



**The National Maritime Foundation
Varuna Mess Complex
NH-48, New Delhi 110010**

NMF/Vietnam/Workshop/2019

10 Jun 19

**REPORT ON INAUGURAL WORKSHOP:
INDIA-VIETNAM MARITIME COOPERATION**

Introduction

1. The Inaugural workshop on India-Vietnam Maritime Cooperation, conducted in association with the Embassy of Vietnam and the Centre for Vietnam Studies (CVS), was held at the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) Conference Hall on 23 April 2019.
2. The theme of the conference was: *“India-Vietnam Maritime Cooperation: Exploring Convergences”*.
3. The Concept Note and Programme are placed at Appendices A and B respectively. The workshop, which was attended by select invitees, saw insightful presentations by the speakers, free flowing and frank discussions, which covered a wide gamut of issues. Salient aspects of the workshop are enumerated in the succeeding paragraphs.

Introductory Address

4. The introductory address was delivered by Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd), the Director-General (DG) NMF.

5. DG NMF commenced the inaugural workshop by welcoming His Excellency, Mr Pham Sanh Chau, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to India, Nepal and Bhutan, and all delegates from the Vietnam Embassy. He also extended a warm welcome to the Director, Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), Dr Ash Narain Roy; the Director of the Centre for Vietnam Studies and Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, Dr Sonu Trivedi; the 'moderators' for the two panel discussions, namely, Vice Admiral Pradeep Kaushiva, UYSM, VSM, IN (Retd), former Director of the NMF; and, Mr Arvind Kumar, IES (Retd), former Senior Adviser (Transport Research) in the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways; the workshop's distinguished Valedictorian, Professor SD Muni; the eminent panellists: Vice Admiral Anup Singh, PVSM, AVSM, NM, IN (Retd), Former Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command; Dr Baladas Ghosal, Director, Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS); Capt Sarabjeet S Parmar, Senior Fellow at the NMF; and Dr Durairaj Kumarasamy, Consultant, ASEAN India Centre (AIC), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). He acknowledged and welcomed the distinguished members of the audience, noting the many eminent scholars and analysts amongst them.

6. The Admiral thereafter briefly recounted a small sampling of the long and impressive history of Vietnam, with particular regard to that country's steely determination, the dedication of its people to their nation, and, its remarkable resilience. He remarked that there was much that Vietnam and India could learn from each other's history. Their respective historical experiences could then be leveraged to catapult the extant, well-established bilateral relations between New Delhi and Hanoi, into a mutually beneficial and mutually reinforcing future.

7. Insofar as the workshop itself was concerned, he said that this was the first of a series of workshops and seminars that would explore maritime convergences between India and Vietnam. This inaugural one hoped to bring everyone on the same page in terms of two important maritime-convergence facets, viz., Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and Connectivity. That said, he advised the assemblage to remember that these were *not* the only areas of maritime convergence, nor was this the only format for future workshops. He added that likewise, while defence / naval cooperation was an important facet of maritime convergence, it was not the only one.

8. He ended by reiterating that this was a 'workshop' and, as such, could afford to be low on 'optics' but needed to be high in terms of content. He encouraged panellists and members of the audience alike to be bold in their approach and not to shy away from the several maritime complexities that needed to be addressed. Only through frank and meaningful discussions, he said, could India-Vietnam cooperation best be advanced in the maritime domain. He closed his introductory remarks by reminding all present that it was perfectly permissible to disagree, but one should do so without being 'disagreeable'.

Special Address

9. An extremely insightful Special Address, rich in allegory, was delivered by Dr Ash Narain Roy, Director, Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), New Delhi, within whose institute the CVS was embedded. He noted that the 21st Century was witnessing a tectonic shift in that there was no State that had the political-, economic-, and strategic-leverage to single-handedly drive the international agenda. He stressed the need to understand the emerging world order and he agreed with Professor Amitabh Acharya of the American University of Washington when the latter pointed out that the world was ‘multiplex’ rather than merely ‘multipolar’. He emphasised the importance of both, history and geography. Neither could be considered a constant because while histories advanced and retreated, geographies, too, had been known to evolve. He reminded the assemblage that most contemporary geopolitical flashpoints involved access-to and influence-over the maritime domain. He made a seminal point in commenting that some significant geopolitical gerrymandering was needed by emerging great powers because, as the British historian, APJ Taylor, had said, the object of being a great power was to be able to fight a great war, but paradoxically, the only way of remaining a great power was not to have to actually fight. He expressed his admiration at the fact that Vietnam was perhaps the only country that had created strategic ties with all five permanent members of the UN Security Council. By 2017, Vietnam had negotiated strategic partnerships with 17 new countries, and comprehensive partnerships with 10, including Australia, the United States and India. This, he explained, was what was being called Vietnam’s ‘clumping bamboo diplomacy’, distinguishing it from the ‘bamboo diplomacy’ of Thailand. The Vietnamese approach was that the more interdependent ties Hanoi was able to cultivate, the easier it would be for Vietnam to maintain its independence and self-reliance — like ‘ivory bamboo’ that easily fell if standing alone but grew firmly in ‘clumps’.

