Interpreting Naval Power in Asia-Pacific: The Longue Duree Structure

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Introduction:

Interpreting naval power in Asia-Pacific depends on a variety of complex inextricably linked factors arranged across space and time. Both naval power and its interpretation, has evolved with time and at times been revolutionary in conjunction with technological innovation that has enabled enhanced access and control over high seas. The idea of long-duree structure as articulated within the world system theory allows for a framework of interpretation where naval power is treated as a sub-set of its creation – political. The objectives of naval power have evolved over centuries in conjunction with time; however certain vital dimensions of naval power have remained unaltered in time – geography. Despite of technological progress facilitating human control over high seas, the importance of geography has remained unaltered in time. For example, the dominant naval power in Asia-Pacific calls on its navy to accomplish “historical” missions for the 21st century. In other words, a powerful navy in Asia-Pacific is tasked with a mission that concerns time. The strategic context within which naval powers in Asia-Pacific are located in the 21st century requires a long duree structure for making accurate assessment about the likely trajectory it is likely to take in the future.

The naval power structure in Asia-Pacific has settled around United States (US) Navy as the predominant security provider after World War II where Great Britain lost its naval supremacy at the hands of Japanese militarism in mid 20th century. While having dislocated Great Britain from its strategic naval base in South East Asia (Singapore), Japan could not sustain a regional reach to initiate a creation of an alternate or sustainment of the world order under the British Empire. Japan having been forced to back out of a hegemonic role in Asia-Pacific, the mantle relocated to United States after the World War II. What the British Empire controlled as colonies on its imperial periphery was maintained within an alliance structure by US during the second half of the 20th century. But the inherent logic remained unaltered with respect to naval power within this structure. Naval power banked on naval bases in order to do enable the predominant power to shape events both at sea and land. This necessity has remained unaltered despite technology reducing the principal requirement for naval bases by providing technical solutions to a strategic problem. In its 21st century avatar the US requires formal military alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand, and has formed or is forming security partnerships with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Burma and India, despite a technical competency in projecting power by way of nuclear powered aircraft carrier and submarines, and global strike assets such as strategic bomber fleet.

The naval power within the longue duree structure has endured with the limitation of geography - constant. Other factors that shape and determine naval power - hi-technology, warfare methodology, economic strength, and relative power difference - have more or less

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changed with time without altering the basic necessity of naval power—geography. The international security architecture of the 21st century is centered on the idea of freedom of navigation which in turn facilitates the idea of free trade as ninety percent of trade is navigated through high seas. Securing constant access to free trade over high seas is essential to maintain the politico-economic content of the international system. Naval power in longue durée terms has played an important role in creating this security structure which is maritime in nature.

**The Maritime Strategic Context in Asia-Pacific:**

Although the Asia-Pacific has continued to lead the way in terms of their expanding maritime influence, it is arguable that the waters of the Indian Ocean, Africa and the Middle East rival them so far as operational naval activity is concerned. In terms of security architecture the Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. In Indian Ocean, China, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore are amongst many other Asian countries that have added their warships to the longer-established European and American regional presence. In addition to the growing naval power among the countries in western Pacific, China’s rise as a regional power remains most compelling in articulating the present maritime security architecture in Asia-Pacific. The ongoing advancement in the capability and proficiency of China’s People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), inevitably continues to drive the pace and development of the Navies in Asia-Pacific region. To the extent that some of the theater level operational naval doctrines that being considered by the United States (U.S.) Navy are attributable to China’s naval modernization.

A2/AD capabilities and strategies to employ them combine to make U.S. power projection increasingly risky, and in some cases prohibitive, while enabling near-peer competitors and regional powers to extend their coercive strength well beyond their borders. In the most challenging scenarios, the U.S. may be unable to employ forces the way it has in the past: build up combat power in an area, perform detailed rehearsals and integration activities, and then conduct operations when and where desired. By acquiring these advanced A2/AD technologies, potential adversaries are changing the conditions of warfare that the U.S. has become accustomed to in the past half century. (Emphasis Added)

The future of American naval power in the western Pacific depends on US Navy’s ability to remain a credible maritime security provider to its allies, partners, and neutrals. This requires the U.S. Navy to project power and deter aggression that threatens international freedom of navigation and over-flights in the region. This credibility has come into questioning in the recent past when despite U.S. Navy’s formal request to conduct Freedom of Navigation (FoN) missions adjacent to

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3 “AIR-SEA BATTLE—Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenges”, *Air Sea Battle Office*, May, 2013, p.3.
The China’s artificially constructed islands (Subi Reef, Sparrly Islands) in South China Sea since 2012, the U.S. government sanctioned such a request after much contemplation on 27 October, 2015 after a high-level meeting between U.S. and Chinese Naval leadership in Beijing on 22 October, 2015. Prior to this event, on 16 October China hosted South East Asian Defence Ministers conference at Beijing to burnish its reputation in a region wary of Beijing’s territorial ambitions.

The Naval strategic context in Asia-Pacific remains a complex and challenging situation where cooperation amongst naval powers in western Pacific is as much evident as incidents that have the potential to flare up the situation. For example in April, 2014 US and China agreed on Multi-National Conduct for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) apart from their work on establishing a new type of relations between navies of major countries. At the systemic level, both China and U.S. stand to benefit from cooperating with each other in western pacific where both have stakes in preserving the global world order. An international world order that has benefitted China since its economic reforms that began in late 1970’s and its later accession to World Trade Organization (WTO) allowing China to integrate with an American dominated International trade regime. This world order banks on freedom at sea as nearly ninety percent of international trade is sea-borne. Providing security for peaceful conduct of international trade will remain high for global power (U.S.) and regional power (China). While a multi-national approach seems to be the strategic in-vogue where Navies of multiple nations participate in joint naval exercise, a permanent maritime security framework still awaits. Regional powers in western Pacific are not yet betting on a multi-lateral framework while approaching maritime security in the region and count on building naval capability independently in conjunction to maritime cooperation with other naval powers.

The complexity is further complicated by the economic ties that China enjoys with its Asian neighbours, where it has emerged as the largest trading partner of many. However such an economic partnership has not spilled into the maritime security domain, where majority of nations in Asia-Pacific still look at U.S. as the net security provider including India. It is an unacceptable condition for India and Indian Navy to be part of a China led Asian maritime security architecture in absence of U.S. Navy. On the contrary for China, its rise in economic terms which heavily banks on international trade via high seas is dependent on U.S. Navy and such a reliance on

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Anglo-Saxon maritime security architecture is a liability to be done with or at the least guarded against.

