

Maritime Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific

REPORT OF A CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY
THE INSTITUTE OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES
(IDSS)



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Mr Barry Desker delivering his opening remarks

INTRODUCTION

In his opening address, **Mr Barry Desker, Director IDSS, Singapore**, noted that the emergence of new powers like China and India is expected to transform the regional strategic landscape in a fashion that could be as dramatic as the rise of Germany in the 19th century and the United States in the 20th century. The rise of these new powers was predicated on a combination of high economic growth, expanding military capabilities and large populations. Besides China and India, other developing countries, like Indonesia, could also approach the economies of individual European countries by 2020 due to their forecasted high growth rates and large population. Barring abrupt reversals in the globalisation processes, the rise of the new powers is a virtual certainty.

Mr Desker further elaborated that these new powers are likely to start exerting their influence in the maritime domain because of the importance of the sea to the countries in the region, which depend on it as an avenue for trade as well as for energy transportation. The increased use of the seas may have already occurred by observing the trends of

increasing trade flows into and within Asia, the increasing energy demand in Asia, and the increase strength of the merchant fleets in the region. The recognition of the sea as an important domain could also be the rationale behind why regional navies have been growing and is expected to continue growing in the future.

Mr Desker further mentioned that with the arrival of the new powers and an increase in their naval capabilities, it was still uncertain as to whether these powers will relate cooperatively or competitively. How the surge in power is accommodated and how the emerging power politics are managed will be key determinants of regional stability in the future. As a result, observing regional trends will have to be a permanent preoccupation for Singapore if she is to sidestep the pitfalls and ride on the wave of opportunities that present themselves in the flux of change in the regional environment. Mr Desker concluded by saying that the conference aims to illuminate on some of these issues and help participants better understand the rise of the new powers.

SESSION I

THEMATIC ISSUES AND PARADIGMS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC MARITIME COMPLEX

Dr Eric Grove, University of Hull, UK, presented his paper, ‘Sea Power in the Asia Pacific Region’, in which he introduced the notion of sea power, both on its own terms and as it pertained to the Asia-Pacific as seen from outside the region.

By way of preamble, Dr Grove remarked that “Earth” is a very bad name for the planet, given that two thirds of it is covered by sea, and that 70 percent of the world’s population live within 100 miles of a coastline. Historically as well, water transport has been extremely important and continues to be so today: shipping accounts for 90 percent of world trade.

Disagreeing with Paul Kennedy’s contention that sea power was declining in usefulness, Dr Grove argued that World Wars One and Two, together with the Cold War, were in fact vindications of maritime coalitions over continental ones. Thus, the ideas put forth by Mahan in ‘The Influence of Sea Power upon History’ have even more relevance today. In particular, Dr Grove singled out two ideas articulated by Mahan. First, the notion that naval power did not necessarily consist in a large merchant fleet; and second, his advocacy for a naval consortium of like-minded states rather than a national naval monopoly.

On the notion that national sea or maritime power was built on merchant fleets, Dr Grove argued that this no longer held true, given that globalisation has eroded much of the mercantilist identity of a coastal state. In fact, a merchant ship at sea represented the ultimate multinational corporation, given that it could be owned, insured, reinsured and managed by, and flying the flag of, different countries, as well as being manned by a cosmopolitan crew. This then raises the problematic question of whose interests were being affected if that notional ship was attacked. Some countries, like the UK, argue that

beneficial ownership rather than the flag entitles a ship to naval protection under the self-defence provision of the UN Charter. In contrast, the US and France will in certain circumstances defend any ship under attack.

Nevertheless, there was a strong connection between the economic use of the sea and naval capabilities. Dr Grove pointed out that the world’s major trading nations – the US, Germany, Japan, France, the Netherlands, the UK, Italy, Canada, the PRC, South Korea and others – were significant naval powers. Indeed, this nexus is very much alive in the Asia-Pacific where there is a congruence of significant naval powers and large national mercantile marines. There were, however, notable exceptions to this generalisation.



Dr. Eric Grove delivering his presentation

For instance, Japan, historically a naval powerhouse, is currently limited in her naval capabilities by the pacifist political culture inherited from World War Two, although she is beginning to ‘normalise’ her Maritime Self Defence Force. Nevertheless, it will be a long time before Japan is willing to act, and is trusted by her neighbours as acting, as a normal naval power. China’s potential as a naval powerhouse is also limited as well because of her historical preference for the ‘continentalist’ endeavour over the maritime. Furthermore, its ‘people’s war’ rhetoric has not been helpful in the development of naval forces whose essence, compared to land forces, has always been high technology. Hence,

the Chinese naval capability presently consisted mainly of littoral force projection than anything else, even though it has been trying to increase its capabilities in recent times. China therefore will have to take dramatic steps in modernising its navy for its naval power to match her ambitions in the Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea. Dr Grove pointed out that the aircraft carrier *Varyag* continues to rust at Dalian even as new destroyers appear alongside it. This illustrates the way the Chinese Navy seems to be developing in the near term.

Similarly, the dependence on sea trade by the other countries in the region, namely Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore, has led to the development of their naval capabilities to maintain the free movement of shipping. These countries are able to deploy impressive fleets in capability, if not in reach yet. The Taiwanese Navy is particularly impressive, as it is roughly equal to the PLAN in overall capability.

On technology, Dr Grove identified two main issues relevant to the regional navies, namely electronic and mechanical. First, regional navies faced mechanical engineering challenges, particularly in the building of submarines. In fact, it is the Japanese who has been able to build submarines without external help. The Russians are helping the Chinese develop the next generation of submarines. By the same token, the Germans are assisting the Indonesians and the South Koreans, and the Swedes are the submarine patrons of Australia and Singapore. Even the building of surface warships entails rare design skills and technologies. Japan remains dependent on US and British equipment to a considerable extent, while the PLAN uses French and Russian technologies. Australia and New Zealand's latest frigates are based on German designs. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia builds its warships in Britain and Germany and buys second-hand from Italy, while Singapore buys second-hand Swedish submarines and enhances the French frigate and German corvette designs. In fact, Dr Grove points out that the only fully independent naval powers in the Pacific are the

Russian and US navies. However, the power of the Russian navy is limited by the sluggishness of the Russian economy.

