 30 years of peace.The German government then also emphasised the need to strengthen global strategic partnerships, including other important regions of the world such as the Indo-Pacific, which is seen as a key region for Germany, in its interest as an economic nation to maintain a rules-based international order there. And this is where the navy gains particular importance.

On the other hand Germany must not lose sight of the Baltic and North Seas or the northern flank, but must position itself as a "**regionally rooted, but globally committed**" country in order to fulfil this requirement. It makes sense to integrate the extended NATO alliance area in the Baltic Sea more closely into the planning of maritime defence and thus also use other bases outside Germany. This opens up a much larger operational area. The joining of Finland and Sweden further expands it. Four F126 frigates are being built at the shipyards in Wolgast, Kiel and Hamburg – the largest shipbuilding project in the history of the German Navy with an order value of over €5 billion. The first one is scheduled for completion in 2028. These ships are to become all-purpose weapons, for example for anti-piracy missions, to monitor embargoes, with special equipment for submarine hunting or to evacuate German citizens.

The frigates will be equipped with anti-aircraft missiles, anti-ship missiles and a 127 mm main gun. The warships will be about 160 metres long and displace 10,000 tonnes. The rear sections will be built at the Peene shipyard in Wolgast, then be transferred to Kiel and connected to the forward sections built there. They will then be outfitted at Blohm und Voss in Hamburg. And there is still more to come. Tenders are currently being invited for five F127 frigates for which Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems in Wismar is bidding, having already made preliminary work on the designs. These multi-combat ships should be ready for national and alliance defence by 2035 at the latest.

But it's not just about the really big "pots". The naval arsenal in Rostock has refurbished the more than 100 year old naval residential ship "*Knurrhahn*" at an estimated cost of €10million. The "*Knurrhahn*" was built in 1916 and has since served an accommodation for 300 people from naval crews during shipyard layovers.Better supplies for the German Navy will also be provided. Two floating refueling stations are to replace the two obsolete ships "*Rhön*" and "*Spessart*", which were commissioned in 1977. The keel was laid at the Neptune shipyard in Rostock in August 2023 for the first of the two new tankers, which cost €900 million. All these and other planned new ships and acquisitions will take time and will only be realised and put into service within the next 10 to 15 years. Since 2012, all important missions of the German Navy have been organised and planned in Rostock, be it the protection of the sea routes in the Atlantic or the arms embargo against Libya. Two operational flotillas and the naval aviation command are

subordinate to the naval command. Naval assets, especially ships and boats, and their crews are subject to a cycle of maintenance, training and operational readiness.With fully trained crews, about one third of the fleet can therefore be planned as fully combat-ready.

"**To remain capable of action, naval warfare assets are required on, over and under water as well as in the air**," says the navy. It will also increasingly rely on unmanned systems, both under and over water and in the air.

Source: Die Neue Deutsche Marine, Presse- und Informationszentrum, Rostock, 2023
Peter Neunhäuser is IMF's Honorary Correspondent in Berlin.

Mayday ?

By Capt Anand Kulkarni (Retd)

To sailors and aviators "Mayday" repeated thrice by voice on radio telephony means distress signal. Every year, I am reminded of a Mayday call I would have made. On joining the Indian Navy, I wondered sometimes whether I would have to make a distress signal or respond to one. My real near "Mayday" situation came when I was on board an Offshore Support Vessel (OSV) named *Ganga Dolphin* (GD). GD was thirty-year-old vessel, engaged in underwater pipe line survey in Bombay High, about 40 NM from Mumbai. Apart from my crew of 13, I had 10 technicians from NPCC, a company based in Abu Dhabi. It was a warm day in March and the sea was calm. I was on the bridge and was involved in some critical manoeuvres as we were towing a device near an oil platform. Suddenly, I noticed that the Chief Engineer ("*Badasaab*") came to the bridge. He was sweating but did not utter a word and went down again. After some time, he came up again and was sweating more profusely. This time I asked him what the matter was. **"There is a hole in the hull, under the Port generator"** he said hoarsely. **"Seawater is gushing in"**. I told him I would have a look myself. I rushed down to the Engine room and found that water was gushing from a hole in the hull. As, it was under the generator, the exact location was not easily accessible. Luckily, the hole was not too big and the Fire bilge pump was pumping out the water so that serious flooding was not happening. However, the hull around the hole could expand and we would be in real trouble. Fortunately, the Second Engineer was an Ex Navy-Mechanician Mr Dhiman and a Damage Control expert (NBCD Instructor). He told me that he will plug the hole very lightly with a bamboo rod in such a way that weak hull around the hole would not be damaged. He did that and the leak became a trickle. I ran to the bridge and altered course to Mumbai and increased speed to maximum. Meanwhile, I was amused to see the NPCC technicians wearing inflated lifejackets, ready on the upper deck to abandon ship. "How come you are not afraid?" one of them asked me. "I am newly married" another guy sobbed. The entire passage from Bombay High to the port was a tense one for the crew. It could be a "Mayday" moment any time. I heaved a sigh of relief only after six hours when we entered the port and anchored. Soon shore technicians from the workshop arrived on board and carried out cold repairs under the directions of the Indian Register of Shipping.

