

Flexing the Maritime Muscle

Indian Navy in multiple joint exercises

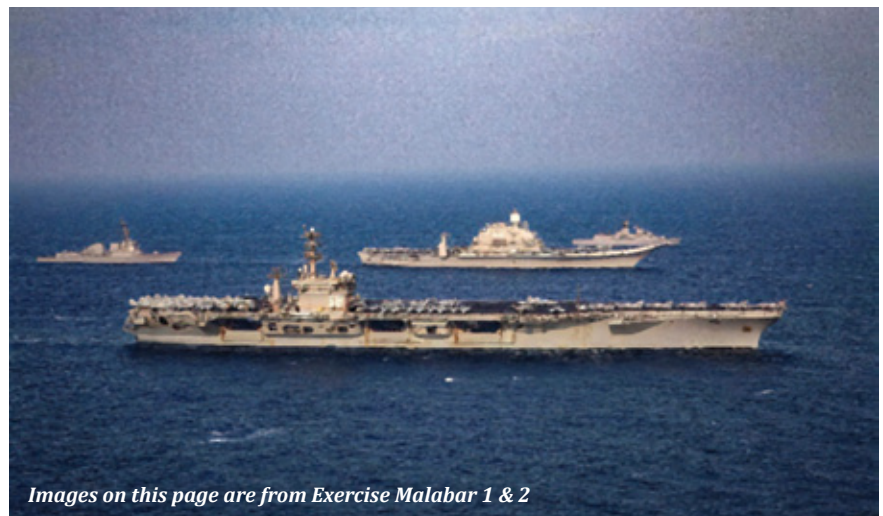
Exercising with 'friendly' maritime forces is not new to the Indian Navy, but in context of the ongoing face off with the Chinese in the high Himalayas, the series of naval exercises involving both the Eastern and Western Fleets for over two months from September 2020 is surely indicative of the resolve to strengthen India's maritime muscle. That China has taken serious note is clear from this Communist nations objection to what it terms as creation of an "Asian NATO".

India's clear message to China is that the maritime option will be exercised, if necessary, and is exemplified by Australia's participation in the annual naval exercises alongside the US and Japan. This has taken sometime since 2007 when the Indian Navy first invited maritime forces of Japan, Singapore and Australia to join its annual bilateral *Malabar* naval exercises with the United States. Surely having more 'friendly' Navies take part was logical in the geopolitical context of the present

times, even though much time has passed since those initial Bay of Bengal Exercises. Meanwhile, the Chinese Navy has since grown exponentially and has acquired bases not only in Pakistan (both Karachi and Gwadar) but at Djibouti in the Horn of

Africa while there is speculation about an arrangement with Iran which would have PLAN units positioned near the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

But back to the Indian Navy and its recent joint exercises.



Images on this page are from Exercise Malabar 1 & 2