



Webinar on 23 April 2021 at 1600 Hrs **Maritime Security and Atmanirbhar Bharat:** **A New Perspective based on the** **Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework**

Background

The global power play has decisively shifted to the tropical littoral waters of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the South China Sea (SCS). The ongoing global order is seeing a massive churn in international relations. The rapid rise of China and the relative decline in the American hegemony has given rise to enhanced contestation and confrontation, largely on economic and political matters that have led to brinkmanship on the military front as well. The pandemic has brought a new set of alignment among nations and also among adversaries. Navies are being openly deployed for joint exercises to re-enforce alliances and proclaim military dominance. The naval deployments have started to see a massive shift towards submarine operations. Even in India, there is a decisive mandate for enhancing our submarine fleet both on the strategic as well as conventional platforms. The entire Southeast Asia is seeing a significant push towards submarine acquisition. Submarine operations is a completely different paradigm in naval operations and brings in, a whole new dimension to the naval engagement for self and the adversary. A very complex naval theatre seems to be emerging in the IOR and the SCS for naval operations to be conducted in future, and it does require far better situational awareness.

The political volatility in the IOR and the SCS, also brings in the non-state actors almost working in cohort with the maritime forces. This further complicates the deployment of maritime forces both in the coastal waters and the blue waters. The disruptive edge these non-state actors enjoy over the conventional maritime forces, further increases the asymmetry of their deployment. The increasing piracy and maritime terrorism incidents in the IOR and the SCS is a manifestation of the deep rooted nexus between the nations and these subversive elements. Thus, the conventional means of operational deployment of the maritime forces need to be relooked at, while we plan our strategic objectives in the future.

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is the conventional term used for enhanced situational awareness for effective deployment of maritime forces. The MDA received significant traction globally post the 9/11 incident, and the entire maritime security establishment enhanced their focus on generating MDA at all levels. In the IOR and beyond, the 26/11 was a similar trigger to build MDA infrastructure. However, it is important to note that the MDA so devised remained a security driven formulation with minimal penetration into the other stakeholders, resulting in constrained budgetary allocations only from the defence spending. The most critical fall out of this security driven formulation was that the underwater component of the MDA that may be referred as Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) remained far neglected and could not be mainstreamed into the Science & Technology (S&T) developments. It is common knowledge that there are serious limitations in the MDA initiative to address the emerging underwater threats. Acoustic capacity and capability building for effective UDA, is inescapable to effectively manage the emerging maritime security concerns in the emerging global order, particularly in the tropical littoral waters of the IOR & SCS. The Atmanirbhar Bharat pitch and the SAGAR vision by the Honourable Prime Minister needs to be analysed in terms of the UDA framework to effectively manage the maritime security challenges in the IOR and beyond.

Proposal

The Maritime Research Centre (MRC), Pune in collaboration with the M/S NirDhwani Technology Pvt Ltd (NDT) proposes to host a webinar titled “Maritime Security and Atmanirbhar Bharat: A New Perspective based on the Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework” on 23 Apr 2021 at 1600 hrs. The event is planned to bring together the defence industry, maritime strategists, policy makers and others, to be able to reach out and build policy priority for the UDA framework both at the national and regional level. The interactions will strengthen the User-Industry-Academic partnership and encourage joint acoustic capacity and capability building at the national and regional level. The high level dialogue will attempt to bring together senior level functionaries to discuss this critical aspect and deliberate on all the dimensions to evolve a cogent way ahead.

Conduct of the Programme

The broad strategic relevance of the dialogue entails that the participants get exposed to the policy issues, technological means, innovative tools and measures, geo-politics, organizational aspects both nationally and globally, regional and global frameworks, and more. The multiple organizations and their mandates within the country and their compatibility with similar entities and user entities will be discussed. The GAP analysis in terms of policy and means and measures will be discussed. A detailed dialogue resolution will be prepared and submitted to the authorities and agencies within and outside the government for further action. The MRC will continue to engage with these agencies and authorities to facilitate effective realization of the Atmanirbhar Bharat and SAGAR vision through an effective UDA framework.

Detailed Programme

- 1600 hrs- Welcome Remarks by Lt Gen D B Shekatkar (Retd).
Chairman Shekatkar Committee and Strategic Defence Analyst.
- 1610 hrs- UDA Framework in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
Dr(Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director MRC, Pune.
- 1630 hrs- Maritime Security Perspective in the Indo-Pacific.
Rear Admiral S Y Shrikhande (Retd), Maritime Security Expert.
- 1650 hrs- Underwater Technology Perspective in the IOR.
Shri Rajasekhar M V, Director R & D, BEL Bangalore.
- 1710 hrs- Security Challenges in the Ongoing Geopolitical Context.
Amb Gautam Bambawale, Former Ambassador to China and Pakistan.
- 1730 hrs- Challenges for the Maritime Industry and Way Ahead.
Shri Jayant D Patil, Head L&T Defence.
- 1750 hrs- Remarks by some Key Guests.
- 1810 hrs- Closing Remarks on User-Industry-Academia Partnership - Dr Malini V Shankar,
Vice Chancellor IMU Chennai and Former DG Shipping.
- 1830 hrs- Vote of Thanks – Shri Praful Talera, MRC Adviser (Blue Economy).

Convener

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