**Military Challenges to Asia-Pacific Security Architecture**

Having maintained an isolationist foreign policy prior to reluctantly accepting global leadership in the aftermath of World War II from United Kingdom, United States is now unable to react efficiently to geo-political-military challenges the American empires faces today.

For the first time since 2007 United States had no aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf. While maintenance was put forward as a reason for withdrawal of *USS Theodore Roosevelt*, the decision came in the wake of Russian naval deployment on 09 October. On 08 October Russian Navy fired 26 long-range new *Kalibr-NK* cruise missiles from naval ships in the Caspian in support of its military operations in Syria. Yet another geo-political challenge in the South China Sea (SCS), where the US strategic concerns for Freedom of Navigation (FoN) remained limited to rhetoric since 2012 despite a formal request in by US Navy in 2015 to challenge China’s sovereign territorial claims in the SCS. Since 2012 US Navy has conducted no naval FoN operations within the 12 nautical miles of China’s territorial waters around artificial island built on the Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands archipelago given its tactical acceptance that it would be provocative to China. Given the nature of international maritime laws where non-contestation amounts to acceptance, on 27 October A US Navy-guided missile destroyer *USS Lassen* completed the first in a series of planned freedom of navigation operations since the last of such missions held in 2012. In the past, US has carried out such missions against multiple nations including its allies such as Japan which uses a Straight Base Line method to claim sovereignty over its territorial sea. Under UNCLOS, the Straight Base Line approach to demarcating territorial sea is an exception, and not a rule.

From a geo-strategic perspective, the American empire was founded on a geo-strategic reality which today stands altered. The power vacuum created in Europe, Middle East, and East Asia after the Second World War paved the way for the US to guarantee military security in these regions. It was the inability of any of the major powers in the region to handle such a responsibility that led to US military alliances in these regions and constant military readiness. For example, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was a crisis to be handled by major powers in Middle East such as Saudi Arabia or Iran, and a crisis in Bosnia and Kosovo to be handled by Germany, France or United Kingdom. In East Asia, despite a conscious effort on part of major powers such as China, Indonesia, Japan, Australia, India, South Korea, and Singapore to create multi-layered multilateral institutions in the form of East Asia Summit (EAS), Asian Regional Forum (ARF), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and sub-regional security forum such as the Six-Party Talks, none of it has addressed the military security concerns of the region adequately. These multilateral

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initiatives have banked on the superstructure of US military alliances and cooperation with the region.\(^{13}\)

However, US military alliances in Europe, Middle East, and East Asia could not deter sovereignty concerns pertaining to Ukraine and South China Sea, and its decade’s long military presence in Middle East could not prevent the rise of ISIL. The US has relied overwhelmingly on military power alone, apart from ideological, economic and political power to create, maintain and preserve international order. This overwhelmingly reliance in military power has been limited to a particular type of military power - *offensive firepower*\(^{14}\). This brand of military power gives rise to military doctrines based on preemption and higher levels of military readiness which stands challenged by increased defense (Anti-Access, (A2)/Area Denial, (AD)) capabilities of Russia, China, and Iran. In lieu of such development in July 2009, the US Secretary of Defence directed the Departments of the Navy and the Air Force to address this challenge and to embark on a new operational concept called Air-Sea Battle (ASB). Then in January 2012, the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defence introduced new strategic guidance in *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence* that specifically tasked the U.S. military to project power despite A2/AD\(^{15}\). This development has retarded US naval forward deployment and power projection capability and tasked the US Navy to rethink its war doctrine in terms of Air-Sea Battle doctrine since May 2013\(^{16}\). In 2015 during the Maritime Theatre Missile Defence Forum (MTMDF) the nine participating countries including the US conducted three weeks of realistic test scenarios with a series of live-fire events at the Hebrides range off the coast of the United Kingdom. The objective of these naval exercises was to practice destroying short, medium, and long-range ballistic missile and anti-ship cruise missile without which US and its military alliance is unable to project maritime force on land using amphibious units and air power as it used to in the 60’s and 70’s\(^{17}\).

From a military perspective while US emerged as the sole superpower after 1991, the resurgence of Russia as a military power since 2014, as it registered a 20 percent increase in arms export while the overall growth of top 100 global arms manufactures fell for three straight years, has reignited the military relations to that existing during the cold War years\(^{18}\). This resurgence was partly possible due to Russia’s military cooperation with China and India given their unprecedented economic growth leading to investments in Russia’s military industrial complex. Russia’s involvement in the Syrian crisis is a regional acceptance of the inability of the US military


\(^{16}\) “AIR-SEA BATTLE-Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenges”, Air Sea Battle Office, May, 2013


power to bring about military stability in Middle East. Russia’s military operations in Middle East are supported by its operational alliances with Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Israel. The establishment of a joint [Iraqi-Syrian-Iranian-Russian] intelligence-gathering centre on 29 September in Baghdad *The Joint Intelligence Coordination Centre* (JICC) and the visit of Saudi Arabia’s Defence Minister Prince Mohammed Bin Salman to Russia on 12 October is a testimony to such a regional acceptance¹⁹. Iran’s participation during the upcoming international talks on the Syrian crisis in Geneva along with Saudi Arabia, US, Russia, and Turkey is in line with US policy of “managed transition”²⁰ reflecting the limits unilateral use of offensive military power.

Sustaining an empire requires adequate political, military, economic and ideological power to maintain stability. This power is constantly challenged throughout the period of an empire, and the strength of an empire depends on how it is able to meet these challenges offered from its periphery. Despite having an edge, US dependence on hard offensive military power to sustain the world order stands contested today. Having shifted to counter-terrorism and piracy operations, NATO commanders are now contemplating a renewed focus to counter Russian military ambitions. The inability of US to intervene successfully in Ukraine, Syria and South China Sea is perhaps a key indicator of the beginning of the end of the American empire in the 21st century.

