

Concept Note for Five Day Workshop
Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework for
Strategic Security Architecture and AtmaNirbharta
15 April 2024 at Pune

The 21st century India is looking very different in terms of its geopolitical and geostrategic moorings and the global community is seeking our participation in the strategic power play. The Indo-Pacific strategic construct brings a new paradigm for strategic security interaction in the tropical littoral waters of the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has become the center of gravity for political, economic, military and socio-cultural interactions. India with its geo-strategic location and geopolitical position in the IOR has no option but to play a major role.

The Government of India has taken multiple steps to ensure our leadership position in the global strategic interactions. The Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision of the Honourable Prime Minister is a major announcement to establish India's role in the IOR and beyond. It recognizes the security concerns that exist in the region, but also acknowledges the blue economic opportunities that are available to us. The Government of India has initiated mega projects to complement the SAGAR declaration, namely the Sagarmala, Bharatmala, Inland Water Transport, Gati Shakti and many more. The trans-boundary Rivers in the North (Indus) and the North East (Brahmaputra) present unique and complex challenges and need to be dealt with urgently. It may be noted that the Underwater Domain becomes a critical theatre going forward, given the strategic security perspective.

The tropical waters in the IOR, present very unique challenges and opportunities on multiple counts. The political volatility brings significant security concerns, the geographic location and the tropical waters present massive economic opportunities and the sub-optimal sonar performance makes it challenging to deploy the imported technology with reasonable level of performance. The extra-regional powers have been meddling in the domestic politics of multiple nations in the IOR allowing large scale participation of the non-state actors into subversive activities with covert support of the nation states. The security establishment has to be prepared for the asymmetry and the disruptive means available to the non-state actors. The invisible enemy can only be dealt with technology edge and nuanced approach.

The Maritime Research Centre (MRC), Pune has proposed the Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework that is well aligned with the SAGAR vision of the Honourable Prime Minister. The UDA framework encourages pooling of resources & synergizing of efforts across the stakeholders and could be a diplomatic leverage to keep the extra-regional powers at bay. The policy & technology intervention along with acoustic capacity & capability building driven by the UDA framework can address multiple challenges and opportunities of the tropical littoral waters. The science & technology driven UDA framework will ensure true realization of AtmaNirbhar Bharat.

Proposal

The MRC and M/S NirDhwani Technology Pvt Ltd (NDT) in collaboration with the Indo-Swiss Center of Excellence (ISCE), Pune, is hosting a high-level dialogue titled “*Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework for Strategic Security Architecture and AtmaNirbharta*”. The event will bring senior decision makers in the strategic security establishment and the supporting organizations, to discuss the challenges and formulate way forward. The following issues will be discussed:

- (a) Emerging underwater threat both in the marine and freshwater systems. Policy & technology interventions required to manage the challenges.
- (b) Capacity & capability building requirement for managing the underwater threats across the multiple dimensions.
- (c) User-Academia-Industry partnership to ensure effective capacity & capability building framework.
- (d) AtmaNirbharta and the Start-up Ecosystem. How to manage innovation in a new domain.
- (e) Indigenous Research & Development (R&D) with appropriate balance between traditional knowledge and modern Science & Technology (S&T) tools.
- (f) UDA framework and the SAGAR Vision – New Way forward.

A detailed report will be generated with actionable inputs and timeline for implementation with clear identification of roles & responsibilities.

Strategic Advisory Board

Lt Gen D B Shekatkar (Retd)	-	Chairman Shekatkar Committee
Amb Anup Mudgal	-	Former Diplomat
Dr. Ajay Kumar, IAS	-	Former Defence Secretary
Shri Amitabh Kumar, IRS	-	Former DG Shipping
Vice Admiral DSP Varma (Retd)	-	Former DG Strategic Submarine Project
Vice Admiral A R Karve (Retd)	-	Former C-in-C Southern Naval Command
Shri Mukesh Malhotra	-	Chairman ISCE
Shri Praful Talera	-	MRC Adviser on Blue Economy

Program

The detailed program is as follows:

Day - 1

<i>0930 hrs</i>	-	<i>Inaugural Event</i>
<i>1130 hrs</i>	-	<i>High Tea and Chief Guest Departs</i>
<i>1200 hrs</i>	-	<i>Plenary Session – 1</i> <i>UDA Framework</i>
<i>1300 hrs</i>	-	<i>Networking Lunch</i>
<i>1400 hrs</i>	-	<i>Panel Discussion - 1</i> <i>Strategic Security Challenges</i>
<i>1530 hrs</i>	-	<i>Tea Break</i>
<i>1600 hrs</i>	-	<i>Project Presentations by MRC Fellows</i>
<i>1730 hrs</i>	-	<i>Close of Day - 1</i>

Day - 2

0930 hrs	-	Plenary Session – 2 Geostrategic Realities
1100 hrs	-	High Tea
1130 hrs	-	Panel Discussion – 2 Indo-Pacific and the New Global Order
1300 hrs	-	Networking Lunch
1400 hrs	-	Panel Discussion - 3 Trans-boundary Rivers and Security
1530 hrs	-	Tea Break
1600 hrs	-	Project Presentations by MRC Fellows
1730 hrs	-	Close of Day - 2

Day - 3

0930 hrs	-	Plenary Session – 3 Maritime Trade and Terrorism
1100 hrs	-	High Tea
1130 hrs	-	Panel Discussion – 4 Blue Economy and Maritime Terrorism
1300 hrs	-	Networking Lunch
1400 hrs	-	Panel Discussion - 5 Inland Water Transport & Navigability
1530 hrs	-	Tea Break
1600 hrs	-	Project Presentations by MRC Fellows
1730 hrs	-	Close of Day - 3

Day - 4

0930 hrs	-	Plenary Session – 4 Freshwater Systems & Strategic Security
1100 hrs	-	High Tea
1130 hrs	-	Panel Discussion – 6 Transboundary Rivers & Security
1300 hrs	-	Networking Lunch
1400 hrs	-	Panel Discussion - 7 Innovation & AtmaNirbharta
1530 hrs	-	Tea Break
1600 hrs	-	Project Presentations by MRC Fellows
1730 hrs	-	Close of Day - 4

Day - 5

0930 hrs	-	Plenary Session – 5 Traditional Knowledge & Water Security
1100 hrs	-	High Tea
1130 hrs	-	Panel Discussion – 8 Indigenization & Challenges
1300 hrs	-	Networking Lunch

1400 hrs	-	Panel Discussion - 9
		Role of Start-ups in Strategic Security
1530 hrs	-	Tea Break
1600 hrs	-	Valedictory Session
1730 hrs	-	Close of Day – 4

Convenor

Dr.(Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director MRC, will be the convenor of the event.
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Registration Fee

Each participant will pay a registration fee of Rs. 20,000/- inclusive of taxes, that will include lunch and refreshments. Delegate kit comprising of reading material and stationery will also be provided. Delegates will make their own arrangement for stay and travel.

Registration may kindly be done before 15 April 2024. Nominated personnel may directly contact the convenor for more details.