

India-Philippines Maritime Dialogue 2025

A New Perspective Based on the Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework- 26th February 2025

Background

India and the Philippines share a long history of diplomatic relations, dating back to 1949 when India established its diplomatic mission in Manila. Over the years, both nations have strengthened their engagement in trade, culture, and defence, significantly focusing on maritime security due to their strategic locations in the Indo-Pacific region. Recent developments have further deepened this relationship. In April 2024, India delivered BrahMos cruise missiles to the Philippine Navy, marking a significant step in defence cooperation. This partnership was further reinforced through the Inaugural India-Philippines Maritime Dialogue held in Manila on December 13, 2024, aimed at enhancing cooperation in maritime security, promoting adherence to the rules-based order, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and discussing areas of collaboration such as Maritime Industry, Marine Scientific Research, Ocean Economy, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Navy and Coast Guard cooperation, and maritime law enforcement.

During the 5th meeting of the Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (2023), both sides emphasised enhancing defence cooperation, particularly in maritime security. Both Ministers underscored the importance of maritime domain awareness (MDA) and the operationalisation of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the White Shipping Agreement (Information Network Protocol) between the Indian Navy (IN) and the Philippines Coast Guard (PCG). They also explored expanding collaboration in cyber security, artificial intelligence, space cooperation, and anti-terrorism measures. The Ministers engaged in wide-ranging discussions on regional and international issues, particularly China's growing assertiveness and territorial claims in the South China Sea, emphasising peaceful dispute resolution and adherence to international law (UNCLOS), including the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea.

India is focusing on maritime-security cooperation with ASEAN and Southeast Asian states, vocally supporting their territorial claims in the South China Sea to counter China's regional influence and protect its freedom of navigation. Over 55% of India's trade passes through the South China Sea and Malacca Strait, making this a key priority for New Delhi. Additionally, India seeks to prevent China from setting precedents that could affect the Indian Ocean, where Beijing could become more assertive in its dealings with India and its neighbours.

An increase in strategic dialogues has also bolstered defence cooperation, with the India-Philippines Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) established under the MoU on Defence Cooperation signed in 2006. In September 2024, the JDCC was elevated to the secretary level, reflecting the growing defence relationship. Since 2006, India and the Philippines have conducted joint naval exercises whenever Indian ships make a port visit to the Philippines. In 2019, India participated in a "group sail" in the South China Sea involving the Filipino, U.S., and Japanese navies, and in 2023, India and ASEAN held their first-ever military exercise, including the Philippines. In 2022, the Philippines became the first country to purchase the Brahmos supersonic cruise missiles developed by India and Russia, which were delivered in April 2024. In November 2023, India offered seven helicopters to the Philippines Coast Guard, enhancing its humanitarian and security capabilities. In March 2024, the Philippines launched its Comprehensive Archipelagic Defence Concept (CADC) to protect its territorial waters and exclusive

economic zone (EEZ), aiming to deter Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea. Both India and the Philippines stand to benefit from exploiting their complementarities. Capacity building of the Philippines' armed forces will enhance India's credibility as a reliable defence partner in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, the Philippines' ambitious military modernisation program presents a lucrative opportunity for the Indian defence industry to boost defence exports.

Significance of Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) and its Framework

The UDA framework proposed by the Maritime Research Center (MRC) encourages the pooling of resources and synergising of efforts by the stakeholders and the nations in the IOR and beyond. The UDA framework will ensure digital transformation to optimally deal with the tropical challenges & opportunities, particularly for the Global South with limited resources and competing socio-economic priorities. An integrated framework with five pillars, including research, innovation, skilling, knowledge and policy to ensure nuanced transformation. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) could prioritise the UDA framework and work towards capacity & capability building to ensure safe, secure, sustainable growth for all in the IOR. The IOR regional partnership has an opportunity to consider a holistic UDA framework to encourage pooling of resources & synergising of efforts. The digital transformation could be a game changer, allowing optimal resource deployment for a larger strategic objective. India could be a formidable partner given its talent pool of young and aspirational human resources. Local site-specific field experimental R&D will be critical. More about the UDA framework is available at <https://udafoundation.in/>.

Proposal

The Maritime Research Center (MRC) and NirDhwani Technology (NDT) hosted a webinar entitled '**India-Philippines Maritime Dialogue—A New Perspective Based on the Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework**' on 26 February 2025 from 3:30 PM IST onwards. This webinar intended to strengthen India-Philippines cooperation by providing a technology-driven decision-making framework based on Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA). MRC and NDT can contribute to capacity building through e-learning modules and skilling programs for maritime professionals while facilitating stakeholder engagement for government and non-government entities in India and the Philippines. Additionally, they implement digital coastal empowerment strategies to support ocean-dependent communities, ensuring sustainable maritime security and economic development.

This webinar served as a timely initiative to advance India-Philippines cooperation in maritime security and sustainable ocean governance. Given the geopolitical dynamics of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, both countries must collaborate on knowledge-sharing, capacity building, and strategic policy-making. The event created a platform for experts from India and the Philippines to discuss mutual concerns and explore joint opportunities in UDA, maritime security, and community empowerment.

The program line-up was as follows:

Time	Speaker
4:00 PM- 4:10 PM	Ms J Cathrine , Research Head, Maritime Research Center, Pune – Overview of the webinar and objectives and Introductory Remarks.
4:10 PM- 4:25 PM	Dr (Cdr) Arnab Das , Founder & Director, Maritime Research Center, Pune—

	Underwater Domain Awareness and its relevance for India-Philippines relations.
4:25 PM- 4:35 PM	Mr. Shridhar Prabhuraman , Deputy Director, Maritime Research Center– UDA Technologies – Challenges and Opportunities
4:35 PM- 4:55 PM	Prof. Mimi Fabe , National Police College, Philippines– India-Philippines Relations.
6:00 PM-6:10 PM	Ms. Joan Andrea Toledo , National Police College, Philippines– Ocean-Dependent Communities & Maritime Security.
6:15 PM-6:25 PM	Dr. Shabana Barua , Associate Professor and Director, NKCSEAS at Jindal School of International Affairs, Sonipat– Strategic Cooperation & Policy Perspectives.
6:30 PM-6:40 PM	Dr Shishir Shrotriya , Center for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi– India’s Blue Economy and Regional Engagement.
6:45 PM-6:55 PM	Vice Admiral M P Muralidharan (Retd) , AVSM & Bar, NM, Former DG Indian Coast Guard– Concluding remarks.

[Videos of our speakers](#)

Please find below the video presentations/keynote addresses by our speaker:

1. **Dr. Cdr Arnab Das**, Founder and Director, Maritime Research Center, India- [Video here](#)
2. **Mr Shridhar Prabhuraman**, Deputy Director, Maritime Research Center, India- [Video here](#)
3. **Prof. Mimi Fabe**, National Police College, Philippines- [Video here](#)
4. **Ms. Joan Andrea Toledo**, National Police College, Philippines- [Video here](#)
5. **Dr. Shabana Barua**, Associate Professor and Director, NKCSEAS at Jindal School of International Affairs, Sonipat- [Video here](#)
6. **Dr Shishir Shrotriya**, Center for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delh- [Video here](#)
7. **Vice Admiral M P Muralidharan (Retd)**, AVSM & Bar, NM, Former DG Indian Coast Guard- [Video here](#)