On the electronic engineering dimension, Dr Grove argued that since the Second World War the integration and use of electronics has been the essence of naval warfare. What is new in the present era is the extent of the information now available to war fighters and the speed at which it can be delivered. The American joint fires system allows timely, precision engagement of targets many miles inland, while cooperative engagement capability allows a complete fire control quality radar picture to be obtained across a whole force. However, these and other networks pose interoperability challenges to members of a coalition. In order to fight with the US, significant resources will have to be spent to ensure compatibility in order to join the network.

In conclusion, Dr Grove argued that the move towards the littoral is the latest in a series of 'oscillations' driven by strategic and technological factors: navies moved out to sea in the 18th century, and then back to the littoral in the 19th century. By the Second World War, littoral power projection along with the battle for sea control had manifested themselves in terms of amphibious landing crafts and carrier air power. This trend was reinforced during the Cold War where the confrontation of Soviet and Western navies on the high seas created a new 'blue water' emphasis to naval doctrines. It was only after the Cold War where there was a return to the current littoral priority. This 'power projection' paradigm is being followed by all the world's major navies, with the paradigm taken to mean the deployment of stand-off military capabilities that are able to deliver significant force either to deter or coerce. The definition of the littoral has also been stretched in the wake of Operation 'Enduring Freedom' where Afghanistan, a land locked country, was converted into the littoral with US carrier based aircraft conducting most of the bombing missions. This demonstrated that aircraft carriers

could substitute for the lack of a host nation in providing bases and support. Hence, power projection assets are becoming the centerpieces of the world's advanced navies. Furthermore, this emphasis on power projection increases the disconnect between the higher levels of contemporary naval doctrine and the more traditional aspects of 'sea power', notably merchant shipping.

In the second paper, **Dr Lawrence Prabhakar, IDSS, Singapore**, discussed the maritime strategic trends in the Asia-Pacific. He argued that the Asia-Pacific had emerged as the maritime strategic hub in the 21st century, due largely to the maritime trade of resources and merchandise. The maritime geography of the region presented the interface of the continental landmass of Asia and the Pacific ocean. The maritime geographical complex of the region is bounded by archipelagoes and islands of Southeast Asia, and hemmed by the extensive littoral of the Asian landmass and the continental powers of US, Russia and China.



Dr Lawrence Prabhakar delivering his presentation

In setting the theoretical framework of his paper, Dr Prabhakar argued that the international relations of the Asia-Pacific in the post-Cold War era was essentially an emergent multipolar balance of power system with the continued hegemonic dominance of the US. The rise of new powers has been competitive and paralleled by the growing strategic capabilities comprising nuclear and missile arsenals even as economic

interdependence has emerged. The balance-of-power in the region is maritime-centric as the contiguity of sea spaces have emphasised the significance of civilian shipping and navies. Sea lanes of communication therefore constituted the arterial networks of resource and energy flows.

Naval transformation has been one area that has gained tremendous salience within the region since the end of the Cold War, and the concomitant developments wrought about by globalisation. The emergent missions and roles of navies in the relative peacetime contexts have substantially modified the traditional paradigm of naval power and maritime strategy. The emergent benign roles of cooperative maritime strategy evident in joint exercises, interoperable missions, and constabulary roles in humanitarian missions have significantly complemented the still prevalent and traditional coercive and compulsion missions of navies.

Dr Prabhakar introduced the notion of 'forward naval presence', which is defined in terms of 'from the sea.' This would provide enhanced autonomy to the dominant maritime extra-regional powers seeking to reduce their vulnerabilities on land yet persisting with strong littoral intervention capabilities. He argued that the US currently led the defence transformation process that is followed closely by its extra-regional allies and regional partners. Forward naval presence would thus lead to the following: (1) the emergence of joint forces that would have expeditionary and amphibious capabilities that are increasingly premised on maritime-air-space platforms; (2) it would lead to the growing interoperability between the US and its regional allies. Although Japan, Australia, South Korea and Singapore are at different stages of the transformation effort, they are expected to converge towards interoperability with the US; (3) the transformation of naval presence would lead to the integration of C4ISR platforms and sensors that are being integrated into joint strike platforms; and (4) the integration of homeland security concerns with forward presence will be facilitated by the deployment of sea-based theatre

ballistic missile defences on high performance AEGIS cruisers, which would also provide assurance and deterrence against littoral ballistic missile threats in the region.

Shifting his presentation to patterns of littoral dominance, Dr Prabhakar argued that littoral operations and littoral dominance would become the accents of the extra-regional naval powers in the region. The scope of forward presence in the 21st century would be centered on the projection of power into the hinterland and the deployment of sea-launched cruise missiles with conventional and nuclear payloads for strike. The maritime doctrines of the US, the UK, France, China and India are specific in regard to littoral control operations.



Vadm (Retd) Hideaki Kaneda (left) and Dr Eric Grove (right) sharing a light moment

Four factors have led to the quest for littoral control in the respective theatres of the North Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits. First, the sea-denial capabilities of the littoral powers have increased, given their stealth platforms and missile corvettes, which has negatively affected the sea control capabilities of the great powers in the region. Second, short-range ballistic missiles, with NBC payloads, have increased the retaliatory potential of the littoral powers, and have neutralised to a significant degree the power projection capabilities of the extra-regional powers. Third, submarines in the littoral offer the best submerged defence for the littoral powers. The

enhanced capabilities of diesel-electric submarines armed with high speed fire-and-forget torpedoes provide the most effective stealth strike options. Finally, shore-based naval aircraft armed with anti-ship and air-to-surface attack missiles also provide for a strong littoral defence capability that complicates the access and basing operations and the ability to sustain littoral control operations.

