

Committed To Defence And Security Worldwide

www.dsalert.org | info@dsalert.org

DEFENCE & SECURITY ALERT

SAARC COUNTRIES: US \$25

Rest of the World: US \$30 | INDIA ₹150

The First and Only ISO 9001:2015 Certified Defence and Security Magazine in India

The Only Magazine Available On The Intranet Of Indian Air Force

MARCH 2024

VOLUME 15 | ISSUE 06

GALATHEA GATEWAY INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER TRANSHIPMENT PORT



Campbell Bay National Park

Township and Area Development

GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND

Campbell Bay

Joginder Nagar

Power Plant

International Airport

International Container Transshipment Terminal

Galathea Bay

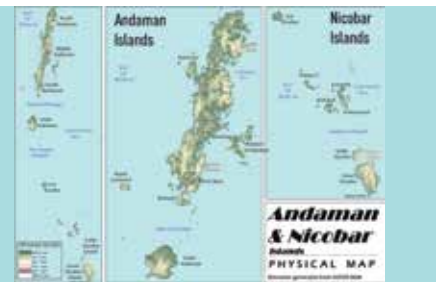
Indira Point



THE FIRST CHOICE IN THE DOMAINS OF DEFENCE, SECURITY AND WORLD AFFAIRS WORLDWIDE

14 YEARS OF STRATEGIC SAGA





FROM OUTPOST TO SPRINGBOARD

VICE ADMIRAL (RETD) VIJAY SHANKAR, PVSM, AVSM

04

GEOSTRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ARCHIPELAGO

NEERAJ SINGH MANHAS
AKRITI SHARMA

12

SEAS OF OPPORTUNITY: GALATHEA GATEWAY - INDIA'S STRATEGIC INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER TRANSSHIPMENT PORT IN GREAT NICOBAR

ANKIT KUMAR

20

CHARTING INDIA'S MARITIME FUTURE: THE AMBITIOUS GALATHEA BAY PORT PROJECT

SREOSHI SINHA

26

WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES: OPTIMISATION PATHWAY

BRIG DR ANIL SHARMA (RETD)

30

WOMEN IN INDIAN DEFENCE: BREAKING BARRIERS, SHAPING THE FUTURE

CHANDER SHEKHAR

38

HYPERSONIC MISSILE PROPULSION OPTIONS

SUMAN SHARMA

42

FROM OUTPOST TO SPRINGBOARD

The text provides a detailed exploration of the historical context, strategic significance, and development challenges of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, emphasizing their pivotal role in India's security and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Determinants of Security and Development

In his opening address to the Seminar on “Security and Development of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands” held at Port Blair under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command on 04 – 05 September 2009, the then Commander-in-Chief of the Islands, flagged four annotative perspectives for the assembly. Counselling that Security and Development were two sides of the same coin, he stated “We are aware that thus far the outlook of successive governments towards these Islands has been that of an Outpost, this to me is a strategic flaw. Rather we need to convert the Outpost to a Springboard for not just our economic but also for security aspirations” for indeed, “development without security makes the former vulnerable while security sans development is vacuous”. The second perspective was the persistent mismatch between the nation’s very obvious potential versus delivered reality. The third and fourth standpoints related directly or obliquely to the challenge posed by China’s Indo-Pacific game plan, namely,





VICE ADMIRAL (RETD) VIJAY SHANKAR, PVSM, AVSM

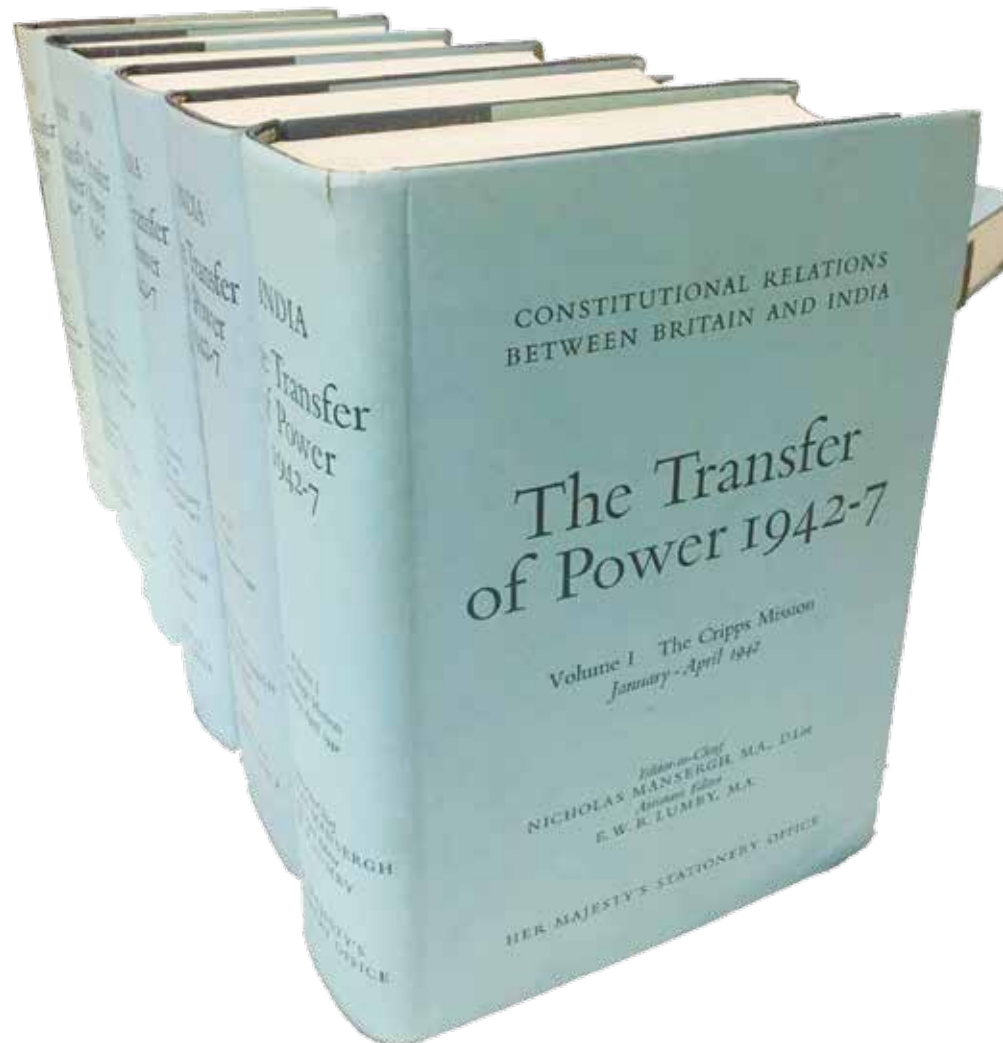
The author holds an MSc in Defence Studies and is a graduate of the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, USA; the Naval Higher Command Course, Karanja and the Defence Services Staff College. He is the former Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman & Nicobar Command, Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Forces Command and Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet. His command and operational experience are comprehensive and include Command of INS Viraat, the aircraft carrier; he saw active service during the 1971 War against Pakistan, Op Pawan, the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka and Op Vijay operations to vacate the Kargil intrusion. He is the recipient of two Presidential awards: The Param Vishisht Seva Medal and the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal.

it’s “Island Chain” and “String of Pearls” strategies while all the time promoting “small groups with disproportionate powers to subvert and sabotage”.

A Quirk of History

Edward Penderel Moon, a former Indian Civil Service administrator in colonial India, wrote a book on the Partition of India titled “Divide and Quit” much of its contents were gleaned from a document put together under the patronage of the British India Office and edited by Moon. It was labelled ‘India: The Transfer of Power 1942-47’ and was published in 11 Volumes. Of particular interest are the confabulations of the British Cabinet, the imperial Chiefs of Staff Committee, Cripps Mission of 1946 tasked with the transfer of power and the concomitant “Mountbatten Plan” of 1947 that outlined the Partition of India.

Amongst the many tangled, artful, and often contentious issues associated with decisions leading to Partition was the fate of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Possession of the Isles had, through the Second World War, changed hands between the British and



Constitutional Relations Between Britain & India. The Transfer Of Power – 12 volume set.



British Indian Ocean Territories (BIOT).

the Japanese. And yet, at no time had Whitehall lost sight of the geo strategic value of the Islands. In July of 1946, the British Chiefs of Staff in India declared that “India was so internally rife with divisions that the Transfer of Power would, inevitably, lead to the intercession of the Soviets” in their quest for ‘Warm Water Access’ (ala Czar Peter!) This became a fundamental assumption for a grand strategic appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

The Committee argued that at stake were the lines of communication between Great Britain and its Imperial interests in the Far East. While the British Indian Ocean Territories (BIOT) provided stepping stones that spanned half the Indian

Amongst the **many tangled, artful, and often contentious issues** associated with **decisions leading to Partition** was the fate of the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands.**

Ocean, there was an unbridgeable gap to Malaya and further East to Australia and the other possessions. They ruled that Partition would breach the grand global network of maritime communications, which in time would lead to the collapse of Imperial Control. The Committee

came to the conclusion that should the ‘Transfer of Power’ occur and strategic basing and logistics denied in mainland India, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands provided the only alternative. This became the case for decoupling the Islands from the transfer of power.



From left, Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru, Vice President of India's Interim Government, Earl Mountbatten, Viceroy of India and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, President of the Muslim League discuss Britain's plan for India at the historic India Conference in New Delhi, 02 June 1947.

Whitehall was quick to endorse this appreciation. The Secretary for Defence Mr Alexander and the Imperial Chiefs of Staff Committee exhorted the Government to retain sovereignty of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. As a result of these urges the draft of the 'Indian Independence Bill', which made its appearance in May 1947, simply contained no reference to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands when the document came to the section on transfer of territories. The matter was leaked to the Press (source of the leak was never quite established) which on 11 June 1947 took note of the glaring omission and warned of the glaring omission and warned of the Bill's imminent rejection. Mountbatten, now the Viceroy, unyieldingly cautioned London of the country-wide uncontrollable and violent ramifications of such a move.

The Cabinet, on 17 June 1947, uneasy at the already simmering reaction to Partition on mainland India, decided eventually not

to progress the proposal despite the vigorous protestations of Mr Alexander, the 'grave anxiety' of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the rather dilatory and specious claim by Jinnah on the Islands based on the vulnerability of the sea line of communication between East and West Pakistan.

Britain as late as 05 July 1947 could have adamantly persisted with their original decision; the Imperial Chiefs of Staff could have dug in their heels and the Cabinet could have mulishly bulldozed their verdict, but they did not through a sheer quirk of history. They had, most unexpectedly, blanched at the thought of further exasperating the very delicate nature of the Partition award and ceded the transfer of the Island territories of Andaman and Nicobar to India.

The 'Mummified' Outpost

An outpost, in the military lexicon, is a far flung remote station located on or near a nation's frontier that

is lightly garrisoned for purposes of providing a surveillance post, an armed perimeter or a 'trip-wire' to raise the alarm of hostile or uncharacteristic activity. During the years post-independence, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands despite its location, decidedly, did not serve India as a military outpost. On the contrary the local administration and the Central Government in their policy making and implementation were more concerned with "mummifying" its environment, which in a way was a policy of doing very little.

The author in 1973 commanded an inshore patrol vessel INS Panaji (ex-Soviet Poluchat Class, commissioned In 1967) based at Port Blair. She was one of three of class that were notionally deployed for coastal defence. However rarely was there an occasion when even two were available at a time. Port facilities were restricted to a rickety commercial wharf (equipped with

steam cranes) on Chatham Island which was also home to a 19th century colonial saw mill and the Western India Match Company's pulp factory. The Haddo Wharf (concrete on piles) was still under construction. No other port in the Islands had any significant infrastructure. Inter-island passenger movement was primarily by small ferries restricted to the fair weather season. Practically all logistics would come from the mainland on a monthly basis. Road infrastructure was restricted to the South Andaman much of which had been built by the Japanese during their occupation 1942-45; other inhabited islands (37 of 572) had rudimentary roads, very few of which were black-topped. Two airfields existed, one at Port Blair and the Air force base at Car Nicobar. Port Blair would handle a weekly commercial flight from the mainland in the fair weather season while the Air Force had a fortnightly courier. There were no commercial refrigeration plants and power outages were common. In short there

was no industry, no commerce, poor connectivity, very basic post and telecom facilities, little security and even less development.