10. Touching upon Vietnam’s approach to China, he offered the delightful analogy of the eminent 19th Century French writer, Guy de Maupassant, who was bitterly opposed to the Eiffel Tower. Yet, he would go every day to the tower to have lunch and when asked why he did so, said *“this is the only place from where I cannot see the tower!”* Vietnam’s emphasis on its physical proximity to China was a similar way of expressing its own strong opposition. He enthralled the audience with additional analogies that summarised Vietnam’s approach to China — one particularly interesting one was that of sleeping next to a chicken in order to avoid malaria because mosquitoes are repelled by the odour of the chicken!

11. He quoted India’s former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Bajpayee, in averring that history and geography had willed that India and Vietnam become strategic partners, and said that the two countries had, indeed, moved closer to each other. However, he cautioned that there was still a long way to go before the two countries could mutually create a game-changing capability.

Address by HE Mr Pham Sanh Chau, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to India, Nepal and Bhutan

12. His Excellency, Mr Pham Sanh Chau, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to India, Nepal and Bhutan, significantly enriched the workshop by his own excellent address. He pointed out that while it was true that contemporary Vietnam had concluded strategic partnerships with all five members of the Security Council, there was only one of them with whom it did not have a painful past. India and Vietnam, on the other hand, shared a very long and entirely pain-free history, marked by friendship and cultural similarities including, of course, the eastward spread of Buddhism from India to Vietnam, 2500 years ago. Noting that India and Vietnam had convergent geopolitical interests, he felt that Vietnam was lucky to have a friend like India, which had always extended a helpful and friendly hand to Vietnam. He identified a few major pillars of Vietnam-Indian cooperation. The first was a political one. There had been several exchanges of high-ranking delegations. In 2018, the President of Vietnam had visited India and this had been followed, six months ago, by the President of India visiting Vietnam. A fortnight hence, he said, the Hon'ble Vice President of India, too, would visit Vietnam as the chief guest of the Vesak celebrations. The second pillar incorporated defence cooperation, where, once again, there had been very satisfactory high-level military and civilian exchanges. Training, he added, was an important facet of the bilateral defence cooperation. At the executive level, there were, even as he spoke, Indian Naval and Coast Guard ships calling at ports in Vietnam, and last year there had been a first-ever port-call to Chennai by a Vietnamese Coast Guard ship. Economy and trade constituted the third pillar. Trade, he remarked, had grown by 38% last year and had reached 12.5 billion US dollars. It was expected to reach the targeted 15 billion US\$ and Indian investors were being welcomed to invest in Vietnam. Education — especially in the disciplines of science and technology — comprised a fourth pillar, and India was all set to be the study-destination of very many Vietnamese students. Cultural connectivity, he stated, was another pillar of the India-Vietnam bilateral relationship. Special flights were being arranged to enable Buddhist pilgrims from Vietnam to visit Bodhgaya. He was hopeful that two months from now, the first ever direct flight between Kolkata and Hanoi — which was, he reminded the assemblage, shorter than the distance between Kolkata and New Delhi — would commence operations by Indigo airlines. The ambassador pointed out that within the ambit of people to people contact — which was yet another important pillar — Vietnam had good relations with every single political party in India. This, he said, had not been easy for Vietnam to manage, since it itself had a one-party system.

13. The ambassador reiterated that Vietnam and India enjoyed a comprehensive strategic partnership — something that had been mutually declared in 2016, when the Indian Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, had visited Vietnam. This comprehensive strategic partnership most definitely incorporated maritime cooperation, which was, in and of itself, a vital link and included, *inter-alia*, anti-piracy cooperation, maritime