**History Matters: Regional Security Architecture in Asia-Pacific**

By order of missing out on the finer details of the military parade held in Beijing to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Chinese military victory over occupying Japanese forces in 1945, an overview of China’s relation with its past and future provide the methodology for the possible use of military hardware displayed during the parade. Following an evolving military doctrine which assumes the future warfare scenario to be – LOCAL, HI-TECH and LIMITED, China’s military prepares to fight and win modern warfare with a self-claimed orientation towards “defence” vis-à-vis “offence”. The distinction between the two methods is of course a matter of debate and shares a mutual relation. The first phase of modern combat is likely to start with manned/unmanned aerial bombing or jamming of air-defense forces. This act of initiating of offence is a defensive measure undertaken to secure the air space required to initiate armed combat sorties for further military missions. China’s display of armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and air borne early warning systems is in line with the general trend in warfare of the 21st century. China’s display of inter-continental, inter-mediate, and short range missiles (*Dong Feng* 21-D, 26, 10A, 5B, 15B, 31A) exhibit the intention to deny the adversary space to remain effective during the first phase of offence in modern warfare. With extended range and effective targeting sensors China will hold the enemy forces beyond the second island chain.

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The political motivation and possible derivatives of this parade far out-weigh the military implication as there are fewer surprises such as the inclusion of foreign contingents- Pakistan and 16 other nations. Breaking away from a trend of showcasing military achievements once in a decade, the symbolic value of this military parade is a case to study. The continuing focus on Japan’s invasion of the mainland and subsequent military will to resist and defeat Japanese forces, and its link to China’s rise to a modern polity in the 21st century is subject left to deep scrutiny and cause for concern. From an analytical perspective it is also a meter gauge to understand and quantify the idea of “revisionism”. Higher level of awareness and consciousness of the past requires one to be associated with them in the present and therefore having implications over their action and behavior. Japan’s invasion of China are located within a specific condition of international situation and varied in interpretation. From a Japanese perspective there do exist concurring examples that defend Japan’s act of War that allows Japan to be unapologetic in unequivocal measure as per China’s diplomatic requirements. Japan’s relation with its past during the World War II induces a behavior change in China’s foreign policy by inspiring the spirit of nationalism. Managing nationalism being the subject matter for state, military as a long standing institution has been a valuable part of modern Chinese polity. This military parade reinforces this equation by being a domestic agent contrary to Japan as an external stimulant in managing nationalism.

China’s military-industrial complex today stands reflecting this phenomenon by achieving phenomenal levels of indigenous production capability of hi-tech military hardware and at par doctrine that accommodates such capabilities. Military cooperation with erstwhile Soviet Union and Russia which initiated the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) during the last quarter of the 20th century is a determinant to this outcome and well presented at the held parade. Russian military industrial complex has consolidated its strength that was lost with the idea of “End of Cold-War” in 1991 and has since remained at forefront of advanced military technology resulting in blacklisting of four Russian defence companies in United States immediately following the military parade in China and included the famous MIG company that is a traditional supplier of combat aircrafts to both China and India. Russia early this year commemorated its military victory during the Great War with German centism in similar symbolic military parade amidst rising discomfort over North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) military behaviour in Eastern Europe and disagreement over the term “annexation” of what Russia perceives as a reunion of Crimea with Fatherland.

History and its instrumental nature at the hands of the state is central to an analysis of this phenomenon. While World War II was a European affair it started in East Asia and the first military operations under United Nations (U.N.) supervision also started in East-Asia. Extensive review of literature suggests a complex situation with varying interpretation and explanations. The political derivation of this complex situation and presentation through symbolic military events is lethal.
As a world event, World War II reshaped international politics which is consistently contested by major powers. In implication the War remained on the battle field, but had bearings on other aspects of international relations such as the world economic order well represented by the ongoing “currency wars” were the western developed nations disagree with China’s monetary policy of undervalued currency pegged against US dollar in the international market. Since the international world order that was realized after WW II was predominantly under western leadership, the rise of erstwhile Great Powers such as China in the 21st century within this world order has been a phenomenon and likely to produce observable reflection of China’s interpretation of its past. The military and the option to use force at the hands of the state is critical to create and sustain this global order given the limitation of international law within a international system that is inherently anarchic. The idea of “Freedom of Navigation” is of consequence to trade and military, a phenomenon non-existent in Asia prior to its engagement with its western counterparts with upgraded naval technology. The capability among nations to secure this world order has remained centralized with few major powers in conjunction with each other such as the NATO which binds US to Europe in military terms. Multiple intangibles such as “values” define the structure of this world order and as it is in-vogue since the disintegration of erstwhile Soviet Union has inclined towards global structure that supports the evolution of market orientation that has at times less co-existed with the state. With the acceptance of neo-liberal market based economy the contest to reshape the in-vogue world order has not simmered due to the disturbing economic shocks produced in various economic centers’ of the inextricably linked world. China declared a 16 trillion Yuan debt ceiling to keep borrowing within local governments’ ability to repay given the slowdown in its growth due to the transiting nature of its economy. China is now relocating from an export oriented economy such as Germany to domestic consumption driven economy such as the US. Given this transitory nature of China’s economy, its concern to maintain peace and stability in regions with strategic importance and create an overall favorable international situation will predominate the crafting of China’s foreign policy.

During this transition China requires a involvement with contents of international macro-economies such as international trade and finance. China has initiated plan that remain nascent to break-away from a western led international financial order in close cooperation with Russia and India. Since the present international order is secured by military force, China’s concern for a military force adept at fighting modern warfare is but logic. Apart from economic and military indicators, nationalism in its myriad forms derived from the past such as the Japan’s use of military force during the WWII is prime catalyst within Chinese polity in providing necessary air-lift to China’s strategic objectives. Chinese leadership has envisaged the idea of modern nation to be achieved in step-by-step process with the phase of industrialization nearly complete.

The problem with international world order is that it is based on a structure with normative variables and defended by international law and use of military force. Societal values in terms of religion and self-conceived notions of past have tested this structure of international order from time to time. A variety of international issues close to being a conflict are in fact a legacy of past and do not necessarily reflect the achievements made by humans as collective whole. Unlimbering
military-security concerns in the Middle East, Balkans, East Asia, South China Sea and territorial disagreements among major powers has remained a recurring phenomenon and rooted in past for causes. Celebration of the past, of the kind enacted by China is mere testimony to this phenomenon.

Instrumental nature of history in serving politics is “double-edged” as it instills a sense of nationalism that may overrule rational method of resolving conflicts. Interpretation of history and preservation of such interpretations through institutions under the command of the state is often a source to future trajectories. Nation-states unrelentless quest for advanced war fighting capability and an operational doctrine to use such capabilities has never followed the dictum of the liberal school of international relations which view economic cooperation to overrule realist concerns for survival within anarchy and instead followed the revolution in military affairs. The international situation is by and large peaceful amidst high-low simmering military contest. Military contest in conjunction with nationalism derived from once interpretation of history is prime driver of an analysis preoccupied with the study of modern warfare. Role of history in conducting both domestic and international politics is often misrepresented one for the other. Was this military parade directed against any threat to China’s National Defence can be rightly misrepresented for a consolidated effort on part of Chinese leadership to strengthen its position in domestic politics. While the military parade appears to be a display of intention to meet future hi-tech military challenges, in essence it is fan the property of much required nationalism in Chinese polity.

