



Webinar on 30 Oct 2021 at 1600 hrs

Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework for Effective Internal and Coastal Security in the Indo-Pacific

Background

The Indo-Pacific strategic space has gained substantial relevance in the last five years due to multiple reasons ranging from political, socio-economic, military and more. The geopolitical and geo-strategic developments have a significant bearing on the maritime interaction between the nations in the region and also the extra-regional powers. The political and socio-economic realities of the region encourages non-state actors to be active in the region and also the state using these non-state actors as regular instruments of state power. This is a very serious and complicated internal security matter to be resolved using the conventional means. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is the only way forward to counter such non-traditional threats. Although, there has been reasonable attention and focus by the maritime forces like the Navy and Coast Guard to build capacity & capability to enhance MDA, however the internal water bodies and the coastal regions have remained work in progress.

The traditional MDA got significant push post the 9/11 incident and the American establishment made it a high priority strategic objective. Massive maritime infrastructure and capacity building efforts took shape within the US and through their allies to ensure effective MDA. In India, post the 26/11 incident, similar efforts were initiated and the MDA infrastructure got prioritized in the IOR. However, in both the cases, being an event driven initiative, it remained a security centric formulation with minimal association with the other stakeholders. The MDA that we see today is largely limited to the sea surface and the underwater component is still a work in progress, even in the US led effort. The Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) will require, very specialized focus and high end Science & Technology (S&T) support.

The UDA in the tropical littoral waters of the Indo-Pacific Strategic Space has some very unique challenges and opportunities. The sub-optimal sonar performance is a major impediment to any UDA initiative. The socio-economic status of the nations in the region is a major road block for maritime governance. Prioritizing S&T for enhancing sonar performance with indigenous efforts is a major cause of concern. The extra-regional powers continue to push their hardware with least performance in the tropical littoral waters. "Digital Oceans" today can have a far greater relevance particularly in the tropical littoral waters of the Indo-Pacific Strategic Space.

The UDA framework proposed by the Maritime Research Centre (MRC), Pune tries to encourage **pooling of resources** and **synergizing of efforts** across the stakeholders, namely the maritime security, blue economy, environment & disaster management and the science & technology providers. The framework can minimize the ongoing fragmented approach across stakeholders within the nations and also among the nations in the region. The UN has declared 2021-2030 as the **Decade of the Ocean Science for Sustainable Development**, and it does presents a great opportunity for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and still retain the pace of blue economic growth. There is significant merit for us, to synergise internal and coastal security concerns with sustainable developmental goals to achieve our objectives of enhanced maritime governance in a holistic manner.

Proposal

The Maritime Research Centre (MRC), Pune and M/S NirDhwani Technology Pvt Ltd (NDT), in collaboration with Institute of Contemporary Studies Bangalore (ICSB) is hosting a webinar titled “*Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework for Effective Internal & Coastal Security in the Indo-Pacific*” on the 30 Oct 2021 at 1600 hrs. The event will bring together the experts and strategist across multiple domains to deliberate on this very important topic, given the ongoing geopolitical and geo-strategic developments in the region. The attempt is to identify the gaps and evolve synergy among the stakeholders and policy makers across the region. The capacity and capability building is a critical aspect, however it does take sustained effort and nuanced approach within and across nations. The high level dialogue will deliberate on all the dimensions, relevant for the development of a way ahead. The Indo part of the Indo-Pacific will carry more meaning with an effective UDA framework at the national, regional and global level.

The MRC will prepare and submit an action-oriented outcome document to the authorities and agencies within and outside the government and beyond for sensitisation and further action.

Detailed Programme

The detailed program for the event will be as follows:

- 1600 hrs- Opening Remarks: Reality Check on the Prevailing Situation.
Shri P M Heblikar, Managing Trustee ICSB, Bangalore.
- 1620 hrs- UDA Framework in the Indo-Pacific Strategic Space.
Dr(Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director MRC, Pune.
- 1640 hrs- Technology as an Enabler for Strategic Security Framework.
Dr. Geeta Varadan, Outstanding Scientist (Retd), Former Director ADRIN, Hyd/ Programme Director (Special Projects), ISRO.
- 1700 hrs- Internal & Coastal Security Issues and Capacity Building.
Shri Alok Joshi, Former Chairman NTRO.
- 1720 hrs- Geo-strategic Security Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region.
Shri P S Raghavan, Former Chairman National Security Advisory Board.
- 1740 hrs- Remarks by some Key Guests.
Cmde Sujeet Samaddar, Founder and Hony Secy SAMDeS.
Prof Ajay Dandekar, Shiv Nadar University, Greater Noida.
Dr. G K Prabhu, President Manipal University Jaipur.
Shri Pritam Banerjee, Consultant at Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- 1820 hrs- Summing up and the Way Ahead.
Shri Madhav Das Nalapat, UNESCO Peace Chair at Manipal University.
- 1840 hrs- Vote of Thanks by Shri Praful Talera, MRC Adviser on Blue Economy.

Convener

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