security, enhancement of Maritime Domain Awareness through the exchange of White Shipping data, etc. In this context, he welcomed the present workshop, and said that he fully supported the idea of this inaugural workshop opening-up a follow-on series of workshops to discuss various aspects of maritime cooperation between India and Vietnam so as to further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two States. He recommended that a roadmap be prepared for future maritime workshops and suggested that the next workshop concentrate upon port-development, to be followed by one focussed upon the maritime economy, with subsequent ones concentrating upon non-traditional maritime challenges, and so forth. He acknowledged the importance of such engagements between subject-matter experts and said that there were three reasons for pursuing such engagements with due vigour. The first was the congruence of maritime interests between the two countries. The second was that these workshops were capable of providing the requisite specificity to these congruences. The third was that they would contribute to the maintenance of peace, security, and maritime development, not only at a bilateral level, but also at a regional one. He stressed the importance of framing the discussion within the principles that Vietnam holds dear. The first principle was that Vietnam sincerely wished to grow its relationship with India but without compromising its desire to be friends with all countries across the world and to diversify Vietnam's multilateral relations and other international engagements. The second principle was that this bilateral maritime engagement was to remain in conformity-with and contribute-to the existing and future partnership between Vietnam and ASEAN. ASEAN centrality, he said, was not only to be preserved but actively promoted as well. The third principle was that whatever India and Vietnam chose to do together in mutual cooperation was to adhere to international law and the judicial processes relevant thereto. The maritime engagement between India and Vietnam was to be entirely in conformity with the UN Charter and the provisions of UNCLOS 1982. The fourth principle was that this process of maritime cooperation was to be supported by the people of the two countries and cooperation within the maritime domain was to be driven by the domestic agenda of each country. He reminded the gathering that domestic agendas tended to vary over time, depending upon the stage of development of each country and the global and the prevailing regional situation. This, he said, was particularly important in the context of the implementation of the several international treaties and arrangements to which Vietnam was committed. His Excellency concluded by saying that maritime cooperation transcended just the security dimension alone and needed to be understood in its broader sense of cooperation in all such fields that would assure the economic, material and societal wellbeing of the people of both India and Vietnam.

Panel Discussion No. 1: Holistic Maritime Security through a Shared Awareness of the Maritime Domain

14. Vice Admiral Pradeep Kaushiva, UYSM, VSM, IN (Retd), moderated the discussions of Panel No. 1 with his customary competence and élan. Having provided

some cogent opening comments on the importance of the maritime domain and the need for awareness of goings-on within the South China Sea in particular, he conducted the discussion by calling upon his three eminent panellists to address specific aspects without making formal presentations. Points made by each panellist, were commented-upon by the remaining two, thereby providing a rich mixture for the audience to contribute its own individual and collective insights. Dr Baladas Ghoshal accordingly focussed his comments upon options in respect of the optimal geopolitical approach that ought to be adopted within the Indo-Pacific in general and the South China Sea (SCS) in particular. He noted that the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR), as had been defined by Prime Minister Modi, in the 2018 edition of the Shangri-La dialogue, was very vast. In order to understand this vision, it was important to recognise and accept the limits of 'capability', vis-à-vis, strategic, economic and security issues, which existed across the IPR. He stated that India's aim of being a net security provider in the region required India to interact with neighbouring nations through various mitigation mechanisms. For this, India's maritime presence in the region needed to be robust and focussed upon trade, ports and capacity-building in general. Dr Ghoshal said that all these aspects required a bilateral approach to cooperation. He strongly recommended that relations first be developed bilaterally and only once sufficient capital by way of capacity and trust had been built, should multilateral approaches be pursued.

15. VAdm Anup Singh, for his part, addressed India's options in the SCS in some detail. A frequently encountered question, he said, was whether India, too, ought to actively involve itself in 'Freedom of Navigation Operations' (FONOPS) within the SCS. He averred that actions undertaken by India in the SCS were robust and were seen to be so by all parties concerned. As such, India's strategic signalling was, perhaps, more effective and louder than the FONOPS operations undertaken by the USA. India's intention to preserve, promote and, where necessary, to protect its maritime interests, was underscored every time Indian Naval ships visited friendly countries like Japan and Vietnam, and conducted naval exercises during their transits through the SCS. He stated that India's maritime cooperation was on the rise with a sharp increase in the number of bilateral and multilateral exercises its navy was carrying out. At a whole-of-government level, too, India's messaging, he claimed, was robust, as witness the proactive stance adopted by ONGC *Videsh* in its conduct of upstream exploration and production activities in the SCS. He highlighted the growing India-Vietnam maritime cooperation with examples of maritime exercises between the navies.

16. Captain Parmar amplified the comments that had been made in the inaugural session in respect of the importance of understanding a nation by studying its historical and geography linkages. He briefly covered the turbulent and conflict-prone history of Vietnam and its neighbours, specifically China, explaining how Vietnam had emerged as a stronger nation by resolving its differences with its neighbours, even while standing up to aggression from stronger nations such as France, China, and the USA. He also touched upon the significant contribution of Vietnam within multilateral constructs such as ASEAN and EAS, its wholehearted participation in the Western Pacific Naval

Symposium (WPNS), and, Hanoi's maintenance of successful diplomatic relations with around 188 nations. With regard to maritime borders, he opined that India-Vietnam relations were once again congruent with each other. Both countries shared a common and equally grave concern over Chinese assertive and outrightly aggressive actions in the SCS and said that any niggling bilateral differences between India and Vietnam tended to get subsumed by this commonality of concern.