For example, Japan’s aggression during the Great War was a necessity for an island nation that depends almost entirely on imports for survival. Control over such resources at sea and land and purposeful denial of the same created the conditions where sanctioning of military use of force seems logical. While China’s foreign policy accepts many of the international conflicts to be a legacy of the past and agrees for it to be resolved over generations, its polity has been unable to accept the atrocities committed by the Japanese military forces. Furthermore, China demands Japanese apology nothing less than in unequivocal terms which Japan does not. China has built its international politics based around a narrative where breaches to its territorial sovereignty are seen as a function of non-repeatability. Given this limitation China has always sought to create a favourable environment to secure its military-security concerns and influence the world order to that effect. For example, China’s alleged sale of anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) Silkworm had blunted the offensive strike capabilities of naval ships and inhibited their operational space. United States naval power projection capability came to tests with this sale to Iran and later to other countries in Middle East. Since this sale, US relations with China never realised enough threshold of “trust” to develop sound bilateral relations. Allegations of such sale of ASCM have never found consent from China, similar to the sale of magnet rings to Pakistan to be used in production of nuclear weapons.

China’s need to be engaged in a proactive manner to shape the world order, has reflected in its military development. China today has developed niche military technology know-how that has produced J-20 5th generation stealth combat aircraft and hyper-sonic projectiles WU-15 in line
with the new operational thinking to engage enemy forces within a highly contested battlefield. With overall balance in favor of defense, China opts for a military doctrine that denies the adversary a chance to initiate interdiction mission during the first phase of military operation by overwhelming adversaries highly guarded defense far beyond China’s shore.

The capabilities displayed during the parade in this regard are more of a reassurance to the domestic audience that Chinese leadership is capable to deny any sought of militarism that challenges its territorial understanding. Two key military platforms, an indigenous 5th generation combat aircraft J-20 and imported S-400 *Triumph* missile defence system did not find their place in the parade which is crucial for modern warfare. Instead China chose to display indigenous built weapons of war. In case it is an exercise to deter potential adversaries, then perhaps the occasion does not meet the factual sensitiveness of how history unfolded during the Great War. Leaving aside the atrocities committed by the Japanese military forces which lasted for 14 years and saw 35 million Chinese causalities, which are of course consequential in nature, it was Japanese militarism that paved the way for the great Asian renaissance by knocking out western military bases in Asia and there by setting stage for de-colonisation.

**Naval Power in Asia-Pacific – 21st century**

While it is analytically simple to gauge the “capability” aspect of any particular military strategy, the “intention” part of it remains elusive and requires careful study of various associated aspects of such a strategy and the relationship among them. After being first reported by Fox News²¹ and its later confirmation by Taiwan Defense Ministry and China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi who provided the rational for such a move, it is now established that China has set up a pair of HQ-9 Air Defense Systems and supporting vehicles such as an engagement radar and the Type 305B AESA acquisition radar on Woody Island, part of the Paracels chain of islands in the South China Sea²². The placement of the Air Defense System on Woody Island seems to have occurred in between 03 February and 14 February when the batteries were first discovered by a commercial satellite²³. It was further reported and confirmed that China has deployed fighter jets to the same contested island in the South China Sea. According to Fox News, US intelligence services had spotted Chinese Shenyang J-11 and Xian JH-7 warplanes on Woody Island in the disputed

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Paracel Islands chain. While confirming such reports US Navy Captain Darryn James, a spokesman for U.S. Pacific Command, the fighter jets had previously used the Island.

The immediate reason for military buildup on part of China in South China Sea which has been an area of significant strategic concern seems to be the series of “Freedom of Navigation” (FoN) exercises conducted near the Spardleys by the United States Navy (USN). United States mandates the US Navy to conduct FoN missions to contest any nation from claiming sovereignty on high-seas that contradicts international maritime law and does so against its own allies such as Japan when it uses a straight base line approach for demarcating its territorial sea. Upholding freedom of navigation and right to innocent passage is central to US strategic concerns in S.C.S; however such concerns are derived from military logic contrary to the ideal of free trade and commerce. The true strategic intent behind upholding the idea of freedom of navigation and right to innocent passage as this analysis argues is an arrangement to facilitate the rapid deployment of naval forces across the maritime spaces without any hindrances offered by sovereignty on high seas by nations.

Prior to the disclosure of Air Defense Systems on Woody Island, On November 23, 2013 China’s Ministry of National Defense (MoD) warranted “Emergency Defensive Measure” on aircrafts that passed the Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) announced by China. This ADIZ was the fourth to be announced in the region, after Japan (1969), Taiwan and South Korea - therefore overlapping. China’s move was considered to be provocative and destabilizing to the region. United States administration chose to tag it “hypocritical” and violated the Chinese ADIZ with two unarmed B-52 bombers. However in following days US advised its civilian aircrafts to respect the ADIZ. The recent FoN missions conducted by US Navy in SCS while suffices to be a reason for deploying HQ-9 it does not necessarily translate to being a sufficient cause.

China’s Military Discomfort with US Air Sea Battle Concept:

China since early 1990’s after making note of serious improvements in capabilities that altered the conduct of warfare since Falkland War/Gulf War, initiated profound rethinking into its operational doctrines for war fighting. One of the major tasks of the Air-Sea Battle office was to optimize the role of aviation in resolving the complex issues regarding movement of logistics through the vast expanse of ocean. It is obvious that the reference here is to Asia-Pacific region and US Pacific Command. The US Air Force has between 43,000 and 46,000 airmen in the Pacific region. The US Air Force also has concentrated resources in the region, with 60% of the stealthy


25 “China says jets to be scrambled only when ‘real threat’ in zone” Shanghai Daily, 4 December 2013. p. A3. Also Mattis Peter (2013), “China East China Sea ADIZ: Framing Japan to Help Washington Understand” China Brief, Volume 13, Issue: 24; Jamestown Foundation: Global Research and Analysis; November 27, 2013. Here the author claims that an escalating political rhetoric (“crisis language”) which precedes any Chinese use of force decision since 1949 has been missing in this particular case. Except a PLA Daily report no language of warning has been used in announcing ADIZ in East China Sea.