In conclusion, Dr Prabhakar believed that the maritime strategic trends in the region portray a mixed picture of competitive rivalries alongside the more recent cooperative maritime partnerships. Furthermore, the maritime balance of power in the region would be driven by the process of naval transformation derived from the broader defence transformation effort. Naval transformation would also be determined by the emergent strategic milieu that conditions the balance of power, with the accents on the multipolar structure underpinned by US hegemony. Naval transformation would also be determined by technology with *jointness* as the central theme. Jointness of the armed forces would be the future paradigm even as the conduct of operations would be tailored to suit the requirements of the architecture of the armed forces. In summary, the maritime strategic trends in the Asia-Pacific portray strong evidence towards a technology-centric naval transformation process.

DISCUSSION

It was pointed out that although China might be regarded as a limited naval power, it was still very powerful. Dr Grove agreed, but reiterated his point that while the Chinese navy was of considerable size, it did not expand according to expectations, especially in the 1990s. The development of Chinese naval power has clearly lagged China's economic rise. The ability of the PLAN to expand to the first island chain is fairly well-established; however, the ability to project force beyond that first island chain remains problematic for the Chinese navy. Dr Grove argued that the nuclear submarine capability had

to be vastly improved before China could be considered to have fulfilled its promise as a great naval power.

A question was asked as to the future of sea power, in particular, whether the Asia-Pacific would be an arena for cooperation or confrontation. Dr Grove first noted that the regional navies were developing at a significant pace. The Indian and Chinese navies are envisaged to develop to a point where they would play a significant role in the maritime dynamics of the region. These developments could lead to a confrontational posture in the region, a trend that is borne out by history. The critical question is how a balance of power might result from these developments. The developments in the Asia-Pacific are however, in contrast to other parts of the world, where the trend is towards an era of cooperation at sea, especially in Europe. It may be possible for such cooperative trends to be replicated in the Asia-Pacific region. Diplomacy would therefore be the key ingredient in mitigating against competition and confrontation.

One participant asked if presently we were seeing the end of the era of the super-carrier. As more platforms got stealthier and anti-ship missiles became deadlier, would navies still need or want super-carriers? Dr Grove argued emphatically that the super-carrier was very much alive and well. He pointed out that the bigger the aircraft carrier, the more resilient to attacks it was and the size of the carrier gave greater flexibility for operational deployment. As such, Dr Grove believed that the vulnerability of carriers was frequently overstated.

A question was asked regarding the growing competition in the maritime dimension – would it have stabilising or destabilising effects in the years to come? Dr Prabhakar's view was that it was too early to tell. However, he was optimistic as previous arms races in the Asia-Pacific region have not led to war. There was also an asymmetry in the region because there exists belligerent states who drive up the destabilising



From left to right: Dr Lawrence Prabhakar, Dr Sam Bateman, Professor Amitav Acharya, Dr Eric Grove, and Mr Michael Richardson

patterns. He cited the instances where a brinkmanship-indulgent North Korea, and a destabilised Pakistan, could lead to destabilising tendencies. However, by and large, the development of capabilities and counter-capabilities would result in a stable equilibrium provided it was underpinned by the US's role as the extra-regional balancer. China's posture will greatly determine if the outcome is a stable one: if China decides to be assertive, then it could destabilise the regional maritime picture.

A point was raised concerning the littoral which, from the classical point of view, had been defined as a space from the coast to about 200 km, and in the context of naval operations, is a highly complex environment. However, in the current context, this 'space' is also where non-state actors breed. The littoral is the 'new geography' in which most of the navy's activities are going to take place. Dr Prabhakar also pointed out that the littoral was made even more complex as the space is being contested by both state and non-state actors.

On the question of Sea Lines of Communications, or SLOCs, there was ambiguity as to how important they were? A participant pointed out that SLOCs were merely constructs, and that the focus of protection should really be on ships and not SLOCs. In any case, ships are always free to deviate from SLOCs, albeit at some cost. The issue of SLOCs and choke points is therefore not a clear-cut one because it involves other issues of business costs

and the geopolitical risks of diverting maritime traffic. The Straits of Malacca, in particular, would prove an important test-case for multi-country maritime cooperation due to the dependence by many countries on it for trade and the transport of oil.

On the notion of forward naval presence, what then is the ‘correct’ strategy for small navies to adopt? For small navies, sea control is important so as to enable an ally to come in support of the operations. In addition, sea denial, and constabulary roles are also important aspects of overall naval strategy.

SESSION II

NATIONAL MARITIME DOCTRINES AND CAPABILITIES

PERSPECTIVE FROM JAPAN

Vice-Admiral (retired) Hideaki Kaneda, Okazaki Institute, Japan, presented his paper, ‘Outline of Japan’s strategic environment and the characteristics of the Asia-Pacific region’. He first set the context by sketching out Japan’s National Defence Program Guideline that was revised in December 2004. In this latest guideline, Japan now recognised that the prospects of facing a full-scale invasion had diminished considerably. However, Japan was now confronted with the rising need to respond against new threats such as WMD proliferation, ballistic missiles, and transnational terrorism. Japan was also concerned about North Korea and China’s military modernisation and maritime expansion. The guideline called for the establishment of a ‘multi-functional, flexible and effective force’ that would allow Japan to participate in multilateral initiatives and to respond to new threats while maintaining its ‘basic defence force’ concept as described in earlier defence policy outlines.



Vadm (Retd) Hideaki Kaneda making his presentation

Vice-Admiral Kaneda also highlighted the Japan-US security alliance as a key element in Japan’s defence posture. The guideline stressed how Japan would need to engage the US in security

dialogue while cooperating with other relevant countries in order to stabilise the region.