17. The panel as a whole was united in its concern over the ongoing clashes of interest amongst ASEAN countries, in the face of the growing assertiveness of China. It was felt that China's adoption of the Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone on February 25, 1992, should have resulted in ASEAN adopting a joint stance on the South China Sea dispute in its own 'ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea', signed in Manila in July 1992. The ASEAN Code of Conduct for the SCS was also discussed in the light of differences amongst ASEAN members that had emerged in the drafting of the code, now known as the 'Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS' (DOC), with the net result that a finalisation of the 'Code of Conduct' (COC) was nowhere in sight.

18. The panel discussion was followed by a highly interactive session, which saw a number of aspects being discussed, salient amongst which are the following:

(a) In response to a query raised by Captain Gurpreet Khurana, Executive Director NMF, H.E. Mr Pham Sanh Chau explained that Vietnam was certainly faced with disputes in respect of both, the Paracel and the Spratly island groups. However, the confrontations in the Paracel Islands were a bilateral issue between Vietnam and China and the assistance of other countries was not essential in the dispute-resolution. The Spratly Islands dispute, on the other hand, required a multilateral approach for its resolution. That said, freedom of navigation was a shared interest of all SCS countries and needed to be ensured.

(b) Senior Colonel Nguyen Quang Chien, the Defence Attaché at the Vietnam Embassy recommended that the India-Vietnam maritime-engagement process should not be viewed solely through a China-centric lens. That said, he pointed out that China was already operating extensively in the Indian Ocean, deploying both surface and sub-surface combatants and wanted to know when India would deploy its own submarines in the SCS. The panel responded to say that India was on record to confirm that the *Arihant* had completed a deterrent patrol. Where this had been effected was, however, not stated. The Vietnam DA accepted this, but recommended that Indian naval actions in areas outside the IOR needed to be more visibly-resolute. He also asked whether, despite India's unequivocal rejection of any military bloc, the Quad or the MALABAR construct could be considered to be an embryonic bloc, as Russia seemed to think. Finally, he enquired whether, given India's increasing maritime cooperation with Japan and the USA, there was any plan for the three countries to jointly assist

Vietnam in terms of maritime cooperation. The panel asserted that there was no intent on India's part to convert either discussion-fora such as the quadrilateral dialogue or exercise-formats such as MALABAR into a military bloc. It also clarified that bilateral maritime cooperation was a prerequisite for any later multilateral engagement options, and given that the former was itself in its infancy, it would be premature to discuss the latter.

(c) As a follow up to the panel's views on the status of the Code of Conduct, the Ambassador stated that the ongoing deliberations and negotiations with China were, indeed, on the right track and it was intended to complete the draft by 2022. He stated that the Code would be comprehensive and legally binding with regard to all disputes within the South China Sea.

(d) Responding to a comment about India's military options within the SCS, His Excellency, Mr Pham Sanh Chau, was unequivocal in stating that Vietnam did not seek military assistance from any power. In fact, he said, Vietnam's own historical experience had been that whenever Vietnam had relied upon assistance-from or involvement-of external powers, victory had proven to be elusive, but whenever Vietnam had stood up to aggression on its own, it had emerged victorious. As such, Vietnam did not and would not rely on military assistance from any power, and was confident in its own capacity and capability to defend its territory, including that lying within the maritime domain. That said, moral support was always welcome.

(e) Addressing a query on the effectiveness of Information Fusion Centres (IFC) in respect of merchant shipping data, VAdm Anup Singh felt that nations needed to build Maritime Domain Awareness from multiple sources rather than relying solely upon an IFC to handle merchant shipping traffic in the region. Building upon this view, VAdm Pradeep Chauhan, DG NMF, recommended that the conclusion of a White Shipping data-sharing agreement between India and Vietnam be afforded priority by Hanoi.

(f) Responding to a question of whether India ought to adopt a more proactive approach to capacity-building, VAdm Anup Singh pointed out that in 2006, there were proponents of technology who held that the adoption of cutting-edge technologies could be an affordable and operationally-effective alternative to increases in the number of Indian Naval platforms. He said that this was a seductive but ultimately inadequate argument, as quantity had its own quality. India, he said, was cognisant of its responsibility to ensure regional maritime stability in the Indo-Pacific, specifically in terms of countering maritime terrorism and ensuring freedom of navigation through the chokepoints of the Indian Ocean Region. Therefore, he concluded, there was a clear requirement to further accelerate capacity-building and effect the requisite increase in the number of ships, so as to meet India's growing responsibilities.