F-22 Raptor fighter fleet deployed in and around the Pacific theatre anytime. The induction of jointly developed F-35 multi-role stealth fighters is likely to find its operation base in the Pacific theatre. Eight partner countries are expected to purchase/induct F-35 (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, and United Kingdom), while Japan and Israel selected F-35 through the US Foreign military sales (FMS) process, and Israel and Singapore have invested in the F-35 at security co-operation partnership. In addition to this a program to induct Long Range Strike Bomber (LRS-B) is underway, which is expected to be in the same class as B-2 bombers. Despite budget pressures LRS-B remains a top USAF acquisition priority. The bomber received USD 379 $ in the President’s Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) budget request and the delivery is expected by 2020. US Air Force is expected to procure 80-100 units at the rate of 550 million USD. Another long range platform poised to play a central role is the High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) built by Northrop Grumman, known in US Air Force as the “RQ-4 Global Hawk” and in US Navy as MQ-4C Triton. These platforms can function at 52,800 ft altitude and provide surveillance up to 2000 nautical miles on round the clock missions. By 2020, the US Navy expects to reach a fleet size of 295 ships in its battle force inventory. This includes 11 Aircraft Carriers, 87 Large Surface combatants (Comprising 15 Cruisers, 69 Arleigh Burke-Class 59 Destroyers, and 3 Zumwalt Class DDG 1000 Destroyers), 37 Small Surface Combatants (comprising 27 Littoral Combat Ships and 10 Mine Countermeasure Vessels), 49 Attack Submarines, 4 Cruise Missile submarines, 14 Ohio Class Ballistic Missile Submarines, 31 Amphibious Warships (including 10 Amphibious Assault Ships), 11 Landing Platform Dock Ships, 10 Landing Ship Docks, 29 Combat Logistics Vessels, and 33 Support Vessels, Four Mobile Landing Platforms MPDT-AKE and 2 Afloat Forward Staging Base Ships. In 2016, US Navy will accept the delivery of new Ford class aircraft carrier which will operate the F-35 Cs.

According to Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work the Pentagon’s fiscal 2017 request included around $3 billion in A2/AD technology development as part of the third offset strategy with a heavy focus of military technologies that would be key in defeating systems like HQ-9 in the event of direct conflict\(^2\). The military requirement here will be to launch offensive strike weapons while staying out of roughly 125 mile radius of the systems missiles or relying on stealthy planes such as the F-35 joint strike fighter to penetrate the protected airspace.

**Doctrinal Lineage: Air Sea Battle**

The Air Land Battle concept adopted in 1970’s and 1980’s was a limited version of the present day Air Sea Battle concept. According to the official (declassified) summary of classified Air Sea Battle concept by Air Sea Battle office (May, 2013) Air Land Battle concept sought to use Air Force in “Degradation of Rear Echelon” over a land domain before an adversary (Soviet Union) could engage allied forces. The Air Sea Battle concept is similarly designed to attack-in-depth, but instead of focusing on the land domain from the air, the concept describes integrated

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operations across all five domains (air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace) to create advantage\textsuperscript{28}. In further clarification on the difference between the two, the document stresses that Air Sea Battle concept includes defense of its own “rear echelon” across the same domains.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Air-Land Battle (1970’s)</th>
<th>Stopping advancing Warsaw Pact armies was the focus of US Army and US Navy during the Cold-War</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air-Sea Battle (2013)</td>
<td>Overcoming Anti-Access(A2)/Area-Denial(AD) would be the new focus of the US Air Force and US Navy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Doctrinal Objectives**

At an operational level, the Air Sea Battle concept intends to get the services thinking more jointly so that, for example (one day) a Navy ship could use data from the army ground radar to guide an Air Force aircraft to engage a target (USN Vice Admiral Mark Fox, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Plans and Strategy (N3/N5), Head of the Air-Sea Battle Executive Committee). According to Major General James Holmes, Air Sea battle concept is not just about acquisition of new platforms and system, but also integration of already existing systems. Its objectives are to realize a seem- less flow of real-time data in between Navy and Air Force. This concept therefore has a profound impact on how wars will be fought and requires transformations at both quantitative and qualitative levels. It is expected that like the Air Land Battle concept which was conceptualized in 1970’s, and achieved its mature operational status in 1980’s, the Air Sea Battle concept has some way to go before it is realized at operational level. According to the Chairman of the House Armed Service Committee’s Sea power and Projection Forces Subcommittee, Congressman J. Randy Forbes, within the current climate of cutting defense budget US was light years away from putting together the material required to operationalise the Air-Sea Battle concepts. The Air-Sea Battle concept also focuses on finding new tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) for integrating, existing capabilities between the services as opposed to developing new systems.

**Cause-Affect Analysis:**

The fundamental “cause” culminating into “effect” - Air Sea battle Concept - requires subtle clarification. The obvious “cause” seems to be the enhanced capabilities of some nations in caring out A2/AD operations (China, Iran). However at closer look, this “cause” (A2/AD - capabilities) has an “effect”, and it is this “effect” that culminates into fundamental “cause” of Air Sea Battle. Therefore the “effect” of enhanced A2/AD capabilities, on U.S. and “expeditionary operations” is what matters. According to the Air Sea battle Office (May, 2013):

\textsuperscript{28}“AIR-SEA BATTLE-Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenges”, Air Sea Battle Office, May, 2013. This document is the declassified summary of the original classified document drafted jointly by Department of Army, Department of Navy (United States Marine Corps), Department of Navy, and Department of Air Force, United States of America.
A2/AD capabilities and strategies to employ them combine to make U.S. power projection increasingly risky, and in some cases prohibitive, while enabling near-peer competitors and regional powers to extend their coercive strength well beyond their borders. In the most challenging scenarios, the U.S. may be unable to employ forces the way it has in the past: build up combat power in an area, perform detailed rehearsals and integration activities, and then conduct operations when and where desired. By acquiring these advanced A2/AD technologies, potential adversaries are changing the conditions of warfare that the U.S. has become accustomed to in the past half century. (Emphasis Added).

From an analytical perspective the “centre of gravity” of this contradictory tension between - A2/AD capabilities and Air Sea battle concept - seems to be each other. Both these constitute the “cause-effect” relation to each other.