The ultrasound readings taken soon indicated that hull around the hole was indeed weakened. This proved the value of the excellent and calm thinking by Dhiman. If he had tried to plug the hole harder, the hole would have expanded and we would have been real trouble. I attribute his action to the fine training he received both as a Mechanician and NBCD Instructor at INS *Shivaji.*

Capt Anand Kulkarni after serving in the Indian Navy was Master of Offshore Support Vessels in the Merchant Marine. He is a Council Member of IMF

River Bank Clean-up

By
Cmde PK Malhotra (Retd)

River bank cleanup is essential for several reasons, as it helps address environmental, ecological, and human-related issues. Here are some key reasons for river bank clean-up:-

1. Environmental Conservation:
Biodiversity: River ecosystems are home to a diverse range of plant and animal species. Pollution and debris can harm these organisms and disrupt the balance of the ecosystem.

Water Quality: Accumulation of waste and pollutants along river banks can lead to contamination of the water, affecting its quality. Cleanup efforts help maintain water quality.

2. **Human Health and Safety:**
Drinking Water: Most communities rely on rivers as a source of drinking water. Contamination from litter, chemicals, or hazardous materials can pose health risks to those who use this water.

Recreation: Rivers often serve as popular recreational areas for activities such as swimming, fishing, and boating. A clean river enhances the safety and enjoyment of these activities.

3. **Flood Prevention:**
Debris Accumulation: Accumulated debris along river banks can obstruct the natural flow of water, contributing to the risk of flooding during heavy rainfall or storms. Regular cleanup helps maintain proper drainage.

4. **Aesthetic and Cultural Reasons:**
Scenic Beauty: Rivers are often valued for their scenic beauty. Clean-up efforts contribute to preserving and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of these natural landscapes.

Cultural Significance: Many rivers hold cultural significance for communities. Cleanup reflects a commitment to respecting and preserving these cultural and historical assets.

5. **Wildlife Protection:**
Habitat Preservation: River banks serve as habitats for various wildlife species. Pollution and debris can harm these habitats, impacting the survival of both plant and animal life.
6. **Economic Impact:**
Tourism: Clean and well-maintained rivers attract tourists, contributing to local economies. Dirty and polluted rivers may deter visitors, affecting tourism-related businesses.

7. **Global Impact:**
Interconnected Ecosystem : Rivers are part of larger interconnected ecosystems. Pollution in rivers can have downstream effects, impacting marine environments and even contributing to global issues such as ocean pollution. In summary, river-bank clean-up is a multifaceted effort that addresses environmental, social, and economic concerns. It plays a crucial role in preserving the health and sustainability of river ecosystems and the well-being of the communities that depend on them.

Commodore P K Malhotra, Director Coastal & River Banks Clean-up(India) and Rotarian Yezdi Batliwala Director Coastal & River Banks Clean-up(Maharashtra) both Council Members of IMF organised yearly Clean-up drives.

The clean-ups were held throughout the country in association with a number of schools, Scouts and Guides, Sea Cadets Corps, Rotary Clubs and other institutional organizations.

River bank clean up in Ludhiana, Punjab









River bank clean up in Pune, Maharashtra






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Letter from London

By
Paul Ridgway FRGS FRIN

UK and Türkiye

On 23 November UK and Turkiye two NATO Allies agreed to work more closely together to help bring greater stability, security and prosperity to both nations. Defence Secretary of UK , signed the Statement of Intent on defence co-operation, with his Turkish counterpart, which will provide the framework for closer working to deliver additional activities that will benefit the security and prosperity of both countries and, in so doing, enhance national, regional and international security.