Panel Discussion Two: India-Vietnam Maritime Cooperation through Maritime-Connectivity Mechanisms

19. The second panel discussion was moderated by Mr Arvind Kumar, IES (Retd), former Senior Adviser (Transport Research), Ministry of Road Transport & Highways; and former Member, Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP), Ministry of Shipping. In his introduction, Mr Kumar provided an extensive overview of issues relating to maritime-connectivity and buttressed his comments by extensive statistical summaries. He stressed the need to leverage soft-power even in areas of engagement and cooperation that were dominated by hard-power considerations, such as defence cooperation, for instance. Having thus 'prepped' the assemblage, he sought the views of his three panellists.

20. VAdm Pradeep Chauhan, Director General, National Maritime Foundation, reminded the gathering that India was not the sole power within the IPR and consequently, India's own geopolitics was impacted by the geopolitics of other regional and extra-regional powers that operate within this region. He pointed out that within the Indo-Pacific, there existed a potent mix of maritime connectivity, collaboration, cooperation and competition — aspects which had been recognised as being of immediate importance to the world, to Asia, and certainly to India. He added that many of these processes — whether collaborative, cooperative or competitive — were occurring simultaneously on both, the tangible and the intangible plane. He pointed to the unique, simultaneous rise of several Asian powers such as India, Iran, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and, the ten constituent nations of ASEAN. This had led to a restoration of the historical predominance of Asia within the balance of global power. The admiral stressed that the rule-based order at sea, exemplified by the consensual entry into force of the 1982 UN Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which had thus far sustained maritime intercourse between nations, was under great strain, as new rising powers such as China were proffering alternative interpretations of maritime order, with the promise of inclusive economic growth through their own connectivity models. As a resurgent maritime nation, India, likewise, sought to emphasise its great civilizational and cultural heritage and was offering the region an inclusive model of constructive engagement. He emphasised the fact that maritime connectivity was the principal thread with which the Indo-Pacific, as a predominantly maritime expanse, could be stitched together, and that there were several other models that could be considered as far as maritime connectivity was concerned. He pointed out that in Vietnam, shipping was witnessing a healthy resurgence. Vietnam's shipping fleet comprised over 1,300 vessels with a total capacity of 6.5 million DWT, and was ranked 30th in the world and 4th in the region. According to Vietnam's leading shipping firm, Vinalines, the total volume of goods moved by sea transport, in 2017, was 160,000 tonnes — a year-on-year increase of 7%. Vietnam was ranked fifth in the world for shipbuilding, which was a fact about which, he said, many Indian maritime analysts were not aware. This, he felt, was certainly a promising area for India-Vietnam maritime convergence.

21. He pointed out that the Vietnamese government's increasing liberalisation of trade, together with the significant increase in Foreign Direct Investment into the manufacturing sector leading to a significant growth in exports, alongside the country's positive demographic advantage and growing consumer demand, had led to the World Bank, in 2018, forecasting significant growth for shipping and freight activity. With exports accounting for 80% of nominal GDP and with trade growth being predicted to reach 9.25% in 2018, Vietnam had begun to attract major investments from international companies, especially in the category of electrical machinery, including modems and telephones. Thus, he explained, Vietnam's growing economy, its several trade agreements, and its strategic geographical location, had combined to increase its global recognition as a regional trade hub, enhancing its attractiveness to foreign freight transporters entering the market. There were many lessons for India in closely examining Vietnam's ports and inland waterways, which had proven vital in securing both regional and global international connections. For instance, he said, Business Monitor International had ranked Vietnam seventh for liner connectivity, allowing ports to increasingly offer direct services Asia-US and Asia-Europe routes.

22. Drawing a parallel between India's port-led development project, SAGARMALA, and Vietnam's own impressive port-development programme, he recounted that recent investment in Vietnam's marine sector had led to the development of as many as 44 seaports along Vietnam's 3,400 km of coastline, with a total capacity of some 500 million tonnes of cargo per year. Of these 44 ports, the three main port-clusters — Hai Phong in the North, Sai Gon in the South, and Da Nang in the central part of the coast, had attracted many global investors. He also drew the attention of the attendees to the six HCMC (Ho Chi Minh City) ports, of which Cat Lai, the newest and largest one, accounted for 71% of total seaport throughput. As for connectivity, he recounted that Cat Lai, along with Hiep Phuoc port, were predominantly used for short-route services to Asian countries, while the Cai Mep International Terminal (CMIT), with its capacity of 1.115 million TEU, was used for longer oceanic trade-connectivity.