However a system approach suggests that “centre of gravity” in this tension is perhaps, “long distance power projection under degraded environment”. The Air Sea Battle concept is not to counter (perhaps, is!) the enhanced capabilities of A2/AD strategy, but to sustain and maintain a similar (as in the past – absence of A2/AD) ability to project power over long distance, even within a degraded environment. The “centre of gravity” therefore is “power-projection”. According to the Air Sea Battle Office²⁹ (May, 2013);

The range and scale of possible effects from these capabilities presents a military problem that threatens the U.S. and allied expeditionary warfare model of power projection and manoeuvre. (Emphasis Added).

**Air Sea Battle – Conceptual Framework**


**Key assumptions held by Air-Sea Battle Doctrine (Official)**

1) The adversary will initiate military activities with little or no indications or warning - The implications are that a short warning timeline requires the U.S. to maintain ready forces that

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²⁹ The document defines the problem as “Adversary capabilities to deny access to US forces are becoming increasingly advanced and adaptive. These A2/AD capabilities challenge US freedom of action by causing US forces to operate with higher levels of risk and freedom of action by shaping the A2/AD environment to enable concurrent or follow on operation. “AIR-SEA BATTLE-Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenges”, Air Sea Battle Office, May, 2013, p.3.
are routinely integrated and prepared to conduct high risk operations against very capable adversaries.

2) Forward friendly forces will be in the A2/AD environment at the commencement of hostilities; the steady state posture and capabilities of forces must be able to provide an immediate and effective response to adversary A2/AD attacks through high tempo operations in the A2/AD environment. Additional forces introduced into the threat environment should be able to promptly integrate into the existing force posture.

3) Third, adversaries will attack U.S. and allied territory supporting operations against adversary forces. In addition to attacking American aircraft, ships, space assets, networks, and people, denying access to U.S. forces requires attacks on bases from which U.S. and its allies are operating, including those on allied or partner territory. The implication is that the defense of all bases from which U.S. forces operate must be addressed, whether on U.S. or partner/allied territory. Even the U.S. homeland cannot be considered a sanctuary.

4) Fourth, all domains will be contested by an adversary - space, cyberspace, air, maritime, and land. Cyberspace and space-based capabilities are essential for U.S. operations and are vulnerable to adversary capabilities with a low barrier to entry such as computer network attack and electronic jamming. Since the adversary may employ a Multi-domain approach, ASB must defend and respond in each war fighting domain.

5) No domain can be completely ceded to the adversary. Each domain can be used to impact and deny access to the others, so to cede one domain to an adversary invites the eventual loss of the other interdependent domains. While U.S. forces may contest freedom of action in each domain, they are not likely to be required to achieve control in each domain simultaneously or to the same degree. As such, U.S. forces must take advantage of freedom of action in one domain to create U.S. advantage or challenge an adversary in another. This will require tightly coordinated actions across domains using integrated forces able to operate in each domain.

ASB is a supporting concept to the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), and provides a detailed view of specific technological and operational aspects of the overall A2/AD challenge in the global commons. The Concept is not an operational plan or strategy for a specific region or adversary. The ASB Concept’s solution to the A2/AD challenge in the global commons is to develop networked, integrated forces capable of attack-in-depth to disrupt, destroy and defeat adversary forces (NIA/D3). ASB’s vision of networked, integrated, and attack-in-depth (NIA) operations requires the application of cross-domain operations across all the interdependent war fighting domains (air, maritime, land, space, and cyberspace, to disrupt, destroy, and defeat (D3) A2/AD capabilities and provide maximum operational advantage to friendly joint and coalition forces. In the ASB Concept, networked actions are tightly coordinated in real time by mission-organized forces to conduct integrated operations across all domains without being locked into Service-specific procedures, tactics, or weapons systems. Attack-in-depth to Disrupt, Destroy and Defeat and D3 represents the 3 lines of effort of the ASB Concept:
In order to ensure freedom of global commons is intended to foster future capabilities that directly support several of the U.S. Armed Forces primary missions described in the DOD’s Strategic Guidance (DSG): Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense. These include missions to Deter and Defeat Aggression, Project Power Despite Anti-Access/Area Denial Challenges, and to Operate Effectively in Cyberspace and Space.

**PRIMARY MISSIONS OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES**

- Counter Terrorism & Irregular Warfare
- Deter & Defeat Aggression
- Project Power despite Anti-Access/Area Denial Challenges
- Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Operate Effectively in Cyberspace and Space
- Maintain a Safe, Secure, & Effective Nuclear Deterrent
- Defend Homeland & Provide Support to Civil Authorities
- Provide a Stabilizing Presence
- Conduct Stability & Counterinsurgency Operations
- Conduct Humanitarian, Disaster Relief & Other Operations

Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff’s force development vision detailed in the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020 (CCJO), JOAC, and the emerging Joint Concept for Entry Operations (JCEO) describes the future operating environment and the high-order vision for how the future force will be needed to conduct Globally Integrated Operations across the Range of Military Operations (ROMO). The ASB Concept views the joint force in a holistic way to include doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) within the Services’ purview to organize, train, and equip. The ASB Concept specifically addresses a range of threats, such as ballistic and cruise missiles, sophisticated

| Disrupt Adversary Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR or C4I); |
| Destroy adversary A2/AD platforms and weapons systems |
| Defeat adversary employed weapons and formations. |
integrated air defense systems, anti-ship capabilities from high-tech missiles and submarines to low-tech swarming boats, electronic warfare, and counter-C4ISR capabilities. Yet, the ASB Concept differs from other concepts because, while it contains the operational details needed in a limited objective concept, it is about fostering institutional change, conceptual alignment, and materiel change in and among the Services. In late 2011, the Secretary of Defense endorsed the ASB Concept as a necessary first step to address the anti-access, area denial challenge and directed the services to work further to develop the Concept. To this end, the Services established a multi-service; flag level ASB Executive Committee (EXCOM), Senior Steering Group (SSG), and supporting staff charged with implementing the Concept. This plan describes the recommended processes and actions to develop forces and enhance military capabilities necessary to counter current and future A2/AD challenges, using 2020 as the objective year.

**Tracing the Genealogy:**

History of warfare is testimony to the indisputable fact that there is ever-present and ongoing quest to seek offence-defense balance in one’s favor. Offence and defense while treated in compartments, share a complex dialectical relationship. The thin line that differentiates the two, if displaced, makes the assessment blurred. For example all acts of War can be coded as “defensive” or “offensive”, if “time” is treated as a variable in each case. Alexander’s offence on Persian ports was inherently an act of defense against Persian navy. Similarly Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor was a defensive action against possible US naval operations in East Pacific theatre. Even in modern warfare, the deep penetration strikes carried out by US Air Force in Iraq are a defensive measure to the follow on land offence.

