

# Rise of Asian naval might

## The race for aircraft carrier-type platforms



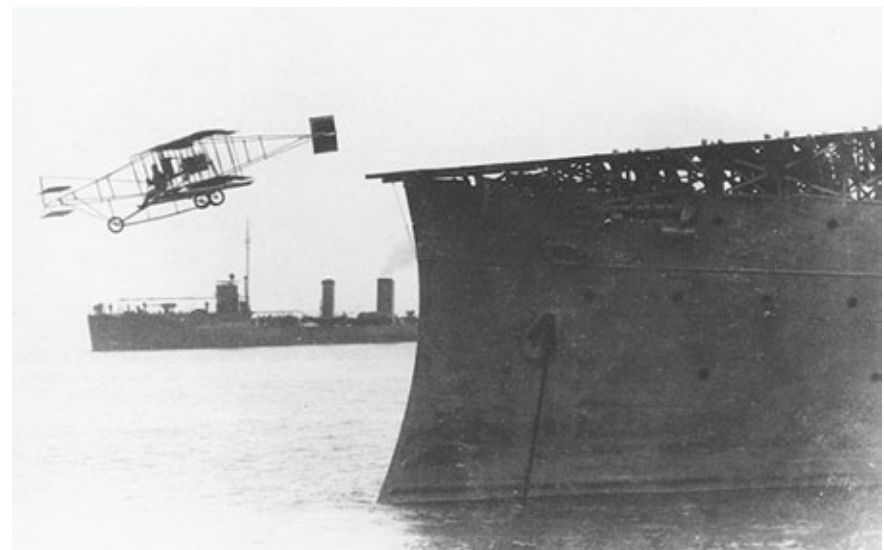
*On the deck of Indian Navy's INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier (Photo: Vayu)*

If one is asked to name the most fascinating warship of the twenty-first century, there is a big chance that one may name an aircraft carrier and that too most probably influenced by high definition aesthetic photos released over time by the US Navy. A 100,000 tonne floating behemoth is often considered a symbol of American diplomacy. Currently there are six navies around the world operating aircraft carriers and some more intend to join the club in near future. For almost eight decades the technology was limited to only US and Europe with India being the only example out of the NATO league to have the experience in operating carriers for more than six decades. But recently, many Asian nations have adopted high end modernisation programmes for their navies which will throw challenges against traditional carrier powers and may shift the balance of naval might.

14 November 1910 marked the beginning of a new era when a US Navy pilot Eugene Ely made a successful flight from the deck of US Navy cruiser USS

Birmingham. Till then only hot air balloons were used to launch as an offensive weapon from a warship. The next year he became the first pilot also to land an aircraft, thus

making a history in naval aviation history. Unfortunately, he didn't survive long to see fascinating and rapid progress of what he had pioneered.



*Eugene Ely makes the first airplane takeoff from a warship in a Curtiss pusher airplane from the cruiser USS Birmingham at Hampton Roads, VA, USA. (Photo: airandspace.si.edu)*