Life ashore in 1973 was about survival and continuance. Sunken ships, listing derelict trawlers impounded in some distant past moored as flotsam and hulks of shipwrecks strewn across Phoenix Bay and Ranger Flat in Port Blair were reminiscent of some cast-off colonial roadstead out of the pages of a Conrad or Maugham novel! There were very few public utilities and most of the buildings and offices were log tenements sorely in need of repair. Evenings were spent at the Colonial Andaman Club where stories were traded of the wild beauty of the islands and escapades involving the indigenous tribes, while the billiards marker cum bartender, the timeworn 'Sher Khan', a shrivelled Pathan who had been incarcerated for serial honour killings, wafted silently in the shadows.

Formulation of a Strategy for Security and Development

Through the years of the Island Development Authority (1985) and the Look East Policy (1991 aimed to foster political, economic and security co-operation with ASEAN nations) there was inappreciable growth or progress to suggest a cohesive and long term blueprint for the transformation of the Islands to a strategic economic and security asset, it remained about continuance and a contrary posture towards change.

The Security and Development Seminar of September 2009 (the former President Kalam and other national luminaries in attendance) was rounded off by a strategy statement. This Declaration (moved to the PM's office by the Special Secretary to the PM, himself a participant) was keenly sensitive to the demands of three overarching considerations. First, interests and vulnerabilities of indigenous communities; second, climate change; and lastly the safeguard and conservation of



Haddo wharf harbour in Andaman.



International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP) at Galathea Bay, Great Nicobar Island.

the fragile ecology of the Islands. The approach was for building infrastructure through a combination of government investment, private entrepreneurship and establishment supervision. The sectors to be targeted were: eco-tourism, education, maritime and fishing industries, infrastructure development and security enhancements. The last included three dimensional surveillance; precision strike capabilities; intelligence sharing; capacity building for amphibious power projection in the Far East and failsafe cyber security. While each of these sectors became a subject of much greater study and discrete implementation, it is the matter of “the one big ticket project” central to the ‘strategy statement’ that will engage the remaining part of our scrutiny.

Container Trans-shipment Port at Galathea Bay

Great Nicobar is the southernmost and largest of the Nicobar group of islands. The land area covers 1044

What makes **Galathea Bay** strategically significant is its location, **proximity** to the one of the **busiest shipping lanes** in the world and the **nature of harbourage** it can potentially provide.

sq.km but is scantily populated. The terrain is undulating and covered by rainforest and is known for its diverse wildlife. The island has four significant rivers whose course conforms to the orientation of the main range that slopes from North to South. Mount Thullier in the North is the highest peak in the Nicobar group, altitude 642 metres. The Island is home to the Great Nicobar Biosphere, Campbell Bay National Park, Galathea National Wildlife Sanctuary and Megapode Island Sanctuary. The non-Biosphere

portions of the island are utilised for agriculture, forestry and settlements and are confined to the south-western and south-eastern coastal reaches. Galathea River originates in the central region of the island and runs 25 kms southward till it drains into the Bay that carries its name. Indira Point, at the western extremity of the Bay defines the southernmost geographic point of India. The Bay is about 8 kilometres in extent in the South-North direction and 5 kms at its mouth. The Bay has navigable soundings

(depths) in excess of 21 metres and is naturally protected from the south-westerly as well as the north-easterly monsoon winds that affect the region.