Following the signing, there will possibly be joint training exercises in the Mediterranean, and the exploration of security support across North Africa and the Middle East.
There was strong agreement on the need to keep focused on collective support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's continuing aggression.

Submarines

On 28 November the MoD reported that two contracts, worth collectively over £100 million, have been awarded to Babcock to support the development of the UK's future nuclear deterrent.
The first, worth £66 million, has been awarded to provide in-service submarine support expertise into the development of the UK's Dreadnought Class submarines – the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent. According to the contract Babcock will provide the MoD with technical and management support, engineering best practice and submarine maintenance capability.

Babcock has also been awarded a £55 million contract by BAE Systems for Weapon Handling and Launch System (WHLS) and Submerged Signal Ejector equipment for boats of the Dreadnought Class programme. This programme will support the design, development, and manufacture of the four new Dreadnought Class ballistic missile submarines, the largest submarines ever to be operated by the Royal Navy.

AUKUS and Undersea capability

It was announced in mid-November that the UK, US and Australia have strengthened their maritime forces, introducing new un-crewed undersea vessels to extend the range and lethality of their warfare capabilities.

As part of the AUKUS partnership, the nations took part in a joint exercise off the east coast of Australia to test new equipment that will increase the protection of critical underwater infrastructure. During the exercise, Australia's new Undersea Support Vessel, *ADV Guidance*, hosted a range of undersea capabilities while they were tested and trialled at sea.

A recent addition to the Australian fleet, *ADV Guidance*'s primary role is to support undersea and surveillance systems trials with both crewed and un-crewed capability.

Business at IMO: The Assembly, Council, India elected

It was announced on 1 December that the IMO Assembly had elected the States listed below to be Members of the Council for the 2024-25 biennium. There are three categories of membership:-

Category (a): Ten States with the largest interest in providing international shipping services (listed in alphabetical order):- China, Greece, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Norway, Panama, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Category (b): Ten States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade:- Australia, Brazil,

Canada, France, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UAE.

Category ©: Twenty States not elected under (a) or (b) above, which have special interests in maritime transport or navigation and whose election to the Council will ensure the representation of all major geographic areas of the world:- Bahamas, Bangladesh, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Türkiye.

The Council: Chair and Vice-Chair

The newly elected Council met following the conclusion of the 33rd Assembly, for its 131st session, on 7 December, and elected its Chair and Vice-Chair for the next biennium: Mr Victor Jiménez. (Spain) and Vice-Chair: Mrs Amane Fethallah (Morocco).

Appointment of the Secretary-General



At left Mr Kitack Lim who retired as Secretary-General of IMO with his successor Arsenio Antonio Dominguez Velasco. Photo: www.imo.org IMO ©.

The Assembly approved the appointment of Mr Arsenio Antonio Dominguez Velasco (Republic of Panama) as IMO Secretary-General, for an initial four-year term starting on 1 January 2024.

Appreciation

During the meeting of the IMO Assembly held from 27 November to 6 December the body adopted a resolution commending outgoing Secretary-General Kitack Lim for his services. The resolution commended his leadership and the many achievements of IMO during the past eight years, including the landmark adoption of the 2023 Strategy on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Ships.

In adopting the resolution, the IMO Assembly designated Mr Kitack Lim as Secretary-General Emeritus of the Organization with effect from 1 January 2024.

At farewell event on 06 December at IMO HQ was launched the IMO history book, ***Safer shipping, cleaner seas - A celebration of 75 years of IMO*** an initiative of Kitack Lim.

Threats to shipping

On 12 December the then Secretary General IMO said: '*The recent reports of threats made to commercial shipping in the Red Sea are extremely alarming and unacceptable. Commercial shipping should never be a collateral victim of geopolitical conflicts. Any attack on commercial shipping is contrary to international maritime law, including laws which protect the freedom of navigation. Any action which might adversely affect shipping engaged in international trade must be avoided. I invite Member States to work together to ensure unhindered and safe global navigation, everywhere, as a prerequisite for maintaining the world's supply chains, and in line with the framework of the* ***Djibouti Code of Conduct.***'

A week later S-G Kitack Lim added: '*The IMO Secretariat is closely monitoring developments and communicating with relevant stakeholders,*

including the shipping industry, IMO Member States, and United Nations partners. Once again, I invite Member States to work together to ensure unhindered and safe global navigation and the well-being of innocent seafarers everywhere.'