In order to interpret this current strategic environment, where concepts such as ADIZ and ASB are in vogue, the following key factors that shape the present environment require attention;

1) The present strategic environment is marked with the presence of post-colonial nation-states, with enhanced military power. With this military power the new independent countries have now the capability and intent to uphold and defend their sovereignty.

2) The relative decline of colonial powers in upholding and defending their colonies and the values there from. Inability to project power in maintaining freedom of access to global commons.

From this perspective both ADIZ and ASB is a mechanism to cope with the shifting strategic reality of the present strategic situation. While ADIZ is a reflection of China’s increased confidence in projecting power and claiming sovereign ideals in nearby seas, ASB is the reflection of US vulnerability brought about by its inability to project power far away in defending freedom of navigation in global commons. This strategic reality is marked by the true and natural concerns of each. It is a mechanism to cope with the existing reality and in that sense must not construe surprise. A historical framework further clarifies this situation.

**Looking back into the future: South China Sea**

The present condition though has lineage with the industrial revolution and the colonial empire building process by industrial powers since 15th Century, is of recent origin. With end of

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World War II given the relative decline in the ability of colonial powers to control their dominions new independent nation-states were born, which for the first time began exercising their national-sovereign rights. This contracted the total strategic space among colonial powers. For the first time the number of claimants for global commons increased exponentially and their ability to defend these rights increased with proliferation of modern armament and its auxiliary. With this shift in strategic situation a mechanism to incorporate new nation states and yet maintaining lost strategic space was initiated. The most verifiable example in this regard happens to be United Nations Convention on Laws of Sea (UNCLOS 1982). This third conference on Laws of Sea, exhibited this phenomenon, where new laws governing the global common at sea were agreed by multiple nations. While its intent was to put in motion a certain mechanism to avoid clashes of interest among nations, with respect to usage of sea, it had a limiting effect on sovereignty concerns of newly independent states and their latest naval capability to claim these rights.

In this regard certain “key concepts” need grasping to comprehend the nature of South China Sea disputes. These concepts make for the “principle” for justifying claim by different claimants and are the key to the disputes. The concepts on maritime boundary are unlike land boundaries, for they are not demarcated, they are marked on the charts and it is the responsibility of the navigator to ensure that they are not violated. Land is mostly owned by single state or at most disputed between two states; however oceans are parcelled out among many states. Each state can exercise its will in exploring the resources on high seas and therefore likely to involve in competition with each other without an overriding authority. This makes “international law” a key determinant of maritime affairs. The limit of a states control over ocean, to a great extent, depends on the capacity of their fleet and fishing vessels. It was not until the end of the sixteenth century that the question of states’ rights to adjacent water developed into a legal pursuit. By the beginning of 17th century “sovereignty” over water just as they had over land began to be contemplated. The “shore-domination principle” in the early eighteenth century tended to reflect a conception of “sea-sovereignty” was premised on the fact that since sea belonged to all, domination of adjacent seas, as far as a cannon could throw a shot, was reasonable and could be conceded to those who owned the shore. In effect it meant that a coastal state should exercise sovereignty over that part of the adjacent sea which it could command by means of guns mounted on the shore came to be generally accepted. However, Great Britain preferred the concept of “contiguous belt of equal width”, which was favored by others as well. This width was settled at three-nautical-miles, and was based on the range of artillery of 18th century.

This system began malfunctioning during the post-colonial period when many nation-states emerged and began claiming their territorial water. The “contiguous belt of equal width” ensured “freedom of navigation” over a large part of the water surface of the earth as possible. Claims to territorial seas through the principle of “contiguous belt” limits the better exploitation of new independent countries and safe guard their national interest effectively and puts in direct conflict with their erstwhile colonial masters, who prefer maximum area of high seas for “freedom of navigation” to protect their commerce, which happens to be their national interest. This is the crux of the conflict between erstwhile colonial powers and their subjects in modern times. This equation is clear and present in the context of South China Sea. This contradiction between the concepts

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32 China and ASEAN is currently contemplating such a formulation of “code of conduct” in disputed South China Sea.
33 Early in the seventeenth century the famous Dutch lawyer Hugo Grotius, in his famous Mare Liberum argued that “no state could control and rule the open sea”. Sudeepta Adhikari (1997), Political Geography, Rawat Publications: Jaipur (India), p.227.
“freedom of navigation” and “sovereignty” adhered to in various forms by different nations in SCS region drives the dispute.

The United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I) first held in Geneva in 1958 to discuss the problems arising out of unilateral claims by a great number of newly independent nation-states which tended to threaten: (a) freedom of navigation in high seas, and (b) freedom of innocent passage across the international straits. The UNCLOS I codified most of what had developed in the field since its earliest days. The following is the brief chronology of the developments in this field:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>United States extended its claims to the wealth of the continental shelf through the Truman Declaration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Three prominent Pacific coastal states of Latin America-Chile, Peru and Ecuador issued the Declaration of Santiago, claiming exclusive fishing rights to a line some 200 nautical miles from their coasts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>The United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I) was first held in Geneva in 1958 to discuss the problems arising out of unilateral claims by a great number of newly independent nation-states which tended to threaten: (a) freedom of navigation in high seas, and (b) freedom of innocent passage across the international straits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>The number of states claiming three-nautical-mile limit declined though not very sharply but the number of states claiming a 12 mile limit increased. The UNCLOS II was held in Geneva without producing any concrete resolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>The signing of the United Nations Convention on the Transit Trade of Landlocked States in 1965 at the New York was a significant development in the sense that the geographical disadvantaged states acquired for themselves the right to approach the sea through their neighbors’ territories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Latin American States (which included Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Panama, Nicaragua and El Salvador) claimed the 200 mile limit either as territorial sea or for the exclusive fishing rights. India sought for 100 mile limit for fishing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>The UNCLOS III commenced in New York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>UNCLOS III had its first working session.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In given times the 12 nautical mile limit for “territorial Sea” is the common practice and 200 nautical miles for “Exclusive Economic Zone”. However this practice, limits the concept of “freedom of navigation”, for example while both Indonesia and Malaysia adhere to the 12 nautical mile limit for “territorial sea”, if practiced blocks Malacca Strait. In the past when this was attempted both United States and Soviet Union had threatened use of force. The practice of 200 nautical miles limit would make one-third of sea non-navigatable. This intervenes with the national interest of those nations that bank on maritime trade. South China Sea in this regard handles nearly one-third of all international shipping. Practice of the concept of “sovereignty” or extended territorial sea limit would affect maritime trade which banks on “freedom of navigation” and innocent passage. Therefore the disputes in South China Sea have historical legacy to it and admits the continuation of colonial domination by core states in Asia, with strategic necessity to preserve freedom of navigation. In terms of its impact on grand strategy, this issue is crucial in deciding the balance of power between core states (colonial powers, erstwhile) and periphery states (colonies, erstwhile e.g. India and China).

