



MASTERS OF THE SEA

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FORCE OF THE FUTURE

ON THE OCCASION OF NAVY DAY TODAY, HERE'S A LOOK AT THE INDIAN NAVY'S STELLAR LEGACY, AND ITS GROWTH STORY

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The Indian Navy is among the most formidable naval forces in the world today. It has been guarding India's 7,500-kilometre undulating coastline for the longest time. Considered to be the fifth largest force in the world, the Indian Navy operates not only on the ocean, but also on land, air, and under the water. Over the years, the Indian Navy has built several mighty ships, powerful aircrafts, and submarines. Since its inception, the navy has been a technology-oriented force. Today, it boasts of the most updated technology in the world.

The Indian Navy was a small force with merely 33 ships after India got independence in 1947. However, over the years the navy

expanded with induction of more personnel and deployment of cutting-edge technology both for combats and rescue operations.

"Indian Navy's role in both war and peace times has been praiseworthy for decades. Its role in expanding traditional zones of influence to a more robust global Naval power has also been noted. India's strategic maritime interests are no more confined from the Gulf of Hormuz to Malacca Straits, they have gone much beyond. This necessitates possession of systems like advanced submarines, SLBMs (submarine launched ballistic missiles), carriers and fast-moving attack systems. Although Indian Navy has an excellent performance record, its current inventory is deficient both in terms of contemporary and futuristic systems," shares Deba Mohanty, vice



president - research at the Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict.

FUTURE NAVAL TECHNOLOGY

According to experts, today there is a visible quest in the Indian Navy to acquire proficiency in modern technology and convert them into operational competence. According to Dr Vijay Sakhuja, former director of National Maritime Foundation, among the Indian armed forces, the Indian Navy is perhaps the front runner in technological transformation and assimilation. It has successfully exploited the benefits of the information revolution and reoriented from a 'platform centric' to 'network centric' force to deal with multi-domain threats and challenges.

"Another techno-naval transformation led by Industry 4.0 technologies has begun and several navies are developing new strengths to fight future wars that will feature smart and intelligent weapons, sensors and ordnances, and conduct autonomous warfare involving complex integration of manned-unmanned-autonomous platforms," adds Sakhuja.

According to experts, the unmanned arms race has already begun, and the Indian Navy would have to reassess its future technological requirements. The remedy lies in both rethinking priorities as also the design of future ship classes focused on Industry 4.0 technologies to sustain a favourable balance of naval power.

"Technologies like unmanned underwater combat systems, cruise technologies, advanced submarines are the future, while larger systems like aircraft carriers are equally important for display of both real and symbolic might," adds Deba Mohanty.

DOMINANCE OF THE INDIAN NAVY

For years, Indian Navy has been playing a crucial role in maintaining peace at India's

maritime front. Not just maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, the Indian Navy is tipped to play a significant role in the coming years, especially safeguarding India's interests in the Indian Ocean Region. Not only for its energy security but also for its trade, security of fisheries against poaching and antipiracy needs. "The Indian Navy today is well poised to effectively straddle manufacturing, capacity building and partnership with its regional and global ambitions. As the largest navy in South Asia, the Indian Navy has a special role in regional HA/DR and capacity building, especially amid rapidly changing

The Indian Navy is committed to enhance cooperation and engagement with the like-minded navies in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond

regional dynamics of not just South Asia but indeed the global maritime space," shares Dr Vivek Mishra, research fellow, ICWA.

Indian Navy is committed to enhancing cooperation and engagement with likeminded navies in the IOR. It has continued to learn from the joint exercise. The Indian Navy has been executing maritime cooperation through four methods—constructive engagements such as high-level visits, joint exercise; collaborative efforts such as coordinated patrols; capacity building; and capability enhancement. "It's partnerships with the US, European countries such as France and Germany, Asia Pacific partners like Japan and Australia, Singapore and key ASEAN nations like Indonesia and Thailand could bring a turnaround in its future role in the Indian-Pacific maritime space. India should leverage its irreplaceable position in the Indian Ocean to augment its regional hold in the larger Indo-Pacific," adds Dr Vivek Mishra.

TOWARDS SELF RELIANCE

Self-reliance has been the mantra for the Indian Navy for over five decades. The force has, over the years, instituted numerous long-term plans that has led to successful warship designs and ship building, engineering electrical systems, and weapons and sensors, etc. Today, among the three armed services, the Indian Navy is best geared and motivated for indigenisation.