The ICS view

On 15 December the International Chamber of Shipping issued a statement on the Red Sea ship attacks: '*There have been an increasing number of attacks against merchant ships. ICS deplores the actions of the Houthis in the strongest terms and calls for the immediate cessation of these attacks. These are unacceptable acts of aggression which threaten the lives of innocent seafarers and the safety of merchant shipping. Currently 12% of global trade passes through the Red Sea. ICS lauds the actions and presence of naval forces so far in intervening against the aggressors and hopes and expects further commitments of the same nature in the very near future. Furthermore, the full maritime security architecture in the region should be brought to bear to end these attacks and protect our seafarers and merchant shipping'*

Operation *Prosperity Guardian*

A coalition of ten countries led by the US, inaugurated Operation *Prosperity Guardian* to defend navigation in the Red Sea as many oil majors, container lines and bulk owners suspended Suez Canal transits and/or opted for longer re-routing around the Cape of Good Hope. On 23 December a significant incident was reported in the Indian Ocean involving the *Chem Pluto*, a Liberia-flagged chemical/products carrier. The vessel was struck on the stern by a UAV, causing a fire in the cordage locker. By 24 December *The Daily Telegraph* was reporting that Iran had threatened to close the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea unless Israel stopped bombing Gaza. This was at the same time as the US had indicated that Tehran was deeply involved in attacks on shipping. It was reported that more than 100 ships had commenced diverting round Africa. All the major container carriers confirmed their ships diverted round the Cape of Good Hope,



A US Navy contribution to Operation Prosperity Guardian in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.
Photo : www.defense.gov,
US Department of Defense ©

which would take up to a fortnight longer. Many tankers were also being diverted – BP Tankers among them.

Nine States that agreed to be part of *Prosperity Guardian* with the US were: Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, Spain and the UK. HMS *Diamond* will lead the Royal Navy's contribution to *Prosperity Guardian.*

According to industry analyst Xeneta, consumers around the world were expected to pay the price for the Red Sea crisis which resulted in 20% rise in freight rates.

Port of Felixstowe

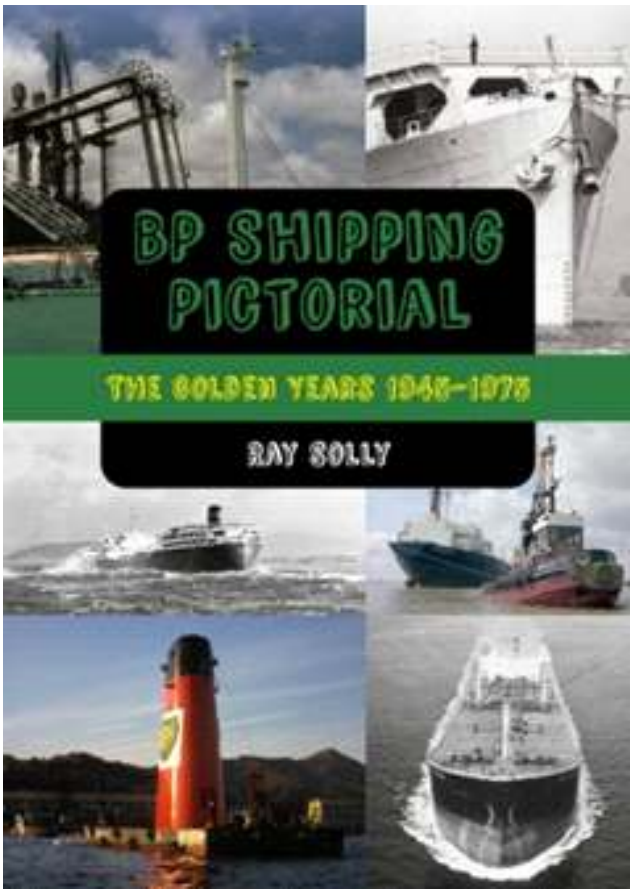
MV *Mumbai Maersk* set a new record for the deepest draft vessel to call at Hutchison Ports Port of Felixstowe. The 20,568 TEU capacity ship arrived at the East Coast port on 11 November from Bremerhaven with a draft of 16.8 met and sailed 24 hours later with a draft of 17.0 met. This record was set after the UK's largest container port announced the completion of a £130m project to deepen the approaches to the port and its container berths.

BP Shipping Pictorial: The Golden Years 1945-1975

This a softback book by Ray Solly, published by Whittles Publishing of Dunbeath, Caithness, Scotland KW6 6EG with 192 pages and over 160 photographs. ISBN: 978 1 184995 474 7. Price £18.99. www.whittlespublishing.com.