Given this nature of the problem in hand in SCS, the assessment of the following development will help gauge the future direction and nature of the problem. The problem has become crucial in many ways in deciding the fate of future international politics, for a simple reason that littoral nations of SCS have now acquired or in the process of building up naval power. This for the first time complicates the equation held so far, for these nations now are in a position to optimize sea for national development. The previous methods of handling sea, seems to limit this option in many ways. This contradiction is likely to play a role in determining the nature of the conflict in future.

India and China will order 100 new naval ships and submarines each by 2032 due to changing global security environment and increasing reliance on the sea for trade in the strategic region. The new orders would include nuclear and conventional submarines and new aircraft carriers, a balanced mix of destroyers, frigates, smaller units, amphibious and logistics vessels, Coast Guard and maritime patrol forces. The two countries' combined order would account for 30 percent by volume and 45 per cent by value of the 1048 naval vessels, worth about USD 200 billion, to be ordered by the Asia Pacific countries in next 20 years. “The Asia Pacific submarine investment is significant, with 100 to be ordered over 20 years, making it the single region buying more submarines than anywhere else in the world”.

Comparatively, the US was projected to order 453 naval vessels, or about 14 per cent of the global orders, between 2012 and 2032. South Korea, Japan and Australia were expected to acquire 220 new vessels worth USD 62 billion during the next 20 years. Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam were also active in the market with the new ship and submarine acquisition. Asia Pacific's increasing trade, increasing reliance on the sea for trade and positive economic growths.

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35 “India, China to order 100 naval ships each by 2032: Report”, Indian Express, 13 May, 2013.
provide the fund for naval investments. India's Scorpene procurement and follow-on P-75 submarine program remain the centerpieces of the region's largest confirmed spender on new submarine capability. The launch of the indigenous Arihant nuclear submarine also marks a long-awaited next step in India's development as a global navy. Meanwhile, China was forecast to add 16 conventional and nuclear powered hulls to the fleet over the next 5 years, the most number of new hulls of any Asia Pacific navies for that period. “China’s submarine procurements are also influencing other navies in the region to fill submarine and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capability gaps, notably in Vietnam, where the first of six new conventional submarines from Russia are expected to become operational within the next 12 months.”

**Conclusion: The Game**

United States (US) and People’s Republic of China (PRC) have based their approach on their unique military potential and limitations. At the moment PRC supposedly seeks a defensive approach, whereas US approach is based on offensive doctrines. It is true for the evolution of warfare where the means of defense moves in parallel line and at about same speed with those of offense. This approach is not necessarily a reflection of intent but of compulsions, constraints and limitations. China is faced with growing interest of US government policy - Pivot to Asia - where it is believed that the next prime focus of US would be Asia-Pacific. Asia-Pacific is now understood to be the next area for geo-political competition and this attention to the Pacific is primarily due to the evolving nature of PRC’s growth - political and military. With China imposing ADIZ and US implementing ASB concept, indicate towards the varying approach towards this new emerging reality in Asia-Pacific.

The ASB concept, like its predecessor the Air-Land Battle concept is a “military strategy” classified as maneuver based strategy. While the Air-Land Battle concept was designed to meet the challenge posed by Soviet Union during the Cold-War, it was operationalised during the Gulf-War. The US armed forces were designed to fight Soviet-equipped centrally directed forces. Not surprisingly the equipment and doctrine developed to confront the Warsaw Pact did very well against Iraq. China has taken a serious note of this military strategy and begun multi-level transformation in its armed forces. This includes force structure, operational art, doctrines, training, organizational re-design. It has also been ascertained that maneuver based military strategy enhance the ability of a nation in seeking military solution to political problems. This is so since a maneuver based strategy is designed to achieve quick victory by initiating war and reducing the duration of war and therefore lucrative at the hands of policy makers who seek military solutions. While war between US and China is ruled out for multiple reasons, the military balance of power dictated by military strategy -chosen- has direct bearings on the political choices made by nation-states in Asia-Pacific region. Balance of power between US and China will decide the political evolution of the Asia-Pacific region in coming years. The concept of ASB not only implicates a shift in military strategy but also the recipient of this strategy. If Soviet Union was the imaginary adversary during

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the implementation of Air-Land Battle concept in mid-1980, the ASB concept is meant for contingencies with respect to China. The following factors dominate US strategic approach towards Asia-Pacific and China in 21st Century;

1) China’s asserting role in defending its territorial claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea.

2) Regulation of foreign military activity in China’s 200-mile maritime Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

3) Countering US influence protecting China’s Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC).

China’s strategy seems to nullify the offensive deployment of US Air Force and Navy within a Joint Command Structure. In order to do so, China seeks itself a joint operational doctrine with unified command structure⁴⁰. China while attempting to implement this strategy at nearby seas, US does the same far away from its shore. Both these developments are a reflection of International Law which the highlights the anarchical nature of the current geo-political environment. The deployment of HQ-9 Air Defense Systems in South China Sea allows China to further discourage a potential adversary (US-NATO) from projecting its offensive military power. However, while the present deployment does not necessarily convert into threat for US Navy is SCS, it sets precedence for being so in the future.

⁴⁰ The three coastal Military Regions (MRs) of Jinan, Nanjing and Guangzhou will be merged into a single Joint Forces Command (JFC) dealing with the maritime theatres of the Yellow, East China, and South China Seas. A further two JFCs will be created from the existing Shenyang, Beijing, Lanzhou and Chengdu MRs. The Chinese defense ministry has denied the formation of a joint operational command. This reorganization, however, continues a trend of aggregation: the 13 MRs established in 1948 were reduced to 11 in 1969, and then to seven in 1987. Yoon Sukjoon (2014), “Is Xi Jinping Reshaping the PLA?” RSIS Commentaries. NOTE: