

Reflections on India's Vikrant-centric Carrier Battle Group by

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INS Vikrant (IAC-I). Photo: Indian Navy

The successful completion of the five-day sea trials (from 4 to 8 August 2021) of the long-delayed indigenous aircraft carrier, the new Vikrant, is a seminal event and one that has been justifiably met with elation and a palpable sense of maritime pride.¹ “Maritime” is quite clearly the prevailing geopolitical flavour. On the very next day (9 August 2021) Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, personally chaired a High Level Open Debate at the UN Security Council, on the theme “Enhancing Maritime Security:

A case for International Cooperation”, emphatically bringing “Maritime India” to the front and centre of the global maritime discourse and dominating India’s eighth rotational membership of this apex intergovernmental organisation.² The additional fact that this demonstration of Indian naval capacity and capability has been made in the Swarnim Vijay Varsh commemorating the 50th anniversary of the victory of Indian arms against Pakistan in the 1971 conflict that resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, and, given that it has

been almost in tandem with India’s record medal haul in the Tokyo Olympics (23 July to 8 August 2021), the voyage of the Vikrant has certainly added to the series of adrenaline spikes and generated a palpable surge of nationalistic pride. It is clear from the available evidence that India is rising — peacefully, responsibly, and with impressive rapidity, even in these pandemic-afflicted times. It is particularly germane to assert that this rise is occurring in an increasingly interconnected world — even if is not entirely a ‘globalised’ one — and that it is

¹ Asian News International (ANI), “Indeed a Historic Moment for India, says Vice Admiral AK Chawla on IAC Vikrant’s Successful Maiden Sea Voyage”, 09 August 2021, <https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/indeed-a-historic-moment-for-india-says-vice-admiral-ak-chawla-on-iac-vikrants-successful-maiden-sea-voyage20210809063905/>

² Geeta Mohan, “UNCLOS ‘Laws of the Seas’ at heart of UN Security Council Consensus, China on board”, India Today (online), New Delhi, 10 August 2021, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/unclos-law-of-sea-un-security-council-maritime-security-open-debate-india-presidency-1838903-2021-08-10>