23. He stressed that the Blue Economy offered enormous scope for maritime connectivity of every sort, including the introduction of short-haul shipping using Roll-On-Roll-Off (Ro-Ro) cargo-ships, passenger ferries and cruise liners, the establishment of digital-infrastructure towards enhanced maritime-connectivity and port-efficiency, and so on. However, in conclusion, he cautioned that port-connectivity demanded a good understanding of the basics of port-efficiencies, because while a government might dictate where a port was to be located, it was quite unable to dictate whether trade would, indeed, come to the port. In other words, he said, connectivity by itself was a necessary precondition for maritime convergence, but not a sufficient one. Consequently, shared risk-awareness and common mitigation-strategies were crucial, and, capacity-building as well as capability-enhancement simply had to be made to work in both directions, if the trap of resentment that seeps into every provider-recipient relationship was to be avoided in the case of the India-Vietnam maritime convergence.

24. For her part, Dr Sonu Trivedi, Director, Centre for Vietnam Studies; and, Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, stated that as a security provider, India's presence in the western Pacific, especially the South China Sea, was capable of being sustained because Vietnam, along with other Southeast Asian nations, perceived India as a benign power whose peaceful rise would yield significant strategic benefits for all, while enabling New Delhi to play a larger role in the region. With specific regard to Vietnam, she said that Vietnam's military modernisation was a prerequisite that would ensure security of activities connected with the exploitation of the economic potential of Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and also aid in the protection of sovereignty in the South China Sea. She dwelt upon the issue of China's increasing aggressiveness in the South China Sea and its ambition of increasing influence in the Indian Ocean, as a maritime security dilemma. She further said that this maritime security dilemma, added to the threats of piracy and armed robbery against ships, and the dangers of sea-based terrorism aimed at land-based targets, necessitated an urgent need for upgrading and deepening Vietnam-India maritime cooperation.

25. Addressing broad maritime issues, she said that both India and Vietnam were maritime nations, with a rich and glorious history of maritime trade. Therefore, Track Two endeavours should be to revive and energise these ancient links in a contemporary setting, so that both nations could become drivers of the Asian resurgence that was being witnessed. In this context, she emphasised that maritime connectivity, which had been the mainstay of India's ancient trade links with South-East Asian nations, required urgent modernisation within the context of current geopolitical realities. In conclusion, she stressed that focus needed to be laid on revisiting and exploring old and new maritime trade routes between India and all ASEAN States, in order to promote greater maritime cooperation in both 'traditional and non-traditional' domains.

26. Rounding off the panel discussion, Dr Durairaj Kumarasamy, Consultant, ASEAN India Centre (AIC), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), focused his comments on economic aspects of maritime connectivity, saying that maritime connectivity in general and trade-connectivity in particular were inhibited by a variety of tariff- and non-tariff barriers. On the other hand, he said, technology was creating and driving new perspectives, thanks to digitisation supplementing — and in some cases, even supplanting — maritime connectivity and associated maritime infrastructure. To improve trade links, he recommended: (1) common vessel-standards issued by classification societies and other certifying authorities, (2) a synchronisation of the master plans of connectivity-projects between India and ASEAN, (3) ensuring interoperability of digital interfaces to connect India and ASEAN through, inter alia, the creation of a single-window system for the levy of customs dues, the adoption of a uniform port-system, and, (4) a gradual relaxation of cabotage on reciprocal basis.

27. As had been the case after the first panel discussion, this one, too, was followed by a lively interactive session, which saw a number of issues being thrown up for further discussion. Prominent amongst these were the following:

(a) Lt Col Mohit Nayal, Research Fellow, NMF, sought the views of the panel on (i) terms that India and Vietnam could offer each other so as to reduce costs, and (ii) the major issues adversely impacting maritime trade between India and Vietnam. The panel responded with a recommendation that the model presently being followed by Vietnam in its trade in electronics with the Republic of Korea, which was based on favourable bilateral investment infrastructure mechanisms, be adopted to improve trade between India and Vietnam.

(b) Responding to a series of questions regarding the implications for India of the Maritime Silk Route, VAdm Chauhan emphasised that geoeconomics was a subset of geopolitics and geostrategies were invariably formulated in order for a nation to attain its geoeconomic objectives. Thus, China's Maritime Silk Route was one of the geostrategies formulated by China to attain its geoeconomic goals of access to minerals and markets in distant parts and across predominantly maritime spaces. He opined that the connectivity offered by the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) might well be the closest competitor of the Maritime Silk Route.

Valedictory Session

28. To wind up the morning's absorbing deliberations, an insightful and thought-provoking valedictory address was delivered by Professor SD Muni, Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University; and Member, Executive Council, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). At the outset, Professor Muni said that even though both India and Vietnam had their own highs and lows in terms of their respective bilateral relations with China, he was very pleased that the workshop was not singularly focussed upon China and that topics relevant to India and Vietnam had been discussed in the workshop without continuously referencing them to China. With respect to trade between India and Vietnam, he emphasised that there was a need for creative and positive engagement processes. To progress further workshops or conferences, he suggested that Task Forces be set up between NMF and the CVS that would study and analyse specific issues and suggest possible solutions. He emphasised that there was a need to maintain a strong focus on possible bottlenecks that could adversely impact such specific issues as would be identified for granular analysis by each Task Force. He also recommended that the CVS and its counterpart in Vietnam should work together and disseminate the result of these studies to policy-makers, as well as to the public at large. This, he said, would create more awareness and such awareness augured well for the enhancement of India-Vietnam relations. He concluded by commending the organisers of the workshop, as the dynamics of bilateral relations could best be understood through dialogues such as this one.

Vote of Thanks

29. In her vote-of-thanks, Dr Sonu Trivedi first provided a broad-brush overview of on-going activities of the CVS in furtherance of the Vietnam and India engagement. She informed the assemblage that a Vietnamese language course had been started at the CVS, even though it was yet to attract sufficient numbers of aspirants wanting to learn Vietnamese, which stood in sharp contrast to the very popular English Language centre in Vietnam. She echoed a common lament that insufficient funding was a significantly-limiting factor in conducting comprehensive research, and suggested that efforts be made to seek support from the corporate sector to push projects forward.

30. Dr Trivedi then brought the workshop to a close by graciously thanking the NMF, her own staff at the CVS, HE the Ambassador of Vietnam in India, all members of the Vietnam Embassy in New Delhi, the moderators and panellists, the Valedictorian, members of the audience, and, all those who had worked tirelessly behind the scenes to provide administrative- and research-support for the event.

**Inaugural Workshop on
“India-Vietnam Maritime Cooperation: Exploring Convergences”
at the Conference Room of the
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23 April 2019**

CONCEPT NOTE

The world's geoeconomic pendulum, having hovered about Europe and the Atlantic for almost a millennium, has now swung back to Asia in general and maritime Asia in particular. The Indian and the Pacific Oceans are regaining the great salience they possessed throughout antiquity and the medieval period of world history. This vast oceanic expanse, along with the Westphalian States that lie on its rim, as also within its constituent seas, gulfs and waterways, is reacquiring its geopolitical centrality and its geostrategic oneness. Indeed, the contemporary expression, the 'Indo-Pacific', has moved quite decisively from its origins within the discipline of 'biogeography' into 'geopolitics'. Within geopolitics, the prefix 'geo' — as Australia's Professor Andrew Phillips succinctly informs us — refers to a country's 'strategic geography' (the core spatial assumptions underpinning her grand strategy). As such, every geopolitically defined region is an artificial, manmade construct, whose defining-boundaries can be (and often are) different for different geopolitical players. Prime Minister Narendra Modis has, in the 2018 edition of the Shangri La Dialogue held in Singapore, unequivocally stated that India's strategic geography — the 'Indo-Pacific' — stretches from the shore of East Africa to the western shores of the Americas. It is entirely natural for other major powers such as the USA, Japan, China, Russia, Australia, etc., to have different Strategic geographies that bound their respective conceptions of the India-Pacific. These differences notwithstanding, two facts stand out as incontrovertible features of contemporary global geopolitics. The first is that in spatial terms, the Indo-Pacific (howsoever bounded) is a predominantly maritime expanse. The second is that the rapid economic development and inter-State engagement of a number of littoral States of South-, East- and Southeast-Asia — particularly India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, Japan, South Korea, and, Vietnam along with the remaining nine constituent nations of ASEAN — are today, central features of the geoeconomic and cultural effervescence of this region. Nowhere is this nascent economic and cultural effervescence more visibly evident than in the case of Vietnam. The spin-off economic benefits of this effervescence have transformed Vietnam into a major emerging market and an attractive destination for foreign business and fiscal investment.

Geography has gifted Vietnam a very long coastline, spanning almost the entire western stretch of the South China Sea (SCS). This is an important sea, incorporating major shipping routes that not only link the economies of several Pacific Ocean littorals, but also connect and bind the economies of much of the Indo-Pacific region. Quite apart

from its trade-based criticality, the SCS also has intrinsic economic value of a high order, given the significant offshore oil and gas reserves that lie within it, as also its abundant stocks of fish. For Vietnam, the contestation of the SCS in general, and the growing assertiveness of China in particular, are matters of critical concern. Vietnam remains the leading voice against Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea. Even if the SCS imbroglio were to be momentarily disregarded, Vietnam's geopolitical significance is undiminished, as may be seen in the influence it exerts upon other countries of the South-East Asian mainland. This geopolitical centrality is, of course, furthered by its own rapid economic growth. The country's economic expansion has been particularly striking ever since 2007, and year-on-year GDP growth is an impressive 6.8%, with further acceleration almost a certainty.