The new guideline called for improvements in response capabilities, mobility, flexibility and multi-functionality. Furthermore, it called for the enhancement of technological and information capabilities, as well as a fundamental review of the effectiveness of existing equipment, systems and structures. Focusing on Japan's Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF), Vice-Admiral Kaneda pointed out that the JMSDF's posture was to develop anti-submarine warfare capabilities. However, the new guideline would entail dramatic changes across the board, including the revision of the conventional defence programs, the appropriate reduction in the scope of major equipment such as surface combatants, and fixed-wing patrol aircraft.

Next, Vice-Admiral Kaneda explained the implications of the new guideline for the duties and roles of the JMSDF. First, as mentioned, the JMSDF would need to develop capabilities that could respond to threats such as WMDs and ballistic missiles, terrorist attacks, invasion to the island area, cyber attacks and spy-ship activities. Second, the JMSDF would still need to respond to the threat of conventional symmetrical wars. Finally, the US remained an important exogenous factor in the development of the JMSDF: the ongoing reorganisation of US forces forward deployment will invariably lead to changes in the Japan-US security relationship.

At the more technical level, Vice-Admiral Kaneda argued that if the aims of the new defence guideline were to be realized, then there had to be significant enhancements to the command, control, communication, and computer functions of the JMSDF as well as the functions for anti-air, anti-ship, anti-submarine and electronic warfare. The anti-submarine and anti-mine warfare roles were especially critical because they were both basic functions of maritime operations and also fundamental to the overall strategic milieu. Finally, Vice-Admiral Kaneda believed that the JMSDF would eventually need

to have tactical aircraft carriers, helicopter carriers, AEGIS ships, with ballistic missile defence capabilities, and multi-purpose ships.

PERSPECTIVE FROM CHINA

In the second paper, **Dr You Ji, East Asia Institute, Singapore**, discussed China's naval strategy and transformation, tracing the various developments since the year 2000. He pointed out that the PLAN's capability since 2000 had been a broad-based improvement in both quality and quantity. Some of the new assets included major platforms such as two Sovremenny destroyers in 2000, two 052B (Luhu class) destroyers in 2003, two 052C (Luyang class) destroyers in 2004 and a significant number of frigates. This spate of acquisitions contrasts sharply with the passivity of the 1990s. Crucially, the PLAN also acquired other major combatants that have given it tremendous blue-water capabilities, including two nuclear attack submarines, one strategic nuclear missile submarine, one new class conventional submarine and no less than four (093) Song class submarines. Dr You Ji highlighted the submarine acquisitions as being particularly important, as they have transformed the image of the PLAN submarine fleet from the noisy, primitive and accident-prone vessels of Soviet origins to one with modern capabilities.



Dr You Ji delivering his first presentation

Dr You Ji also discussed the driving factors behind the rapid expansion of the Chinese navy

in the last five years. He cited intensive research and development as key factors in the process, but also added that progress was propelled by foreign acquisitions. China's powerful economy will play a critical role in speeding up the naval modernisation process. In the coming decade, he said that US\$20 billion will be allocated for this purpose alone.

Speaking on the issue of technological breakthroughs, Dr You Ji explained the PLAN's new assets as the product of an impressive number of technological breakthroughs in the last two decades. He argued that these breakthroughs constituted an important foundation for the continuing process of naval transformation. Also, while conceding that the PLAN could not be considered among the elite naval powers, he believed that the PLAN was able to extend its combat range, and that under certain conditions, could carry out blue water missions around the first island chain. Indeed, he pointed out that the bulk of the technological breakthroughs are for blue water operations, with emphasis on air defence and anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Despite growing blue water capability, Dr You Ji argued that, in practical terms, Chinese naval operations were not grounded in blue water intentions, but in more realistic combat models. Using the concepts of sea control and sea denial, the PLAN is thus seen as exercising sea control in the coastal waters, while projecting sea denial capability up to the first island chain. The latter is predicated on inflicting heavy losses on an adversary that is aiding Taiwan in its bid for *de jure* independence by conducting a naval blockade of China's sea space. Dr You Ji argued that this defensive-offence posture suits the navy's regional role and indicates that it perceives sea control and sea denial in tactical, rather than strategic, terms.

In conclusion, Dr You Ji argued that there was currently a missing link between the PLAN's strategic ambition and its actual operational capability. With Taiwan ever at the forefront of policy thinking, the PLAN has modernised with

the view to potential cross-Strait conflict. However, the PLAN is far from being a true blue water power. Dr You Ji cited difficulties such as its lopsided force structure, the slow growth of its ocean-going fleets, the lack of progress on developing strategic nuclear submarines, its obsolete airforce, and its stalled aircraft carrier programme as factors that prevent the PLAN from being a true blue water power at present. Still, if China's economic growth continued apace, then it would simply be a matter of time before the PLAN achieved its longer term ambition of becoming a blue water navy.

PERSPECTIVE FROM INDIA

In the final paper of the day, **Commander (retired) Dr Vijay Sakhujia, Observer Research Foundation, India**, discussed how the Indian navy was keeping pace with the emerging maritime challenges. The paper focused primarily on the geostrategic imperatives currently shaping the growth of the Indian navy, and examined the Indian navy's strategy and force structure. Dr Sakhujia believed the Indian ocean to be the most dynamic region in strategic and economic terms today, and that maritime developments were integral to the regional economic and security environment. Since independence, India had been actively engaged in building closer relations regionally and globally. The Indian navy has been at the forefront of international and regional initiatives for maritime cooperation. However, the Indian government is concerned about the future role



Dr Vijay Sakhujia delivering his presentation

of extra-regional powers in the Indian ocean and their impact on stability and security.

Dr Sakhuja explained that the Indian navy's mission was to provide maritime security in 'all directions', and to take the battle into an adversary's zone should hostilities develop. The navy's foremost task therefore was to provide deterrence from a position of strength and the carrier task force must be able to execute sea control from a zone that extends up to 1.5 million square kilometers. The Indian navy's strategy is therefore based on its ability to exercise sea control of its immediate sea spaces, with the degrees of control being calibrated as zones of positive control, medium control and soft control. These describe the navy's ability to engage a given enemy before it can endanger or damage national assets. In geographical terms, these zones encompass the large sea areas from the coast to the deep sea areas of the Indian ocean.

In discussing recent developments, Dr Sakhuja noted that, as articulated in the Indian Maritime Doctrine published in 2004, there was a reaffirmation of the role of the Indian navy in its warfighting, constabulary and politico-diplomatic functions. He singled out the latter role as being a critical one that will help shape multinational naval cooperation and strengthen confidence-building measures among states. Hence, navies will increasingly cooperate to preserve order at sea even when they are not part of any formal military alliance. The new doctrine also noted that, post-Cold War, the focus has shifted from large armies and their bases to maritime forces in support of littoral warfare. Consequently, the Indian maritime vision for the 21st century regards the arc from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits as a legitimate area of interest. Indian naval thinking was therefore concerned with the development of powerful naval forces to act as a deterrent, conduct naval diplomacy, and maintain maritime order. These issues then translate into joint operations, information warfare and littoral warfare.

In conclusion, Dr Sakhuja said that the Indian

navy had been engaged in major acquisition programmes since the late 1990s and these programmes were aimed at force modernisation along the lines mentioned above. A variety of advanced platforms, missiles and electronic warfare equipment have also been added on. Although the navy, as it stands, has the capability to safeguard India's maritime interests, it remains dependent on foreign sources for weapons and sensors.

DISCUSSION

On China, a participant asked if sea control and sea denial were only to do with tactics as Dr You Ji had argued, or if they fit into a broader strategic mission? Dr You Ji reiterated his stance, further arguing that the notions of sea control and sea denial were underpinned by economic rationale, where Chinese economic activity, the bulk of which is foreign trade, had to be protected especially during times of tension. He conceded however that there could be exceptions. For example, many of China's oil tankers steamed through the Indian Ocean region, and if tensions escalated in that region, China's source of energy would be threatened. This could be the situation in which China would exert its naval power for sea control and denial.

Further elaborating, Dr You Ji confirmed that sea control and sea denial by and large pertained to operational matters. Sea denial tended to refer to the eastern region off Taiwan, where submarines could be deployed. However, the efficacy of any sea denial operations depended on who was being denied: clearly the Chinese did not have the capability to mount such operations against the US.

On the question of China's carrier programme, Dr You Ji believed that it had merely been put on hold, rather than completely abandoned. He believed that any further progress on the carrier project was contingent on China's ability to develop systems that could deal with air and missile attacks.

On another question regarding carriers, a participant asked what China's asymmetric strategies vis-a-vis anti-carrier operations were. Dr You Ji replied that, given current constraints, the PLAN would employ network-centric warfare or even space warfare to paralyse the command and control functions of the carrier, rather than to try to sink them. However, You Ji pointed out that the future of information technology (IT) warfare in general is still uncertain.

A question was asked about the conditions under which China might acquire a blue water naval capability within the next 25 years. Dr You Ji replied that any strategy on the part of the Chinese would largely be a reaction to the situation in Taiwan. Since the 1980s to the early 1990s, China had reduced its military budget considerably as it did not believe that she would be involved in any major war. Subsequent budget increases were made in the 1990s after Taiwan started to push aggressively for independence. China then began to believe that war with Taiwan might become inevitable, and that this war would involve the US. Hence, China's military build-up had both Taiwan and the US in mind. However, this development also provoked a reaction from Japan and India. China, therefore, is very much at the cross-roads. As China embraces interdependence and the principles of the international community, she has also to grapple with the tendencies for nationalist expansionism at the same time. Dr You Ji believed that the latter would be provoked by external developments, such as the bombing of the Chinese embassy, and the harassment of Chinese submarines by US warships.

The discussion then turned to the legal aspects of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), as many countries saw it as unilateral and unlawful. It was noted that once a country signed and was part of the PSI, it stood to gain collectively from the arrangement. Could the PSI be seen as a collective good, rather than solely benefiting the US? Dr Vijay agreed that it was for the collective good, although he cited the negative experience

of the North Korean vessel *So San*. He also pointed out that even though the collective good was the end game, the process by which that point was reached has been unilateral, and he argued that there should have been a greater amount of debate before the PSI was implemented. The PSI has been particularly problematic because of its perceived unilateral nature, and also because of the perception that it would entail the surrendering of a nation's sovereign rights.

Turning the question to operational matters, a participant asked if and when the Indian navy would become part of India's strategic nuclear forces, i.e. the ballistic and cruise missile force? Dr Sakhuja replied that for the moment, attention is not focused on integrating the Indian navy into the overall strategic nuclear forces. However, the Indians are developing the *Sagarika* missile, which could serve as a delivery system for nuclear weapons. The challenge then becomes one of miniaturising the weapons systems in order to fit them into submarines.

A question was raised on the interoperability of the Indian navy with other navies. Dr Sakhuja replied that interoperability was contingent on which ally one was referring to. For example, with the British Royal Navy, interoperability was not an issue because of historical connections such as the admiralty documents. However, interoperating with the US Navy was more challenging, and the Indian navy has had to build separate communications systems to facilitate such interoperability. However, as Indo-American cooperation has been in existence since 1992, there has been considerable time for cooperation to become more sophisticated and for learning to occur.

A point was made that navies today appeared to have problems engaging in confidence-building measures (CBMs). In the early 1990s, it was thought that warships could also serve as 'law' ships, i.e. ships that enforced the common international law. However, recent trends in naval developments indicate that navies are

increasingly focusing more on their war time roles rather than their constabulary and diplomatic roles. As a result of the navy's increasing focus on war time roles, coast guards may then have to play a bigger role in the constabulary duties of maintaining law and order at sea. Coast guards may be the right organisation to take on such constabulary duties as they do not have the historical baggage or restrictions that navies face. However, it was noted that coast guards already had a heavy set of responsibilities, such as marine safety and the conduct of search and rescue operations, and as a result should not be overburdened with CBM-type activities.

SESSION III

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE DEFENCES: THE MARITIME DIMENSION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UNITED STATES



Dr Donald Berlin delivering his presentation

Donald Berlin, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, US, began his presentation by asserting that the Asia-Pacific region is likely to be characterized by a gradual increase in the number of nuclear weapons states. At the same time the region will also witness an increase in the size and quantity of these states' weapons inventories. Furthermore, Asia's nuclear weapons will eventually have a maritime dimension. This will either be because they will be sea-based or because the environment in which they could be employed during battle has a maritime component.

According to Berlin, Asia-Pacific states that are likely to develop and deploy nuclear weapons in the future include Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and Iran. Before long, India is expected to start deploying nuclear weapons at sea on submarines and Pakistan will most likely follow suit shortly after. India's intention to add a maritime dimension to its nuclear posture was declared as long ago as 1999. This was also the year in which Pakistan announced that its navy would be assigned a nuclear role.

The development of China's sea-based nuclear

weapons capability is already well underway. It recently launched the lead hull of its next-generation nuclear-powered attack submarines, Type 093. It is also developing a new design Type 094 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine.

One state that has not received much attention but does in fact have a bearing on the maritime balance of power in the Asia-Pacific is Israel. It is suspected that Israel has the capacity to launch attacks against targets at the Indian Ocean entrance of the Red Sea. Israel's navy has also been developing plans to operate in the Indian Ocean.

Berlin went on to describe how the nuclear weapons of the Asia-Pacific will be increasingly maritime in focus because of the battle space in which they will be deployed. This is essentially because many of the various scenarios entailing the use of nuclear weapons in the Asia-Pacific region involve the maritime environment. The conflict between China and Taiwan across the Taiwan Strait is only one example.

Another reason for this increased maritime dimension is the proliferation of forward basing of naval facilities, demonstrated by the US and most likely in the near future by India and China.

In sum, according to Berlin the future of the region will be characterized by the rise of Indian and Chinese naval power, and the balancing against them of Japan, the US and Australia.

DISCUSSION

The question of what circumstances would be required for either Japan or the Republic of Korea to make the decision to acquire nuclear weapons was discussed. If the US assumed a less proactive security posture in the region, or if the US ceased to underwrite Japanese security and provide extended deterrence, Japan may well be forced to develop nuclear weapons. Japan could also elect to have nuclear weapons in response to Chinese military developments. In other words, if China looks sufficiently dangerous and

provocative Japan may well make the decision to acquire a nuclear capability, notwithstanding continued US support. Korea is in a difficult strategic situation positioned as it is between Japan and China, and this alone may be enough to prompt her to develop nuclear weapons.

Another question discussed was what were the elements that have the greatest potential to destabilize the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific? According to the speaker the development of significantly better Chinese missiles - in particular missiles that are mobile and have longer ranges - would have the potential to upset the balance of power in the region. The trend of sea-basing in the region may also cause some destabilisation in the long-term.

PERSPECTIVE FROM JAPAN: TRANSFORMING OLD IDEALISM INTO NEW REALISM; A NEW DIMENSION IN JAPAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION



From left to right, Dr Sam Bateman, Prof Amitav Acharya, Dr Eric Grove, Mr Michael Richardson.

Katsuhisa Furukawa, Research Institute of Science and Technology for Society, Japan, began his presentation by describing how Japan has demonstrated a 'unique assertiveness in leading regional and international efforts to address security problems.' He went on to explain the saliency of this role, particularly in relation to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and how Japan's national security strategy has evolved over the years in tandem with the Bush

administrations' pursuit of a rigorous national security strategy against proliferation.

Furukawa described how Japan's traditionally optimistic national security policy has been replaced with a more pragmatic one, which is characterised by realism rather than idealism. This change occurred primarily following the 9/11 attacks on the US and the resumption of the North Korean nuclear crisis in 2002. Japan's national security strategy has now evolved and diversified into a more balanced posture, one which incorporates measures for "assurance, deterrence, dissuasion, denial, counter-proliferation, and damage limitation." Subsequently Japan has put in place a number of new legal and diplomatic frameworks designed to create more responsive and effective mechanisms of enforcement for international agreements on non-proliferation and counter-terrorism.

Japan's new national security posture and the aggressive role it has adopted particularly in advancing the nonproliferation effort have significant implications for regional security. Furukawa even goes as far as to argue that Japan's assertiveness in the region on security issues has the potential to build and institutionalise an Asian security network.

The question of Japan 'going nuclear' as a counter-proliferation measure was also addressed in the presentation. Both the political and technical arguments of the utility of Japan's nuclear armament were discussed, so too was Japan's perceptions of the credibility of US extended deterrence. The debate as to whether or not Japan should acquire nuclear weapons has been on going but has become more important in the light of North Korea's increasingly provocative behavior. Such perspectives are still largely marginalised in Japanese political circles however, given the continued confidence in US extended deterrence and the perception that neighbouring countries' nuclear weapons do not yet represent a grave threat.

DISCUSSION

It was pointed out by one participant that following the collapse of the North Korean regime, a reunited Korea would inherit the North's nuclear weapons program. The question that followed was whether Japan would accept a nuclear Korean peninsula? The speaker responded by stating that Japan is not particularly concerned about the implications of Korea inheriting nuclear weapons due to Korea's high dependency on international trade and investment and the unwillingness of the Korean Government to jeopardize this. However, Japan is concerned about the fact that the scientists once employed by North Korea to develop nuclear weapons would, following the unification of Korea, be employed in the new regime. This could potentially lead to problems in the future.