Here is a valuable shipping company history being a**n authoritative examination of the thirty-year post-Second World War period that covers significant changes in the history of the British Petroleum Tanker Company (BPTC). It features a major period of prosperity prior to the development of the company's fleet into VLCC-class ships.**

These major changes were vital to the development of the company's fleet from modest 12,000 summer dwt tonnage vessels to the VLCC class ships which ranged up to *British Respect* with her capacity of 277,746 dwt.



The author, a former navigating officer who served in deep-sea dry cargo vessels and supertankers with the Merchant Navy, starts with a concise history of BP from its beginnings around 1915, including early developments in the design and construction of tankers.

Solly went on to a career as a schoolmaster and away from that he taught coastal navigation and radar to the Royal Navy at its School of Maritime Operations, HMS *Dryad*. He is an established writer on maritime topics.

Losses totalling fifty tankers (company-owned and managed vessels with 675 ships' staff killed) during WW II were countered by developments in conversion of vessels for wartime duty and the construction of new tonnage. Post-war, and after considerable losses, the drive to repair vessels and build new tankers led to the growth of the 1950s.

In many areas, BP was instrumental in designing and implementing safety rules long before they were adopted internationally and the effects of these changes are considered in detail. Also featured is the recovery of the fleet following the ravages of the Second World War which was influenced by an unprecedented world demand for oil.

There were also numerous political upheavals that had a direct influence on ship routeing and fluctuations in the growth of the parent company, BP International, which affected the shipping arm, BPTC.

Tank construction and ship stability problems are discussed along with a major overhaul of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

Paul Ridgway is IMF's Honorary Correspondent in London.

Global Maritime Impact of Localised Continental Conflicts

By
Cmde Anil Jai Singh, (Retd)

In the last two years, the world has been witness to several conflicts of varying scope and intensity. Of these, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which is now almost 700 days old, and showing no signs of abating, and the Israel-Hamas conflict, triggered by an unprovoked attack by Hamas on Israel on 07 October 2023, which is now in its fourth month are of considerable significance to the region. In both these conflicts, the warring parties are continental neighbours and the actual fighting has been largely restricted to their respective land borders. In both instances, despite the striking asymmetry between the opposing forces, the prolonged duration of the conflict has debunked the myth about short, sharp, and decisive conflicts between two unequal foes. In fact, in both cases, the militarily superior side has reduced itself to targeting civilian infrastructure including schools and hospitals leading to the indiscriminate killing of innocent people, including women, children, and infants. Due to the recalcitrance and obduracy of their 'alpha male' leaders, who obviously cannot stomach the resistance they have faced in achieving their objectives, both militaries stand diminished as honourable uniformed forces fighting a fair war. This lack of quick success must also be leading to a great deal of frustration among the military commanders with a desired end-state getting increasingly blurred.

The other feature of both these conflicts is the involvement of many extra-regional powers without actually putting any 'boots on ground'. The proximity of the Russia-Ukraine conflict to Europe's and NATO's borders has led to Ukraine receiving a constant supply of modern weaponry from the west; and economic and other sanctions have been imposed on Russia. While Russia had hoped to create a fault line between the US and its NATO partners, the opposite has actually happened with Sweden and Finland also seeking membership of NATO and European countries like Germany increasing their defence budgets. Similarly, despite the Israel-Hamas conflict having remained largely localised so far, except for the marginal participation of other state-sponsored militant outfits like Hezbollah, there has been no direct participation from any extra-regional players as yet.

It is only in the maritime domain that the fallout of both these conflicts has had a global impact. While the actual naval conflict in the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been restricted to a few sporadic actions in the Black Sea, which included the sinking of the Russian Black Sea Fleet's flagship, Moskva, the disruption of merchant shipping by Russia to weaken Ukraine economically, resulted in a spike in the price of food grains which led to inflationary pressures across the world and sparked a food crisis in the less developed parts of the Indo-Pacific region.

Similarly, the sanctions on Russia, including those on the export of oil from that country impacted the global crude oil supply chains and also created a new maritime security problem with ships carrying Russian cargo going 'dark' to circumvent scrutiny. Indirectly, these sanctions have also led to a geopolitical polarisation between those supporting Russia and those who are not. The attack on the deep-sea gas-carrying Nordstrom pipeline connecting Russia to Europe with each side blaming the other, and the less publicised damage to undersea cables by a Chinese ship that dragged its anchor across them are just two instances of the security challenges at sea in a globalised and interconnected world.