There are strong geopolitical convergences between India and Vietnam on the South China Sea and beyond, with both countries asserting the criticality of maintaining freedom-of-navigation and overflight, inclusivity throughout the maritime common, and, adherence to the internationally-accepted and negotiated rules-based order founded upon the UNCLOS.

Even outside of geopolitics, the predominance of the maritime domain in all extant and desired convergences between India and Vietnam is marked. It is, of course, quite obvious that several geoeconomic objectives of both countries can most readily be realised through mutually-supportive maritime economic activity. Examples include the promotion of well-regulated and sustainable fisheries; upstream (Exploration and Production [E&P]) activities in respect of offshore energy; merchandise trade, incorporating sustainable and ecologically-sensitive shipping and environmentally-sensitive port-development; marine biotechnology; etc. Bilateral mechanisms that promote and assure maritime safety and human-security at sea (including weather and navigational warnings, search-and-rescue, humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief, etc.), and the development of legal maritime frameworks that could contest the growing tendency of certain nations to engage in what has come to be known as 'lawfare'; etc., are vital adjuncts to such endeavours. Of equal, if not greater importance, is the need to leverage the ability of maritime connectivity to enable and facilitate the realisation of non-geoeconomic bilateral aspirations — such as people-to-people contact, the exploration and strengthening of historical and cultural linkages — as well as hybrid-objectives such as enhanced tourism-development in both nations.

Vietnam is rapidly emerging as an extremely significant partner in India's 'Act East' policy, especially when an increasing number of countries are suffering the ill-effects and deleterious consequences of debt-trap diplomacy through partnerships with other powers that involve economically unviable infrastructural projects.

Against this backdrop, the 'Centre for Vietnam Studies', in partnership with the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), and the Institute of Social Sciences, and, with the blessing and patronage of the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, has organised an inaugural day-long Workshop to explore and chart the range of maritime convergences between India and Vietnam, so as to identify more-specific areas and projects that

would need to be delved-into in greater detail and with more granularity, in subsequent Workshops amongst this triumvirate, as also with other relevant stakeholders. Attendance at this initial Workshop, which will be held in the NMF Conference Room on 23 April 2019, will be by invitation only, but it is expected that once specific issues are identified, it will be possible for subsequent Workshops to be enriched by a much more open process of public debate and discussion.

**Inaugural Workshop on
“India-Vietnam Maritime Cooperation: Exploring Convergences”**

Venue: Conference Room, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi

Date: 23 Apr 2019

PROGRAMME

Opening Session

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| 08:30-09:00 | Registration |
| 09:00-09:10 | Introductory Address by Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan , AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd), Director-General, NMF |
| 09:10-09:20 | Special Address by Dr Ash Narain Roy , Director, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi |
| 09:20-09:40 | Keynote Address by H.E. Pham Sanh Chau , Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, New Delhi |

09:40-10:40

**PANEL-DISCUSSION ONE:
“HOLISTIC MARITIME SECURITY THROUGH
A SHARED AWARENESS OF THE MARITIME DOMAIN”**

Moderator: Vice Admiral Pradeep Kaushiva, UYSM, VSM, IN (Retd)

Panellists:

1. **Dr Baladas Ghosal**,
Director, Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS), New Delhi
2. **VAdm Anup Singh**, PVSM, AVSM, NM, IN (Retd)
Former Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command
3. **Capt Sarabjeet S Parmar**,
Senior Fellow, NMF

10:40-11:10

Interactive Session with all Attendees

11:10-11:30

TEA BREAK

1130-1230

**PANEL-DISCUSSION TWO:
“INDIA-VIETNAM MARITIME COOPERATION
THROUGH MARITIME-CONNECTIVITY MECHANISMS”**

Moderator: Mr Arvind Kumar, IES (Retd)

Former Senior Adviser (Transport Research), Ministry of Road Transport & Highways; Former Member, Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP), Ministry of Shipping.

Panellists:

1. **Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan**, AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd),
Director General NMF
2. **Dr Sonu Trivedi**,
Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi; and
Director, Centre for Vietnam Studies, New Delhi
3. **Dr Durairaj Kumarasamy**,
Consultant, ASEAN India Centre (AIC), Research and Information
System for Developing Countries (RIS)

12:30-13:00

Interactive Session with all Attendees**VALEDICTORY SESSION**

13:00-13:20

Valedictory Address

Valedictorian: Professor SD Muni,

Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Member, Executive Council, Institute for Defence Studies and
Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi

13:20-13:30

Vote of Thanks

Dr Sonu Trivedi, Director, Centre for Vietnam Studies

LUNCH

1330-1430

Lunch (at Varuna)