Mr Katsuhisa Furukawa giving his speech

Another participant commented that if a ballistic missile was launched from North Korea at Japan, due to the short distance to be covered by the missile Japan's reaction time would be very short. With this in mind, Australia is currently investigating how its Over the Horizon Long Range Radar (OHLRR) could be useful in detecting North Korean ballistic missile launches in their early phase. In addition, Australia has now formally joined the Ballistic Missile Defence program with the US. The participant then asked if Japan will be expecting Australia to make the findings of its OHLRR investigation

available to them. The response was that particularly in the areas of intelligence, cooperation between the US, Japan and Australia is good. Thus, the expectation is that the information will be shared. The speaker also pointed out that Japan has its own radar and detectors and is currently in the process of developing more.

PERSPECTIVE FROM CHINA

Dr You Ji, East Asia Institute, Singapore, traced the evolutionary process of Chinese nuclear forces, from 1964, when China carried out its first nuclear test, to the present day. Since that time China has maintained a strategy of minimum deterrence and non-first use. You Ji argued that this strategy is now irrelevant. This is due to a number of reasons. The main nuclear threat to China is the US, but the minimum deterrence posture would not be sufficient to avoid or retaliate against a nuclear attack by the US. With regards to non-first use, technical advances in the field of conventional weapons development has led to a situation whereby a non-nuclear attack by conventional weapons could cause the same destruction as a nuclear attack. Therefore, it may be necessary for China to use nuclear weapons in the absence of a first nuclear attack by the enemy but in response to a conventional weapons attack.

In 1987, China announced that it had developed triad capabilities of being able to deliver nuclear weapons via aircraft, mobile land-based assets as well as through sea-based assets. However, in You Ji's opinion this is 'a myth'; China does not yet have effective capability to deliver nuclear weapons from the air or from the sea. China's H6 bombers date technologically from the 50s and have no penetration capabilities and her current submarine capability is also deficient. The only capable delivery systems that China has to launch a nuclear attack are its Dongfeng 4 and Dongfeng 5 intercontinental ballistic missiles. With a range of 8,000 -10,000 km, an attack on the US would be feasible. However, since the early 1990s China has been developing

two new types of nuclear submarines and these are about to become operational. You Ji also estimated that by 2020, China will have 308 nuclear warheads aboard submarines that will be capable of striking targets anywhere in the world, giving her a significant retaliatory capability.



Dr You Ji delivering his second presentation

PERSPECTIVE FROM INDIA

Arvind Kumar, National Institute of Advanced Studies, India, began his presentation by pointing out that many ASEAN nations have seen considerable militarisation in the last three decades. However, India's concerns focus around Chinese military developments, in particular its naval activities, and the ability of Chinese missiles to strike India's territory. India has expressed concern at the Chinese Navy's close interaction with countries in the region, in particular Pakistan and Myanmar. There was a worry in India that Chinese assistance in developing Pakistan's Gwadar port could lead to important shipping routes being threatened and that its assistance with the modernisation of Myanmar's naval bases was to support Chinese submarine operations.

Kumar went on to describe how India has adopted a formal nuclear doctrine, which states that India should develop nuclear forces based on a 'triad' of aircraft, mobile land-based missiles and sea-based assets. At present priority has been given to the development of its indigenous sea-

based assets, which it is developing at a much faster pace than in the past.

The Indian response to US Ballistic Missile Defence programs has changed in recent times. Once in opposition to US deployment of ballistic missile defences, Indo-US collaboration on a missile defence project is now a real possibility. The Indo-US agreement signed in September 2004 as part of the Next Step in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) was a major catalyst for enhancing cooperation on this issue. If such collaboration does take place it will have significant implications for Indo-Pakistan relations, in particular Pakistan's ability to engage in nuclear blackmail. US missile defence deployment would also have an impact on China's current deterrent posture towards the US and may cause China to increase her number of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Nuclear weapons are a now part of what Kumar calls the 'harsh reality' of the Asia-Pacific. In order for equilibrium to prevail the major states of the region will need to increase their cooperative engagements through institutions like ASEAN and other sub-regional groupings.

DISCUSSION

A participant posed the question: What is the possibility of a missile cascade taking place in Southern Asia following a US deployment of Theatre Missile Defence or Ballistic Missile Defence? Would the result be an increase by China of its Multiple Independently Re-targetable Vehicles (MIRV)? The participant went on to comment that there would have to be a reaction by India and Pakistan, which would result in a vertical arms race.

According to the speaker, the Chinese have already declared that as soon as the US launches its national missile defence systems they will increase their Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. India will in turn try to acquire more of its Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles, in



Dr Arvind Kumar making his presentation

order to deter China. Pakistan will also follow suit.

A second participant raised the issue of Russia's attempts to sell India Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM). Research into the Chinese experience of developing their SLBMs indigenously has led the participant to conclude that it is less costly and troublesome to buy them. The speaker responded that India has already started a program to develop SLBMs indigenously.

SESSION IV

THE EMERGENT MARITIME FUTURES OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Sam Bateman, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, began the final session of the conference by posing the question: where will it all end? In other words, what is the maritime security outlook for the Asia-Pacific region? The underlying trend in the region is, according to Bateman, the ongoing shift in the balance of global maritime power away from its traditional power centres in Europe and North America, towards the Asian region. This is due to a desire by naval forces to extend their regional strategic significance in order to secure sea lines of communication, the most vital being in Southeast Asia. Bateman also noted that there is a secondary maritime strategic trend in the region, one which he terms a 'quiet revolution'. That is, the increased operational significance of littoral areas: "Major Western navies are focusing on littoral operations and expeditionary forces while coastal states, especially some in the region, perceive a growing need to protect their sovereignty and defend their own littoral."

More specifically, Northeast Asia is and will remain an unstable part of the region in the near future. This is due to a number of factors: the unresolved status of Taiwan, the rogue behavior of North Korea, continued territorial disputes, and the rise of China.

The region will continue to see the increased presence of Japan, particularly in the waterways of Southeast Asia and in the Indian Ocean in the context of the fight against terrorism and piracy. The South Korean navy will continue its expansion and development, reflecting its concern that Chinese and Japanese relations may deteriorate in the future.