Even the naval action in the Black Sea remained limited because Turkey invoked the Montreux Convention to prevent warship movement

through the Bosphorus to both sides, thus limiting access to naval forces and a possible escalation in the conflict.

In the Israel-Hamas conflict, the missile and drone attacks on shipping in the Red Sea by the Yemen-based Houthi rebels, which began in December 2023 have added a dangerous new dimension to the conflict. The immediate fallout of the initial attacks was the rerouting of ships around the Cape of Good Hope by many shipping lines to avoid being attacked, and also to avoid the high insurance premium they would have to pay for transiting through the Red Sea. This has added another 6000 miles and about 10 days or more to the passage with the consequent effect of the additional cost of carrying freight over a much larger distance and a disruption in the smooth functioning of global supply chains. This has impacted about 12% or so of global trade that passes through the Red Sea and its effects on the global economy are going to be considerable.

The initial attacks by the Houthis led to the US announcing Operation Prosperity Guardian with the US Navy and other allied navies protecting the ships transiting through the Red Sea by shooting down the drones and missiles aimed at them without retaliating against the Houthis. The Houthis had claimed that they would only attack shipping bound to and from Israel but it is unlikely that the Houthis can positively identify these ships and the attacks have therefore been more random so far. The firing of a ballistic missile and a few anti-ship cruise missiles by the Houthis as they increased the intensity of their attacks took the world by surprise as such sophisticated technologies are available with only a few nations; this confirmed the involvement of countries that hoped to gain from this conflict. This also signalled the possibility of a dangerous escalation to the conflict and has resulted in the US and UK attacking Houthi positions in Yemen to degrade its ability to launch missile strikes on shipping in the Red Sea. This counter-attack by the US and the UK has the potential of further escalating the scope of this conflict across West Asia and beyond.

Another fallout of this conflict in the maritime domain has been the alarming re-emergence of Somalian piracy in the western Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. On 15 December 2023, a Maltese-flagged ship, MV Rouen which had reported being hijacked was shadowed and tracked by an Indian Naval destroyer and an Indian Navy P8I Long Range Maritime Patrol aircraft. A few days later, MV Chem Pluto, a Liberian-flagged ship was hit by a drone at a distance of a little over 200 miles from the Indian port of Porbandar. The Indian Navy promptly despatched a guided missile destroyer and an aircraft to safely escort the ship to Mumbai. A drone attack so close to Indian waters and a fair distance away from the turmoil in the Red Sea set alarm bells ringing. The US was quick to blame Iran; the denial by the Iranian Foreign Minister terming the US allegation as 'baseless' was equally prompt.

The source and reason for the attack are yet to be established but the forensic examination being done in Mumbai should provide some information. What should be of concern is that this is not an isolated incident. A week later, a Gabon-flagged vessel MV *Saibaba* was attacked by a drone in the Red Sea. In the first week of the New Year, a Liberian-flagged vessel, MV *Lila Norfolk* was hijacked by pirates. The Indian Navy promptly deployed the guided missile destroyer INS *Chennai* to track the ship, a P8I aircraft to shadow it and MQ-9 drones to keep a vigil on it. Finally, in a daring operation, Indian Naval commandos were lowered onto the ship by helicopter by which time the pirates had fled. The crew was rescued from the citadel on board while INS *Chennai's* crew restored the power and propulsion of the ship after which the *Lila Norfolk* was allowed to continue on its original passage.

In the days since these attacks, the Indian Navy has increased its vigil in the Arabian Sea. It first

deployed four guided missile destroyers and a frigate on anti-piracy missions. This was subsequently increased to 10 ships and presently, 12 ships are deployed in the Arabian Sea and the western Indian Ocean. Such a large deployment of frontline warships would suggest that there is enough cause for concern with the distinct possibility of further attacks on merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean, both by the hijacking of ships or drone and missile attacks, if the conflict escalates. The Indian Ocean, which is the world's third largest ocean has some unique features which make it different from the other oceans and highlights its importance in the global economic system. The first is that it provides maritime connectivity between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans which results in a large volume of global trade passing through its waters.

It is estimated that more than 100,000 ships transit through the Indian Ocean annually. The second feature is that it is the only ocean bound by chokepoints on its eastern and western extremities; some of these like the Straits of Malacca, Hormuz, and the Bab-el-Mandeb have great strategic significance and are both a strength and a vulnerability for the region. Hence ensuring maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean presents unique challenges.

The Indian Navy, as the largest naval power in the Indian Ocean, is widely respected in the region for being the first responder in times of crisis, and as a preferred security partner to other countries in the Indo-Pacific. The term 'net security provider' is also often used to describe India's role in the Indian Ocean.

The Indian Navy, as the largest naval power in the Indian Ocean, is widely respected in the region for being the first responder in times of crisis, and as a preferred security partner to other countries in the Indo-Pacific. The term 'net security provider' is also often used to describe India's role in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Navy takes this responsibility very seriously. It is committed to ensuring good order at sea, and the safe and secure passage of global shipping.

With the Indo-Pacific being home to two-thirds of the global population and generating more than 60% of the global GDP, the safety of shipping transiting through the Indian Ocean is critical for the global economy. The shift in the geo-political and geo-economic centre of gravity to this region has led even Eurocentric countries like Germany and the Netherlands to develop and articulate their Indo-Pacific strategies. France, UK, Canada and EU who have interests in the Indian Ocean have also done so. The focus is on safeguarding their economic interests in the region. The current conflict in West Asia and its escalation in the maritime domain will have a direct impact on this. A Combined Maritime Force, comprising ships of many European and Asian navies, of which India has recently become a full member, is permanently based in the western Indian Ocean to address various security challenges in the region, including anti-piracy and maritime terrorism.

However, their area of operation is not sufficient to ensure security over this vast swath of ocean. India has therefore taken a prominent role in developing the maritime security architecture in the region through various initiatives including its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policy. The continuation of these conflicts is having a significant impact in the maritime domain. Even a relatively minor skirmish at sea could lead to an unintended escalation with serious consequences for the global economy, which is yet to fully recover from the effects of the pandemic. Hence the leading world powers must rise above their parochial interests and aggressive rhetoric to avoid any possibility of escalation and also push towards a speedy resolution to both these conflicts.

Commodore Anil Jai Singh is a submarine veteran. He is the Vice President of IMF, based in Delhi and an Honorary Fellow of the National Maritime Foundation.

Gallimaufry

"Operation Pinwheel"

U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS *Midway* (CVB-41), in 1946 used the propeller thrust of 32 of the embarked Vought F4U-4 Corsairs to swing the carrier. This was first used by USS *Randolph* (CV-15) off Guam in June 1945 when the proximity of dangerous shoals and heavy harbour traffic made it impossible for the carrier to turn around under her own power. *Randolph's* commanding officer, Captain Felix L. Baker, ordered that 5 aircraft each be placed on the port bow and the starboard quarter, facing inward. As the props of the starboard planes turned at cruising speed, the carrier's bow turned to the left so that the carrier's port bow caught the trade wind.

Since then this method was occasionally used in the U.S. Navy as an emergency procedure and named "Operation Pinwheel".

US Navy All Hands Magazine - June 1946

A Proud Son recalls his Illustrious Dad

Here's a little story about my Dad - Rear Admiral YN Inamdar. By way of background, he was one of the senior most engineers in the Indian Navy and laid the foundations of the Engineering branch of the Navy. Soon after he passed away in 2019 at the age of 89, I was informed by a neighbour - Commodore Aseem Anand - a Naval Engineer that a building had been named after Dad in INS *Shivaji* a naval base near Lonavala in the 1980's . INS *Shivaji* is the premier Engineering training establishment of the Navy.

(Dad had served there in the 1960s and I was a student of the school in the Naval base) He also said that a 'Memorial' to my Dad had been placed in the Naval Engineering Museum in INS *Shivaji*. Dad had never mentioned this to me. I was keen to see the building and the memorial .

Due to Covid I had to put off my visit to INS *Shivaji* and finally visited there in January 2023. I was greeted there by Commodore Mohit Goel , the Commanding Officer of the base and given the red carpet treatment that included a visit to the museum. This was an indication of the respect in which Dad was held by the Navy. I asked Commodore about the building named after my Dad but he was not aware of it. He promised to investigate.

We were taken to the Museum where the curator showed us an exhibit where Dad's carefully preserved handwritten notes on engineering subjects written between 1948 and 1953 had been put on display in a glass case along with a plaque that explained his contribution to the Navy. He then presented me with a book containing other writings by Dad.