The Asia-Pacific region's most powerful maritime player is China. It is, according to Bateman, moving towards being the complete sea power with a blue water navy, one of the

world's largest merchant fleets, a distant water fishing capability, and a rapidly expanding ship building industry. He went on to describe how China is continuing to expand its naval assets with the addition of *Kilo*-Class and nuclear-attack submarines. It will also acquire a second pair of *Sovremenny* Class destroyers, build air defence destroyers, and possibly acquire an aircraft carrier capability and/or several helicopter carriers.

In contrast, the Russian and Taiwanese navies will continue to struggle to keep up with regional naval modernisation.

In Southeast Asia, the focus is on sea-denial capabilities. Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are all currently in the process of naval modernisation and expansion. Singapore is leading the way with its recent launch of the first of five new frigates.

On the other hand, the Indonesian navy is still suffering from the effects of the economic collapse in the late 1990s. Bateman did point out however that this trend may be reversed shortly. Indonesia intends to acquire new submarines, possibly from South Korea. Two new corvettes might also be ordered from the Netherlands.



Dr Sam Bateman delivering his presentation

In South Asia, India continues to have the most powerful navy; dominating the Indian Ocean. India's maritime influence is extending eastwards, and as a consequence it will become

a greater player in regional political and security affairs. This is essentially part of its effort to counter any advancement of Chinese naval power in the Indian Ocean. India is also actively developing its strategic relationship with the US and by doing so has further boosted its role in the region. Naval development will continue to be a top priority of the Indian armed forces and there will be a re-establishment of a credible aircraft carrier capability in the near future. Bateman pointed out that unless managed carefully, “there are serious long term implications of India’s apparent desire to demonstrate a capability to operate East of Singapore, and China’s similar intentions to operate into the Indian Ocean.”

Bateman ended his presentation on a sombre note cautioning that the regional trends are in the wrong direction; the resurgence of naval activity and increased defence budgets could fuel an arms race in the region.

DISCUSSION

Kwa Chong Guan, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, opened the discussion session with a number of observations on the way in which the concept of ‘the freedom of the seas’ has been constructed over the course of history. He argued that we are now entering a new era in which the sea was being radically reconstituted. The sea was now part of the seamless network of international trade. In addition, the sea was now increasingly being thought of in relation to

resources; as a resource rich environment that needs to be managed. These new constructs will have implications for the way in which we develop maritime security in the future.

The speaker was then asked what the Chinese submarines that intruded into Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone were doing there. According to the speaker the submarines were carrying out intelligence and surveillance gathering operations and collecting oceanographic data needed to enhance their operational capability. This leads onto the issue of water space management, in other words preventing submarines from encountering each other by surprise, which was not only problematic from a safety perspective, but could also have political ramifications.

Another participant commented that the capability of the Chinese navy was still largely unknown because they are not battle tested and little was known about their training programs. When examining the capability of the Chinese navy it was also important to take into consideration the fluctuating capabilities of other states. While the Chinese submarine capability was increasing there is a reduced emphasis on capability in this theatre by the allied forces. A recent US study has shown that since the end of the Cold War, US submarine capabilities have been substantially reduced and their underwater sensors decreased by up to a half. This could pose problems for the US in future if she had to deal with the Chinese submarines.

Rapporteurs:
Adrian Kuah Wee Jin
Catherine Zara Raymond

C O N F E R E N C E P R O G R A M M E
&
L I S T O F P A R T I C I P A N T S

C O N F E R E N C E P R O G R A M M E

Monday, 7 March 2005

1900 Welcome Reception

Tuesday, 8 March 2005

0930 Opening Address:
Barry Desker, Director IDSS

0945 **Session I**
Thematic Issues and Paradigms in the
Asia-Pacific Maritime Complex

Chair:
Sam Bateman, Senior Fellow, IDSS

Speaker:
Eric Grove
Director Centre for Security Studies,
University of Hull, UK

1045 Tea Break

1100 **Session I (Continued)**
Thematic Issues and Paradigms in the
Asia-Pacific Maritime Complex

Chair:
Sam Bateman
Senior Fellow, IDSS

Speaker:
Lawrence Prabhakar
Research Fellow, IDSS

1200 Lunch

1330 **Session II**
National Maritime Doctrines and
Capabilities

Chair:
Amitav Acharya
Dy Director and Hd Research, IDSS

Perspective from Japan:
Vadm (Ret) Hideki Kaneda
Senior Research Advisor, National Security,
Mitsubishi Research Institute, Tokyo, Japan

Perspective from China:
You Ji
Visiting Research Fellow, East Asia Institute,
National University of Singapore

1530 Tea Break

1545 **Session II (Continued)**
National Maritime Doctrines and
Capabilities

Chair:
Amitav Acharya
Dy Director and Hd Research, IDSS

Perspective from India:
Vijay Sakhuja
Research Fellow, Observer Research
Foundation, New Delhi, India

1700 Adjourn

1900 Dinner
Muthu's Curry Restaurant

Wednesday, 9 March 2005

0900

**Session III
Nuclear Weapons and Missile Defences:
The Maritime Dimension in the Asia-
Pacific**

Chair:

Eric Grove

Director Centre for Security Studies,
University of Hull, UK

Perspective from the United States:

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Perspective from Japan:

Katsuhisa Furukawa

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(RISTEX), Japan Science and Technology
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1030

Tea Break

1045

**Session III (Continued)
Nuclear Weapons and Missile Defences:
The Maritime Dimension in the Asia-
Pacific**

Chair:

Eric Grove

Director Centre for Security Studies,
University of Hull, UK

Perspective from China:

You Ji

Visiting Research Fellow, East Asia Institute,
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Perspective from India:

Arvind Kumar

Research Fellow, National Security Studies
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Studies, Bangalore India

1215

**Session IV
The Emergent Maritime Futures of the
Asia-Pacific**

Chair:

Kwa Chong Guan

Head External Programmes, IDSS

Speaker:

Sam Bateman

Senior Fellow, IDSS

1245

Lunch

1400

Departures

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