Commodore Goel called me later to say that he had been through the Naval archives and had indeed found evidence that a building that was used as a dormitory for naval cadets under training had been named after Dad and that he himself had stayed there, though today the building no longer exists.

This anecdote describes the love and respect given to senior leaders in the Armed Forces. So much so that the son of an Admiral who retired in 1982 is treated like an honoured guest when he visits a Naval establishment 31 years after his father retired from service.

Rajiv Inamdar is the son of Rear Adm YN Inamdar AVSM. A postgraduate from IIM Ahmedabad, he has worked in MNCs in the fields of Advertising, Market Research, Brand Management and Knowledge Management in several countries. Currently he is a Consultant and a Board Director. He has authored a book titled "Adventures of an Itinerant Executive"

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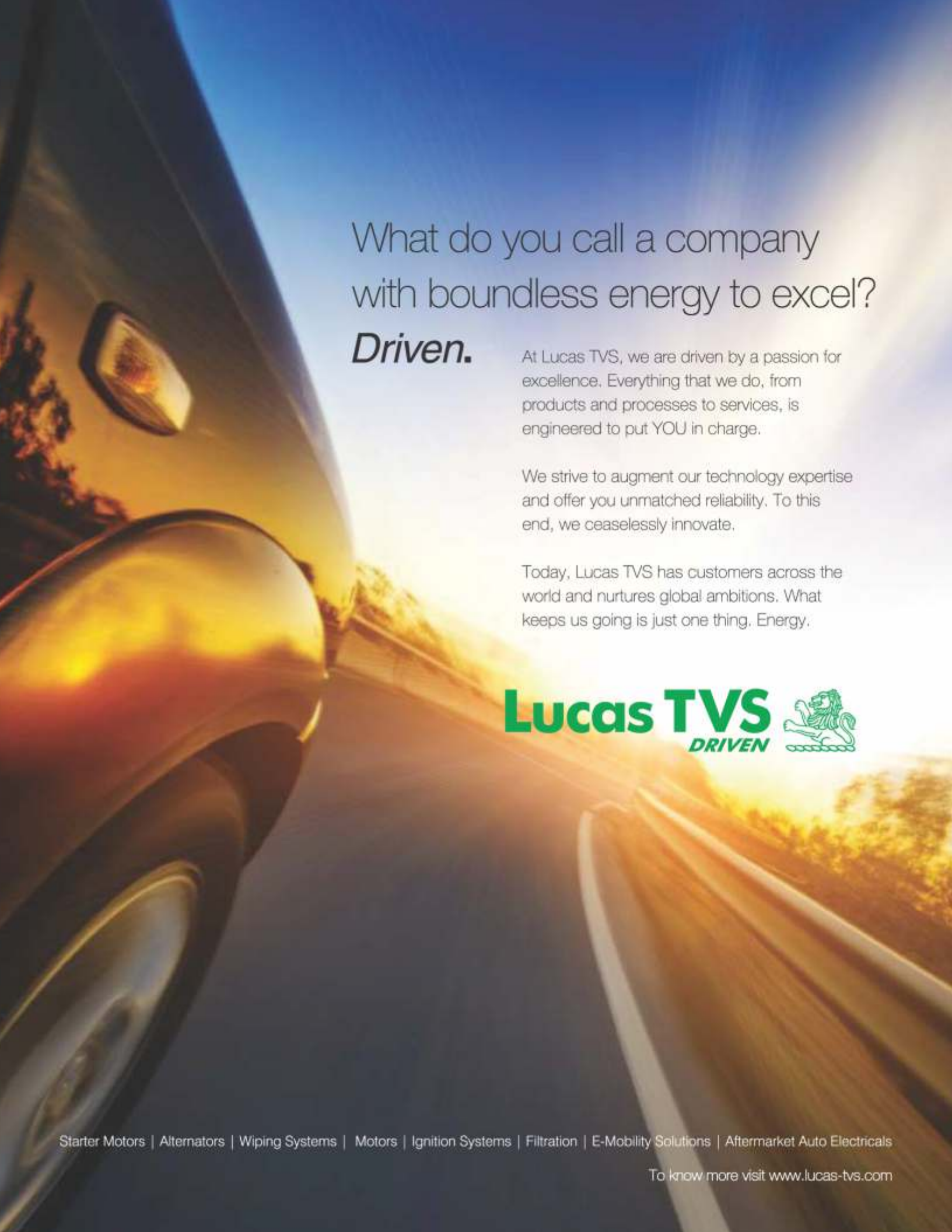
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