What makes Galathea Bay strategically significant is its location, proximity to the one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world and the nature of harbourage it can potentially provide. It is situated within 60 nautical miles (nm) from the approaches to the Malacca Straits and 40nm north of the 6 degree Channel, one of the densest shipping arteries in the world. The Channel connects the shipping routes emanating from the Persian Gulf the Red Sea and around the Cape of Good Hope transiting via the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to the Malacca Straits and on to the South China Sea and Western Pacific Ocean. This narrow and vulnerable Waterway is crucial to the flow of global energy and trade, and is strategically and

commercially significant for more than a third of humanity. It is also the shortest sea route between the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean and over one-third shorter than the closest alternative sea-based route. It also accounts for 60% of global trade. In 2021 on an average over 200 hulls passed every day through the 6 Degree Channel. The average per day composition was 44 tankers, 6 Very Large Container Ships/Ultra Large Container Vessels (VLCS/ULCV), 60 cargo ships, 86 passenger ships and 4 support ships.

Hitherto, containers bound for India and exported out embarked on-board VLCS/ULCVs had to be transhipped to Colombo, Singapore or Klang since no container terminal in India can handle VLCS/ULCV of draught in excess of 17 feet. Currently, these very ports outside India handle roughly 75% of the transhipped cargo from India. More than 85% of this cargo is handled at Colombo, Singapore, and Port

Klang, with 45% of it handled at the Colombo Port. The transit and turn around at the 'Relay-Port' adds substantial costs to the tune of \$500 to \$1000 per Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit (TEU load 28 tons) standard container. Relay-Port turn around tariffs and other services further hike-up costs.

From the economic perspective, construction of Galathea Bay Port is expected to provide savings, foreign direct investment, higher economic activity at other Indian ports, improved logistical infrastructure, job creation, and increased revenue share. Handling transshipment goods from all the nearby ports, including domestic ones, are expected to make the Port a significant hub for Asia-African and Asia-US/European container traffic.

The Geopolitical Impact

The term 'geopolitics' has historically been employed in reference to a nation's interests and stratagems adopted to secure them. This understanding is subjective; for it does not account for the full significance of the term and even bears negative connotations. In the run-up to the Second World War, both Germany and Japan's expansionist policies were justified using the 'geopolitical' argument garbed in bizarre concepts of Lebensraum and the Greater East Co-prosperity Sphere and today it is China with its unrelenting strategic urge towards "Rejuvenation". The study of the relationship between a nation's geography and its politics and how the former is leveraged to advance its national interests diplomatically is a far more elegant understanding of the term.

However, the reality of the international system is the place that power enjoys in the scheme of assuring stability in relations between nations. Uncertainty in



The Allied Reoccupation of the Andaman Islands, 1945. Vice Admiral Tiezo Hara signs the document confirming the formal surrender of Japanese forces in the Andaman Islands. The ceremony took place at 10 am on the Gymkhana Sports Ground, Port Blair.



The quadrilateral security dialogue **(QUAD)**, the **Australia-UK-US alliance** and **Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific** aim at maintaining prosperity, security and order in the **Indo-Pacific**.

leading democracies of the world converge on many aspects in the Indo-Pacific. At its core lies maritime security. India's Act East Policy, in addition to having economic, cultural and commercial goals, includes strategic interests. The quadrilateral security dialogue (QUAD), the Australia-UK-US alliance and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific aim at maintaining prosperity, security and order in the Indo-Pacific.

relations queers the pitch, in view of the forces that can disrupt the status quo. In the absence of a security oriented cooperative impulse, the problem with competitive and often combative national interests is blindness to recognize that, we are in fact dealing with diverse regions, fast depleting resources and sea spaces that are the busiest of all the "vast commons". The

reluctance for collaboration on mutually acceptable terms makes the potential for friction high and the only consideration that could bring about change is the ability to attain a strategic posture that serves to deter, stabilise and preserve.

The Spring Board as a Conclusion

Strategic interests of India and

The large scale advancement of security measures in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and development of Galathea Bay as a major hub for the management of container traffic, and indeed, strategic control; is a signal to China that attempts to side-line the existing rules based order and dislocate the status-quo will have consequences. **DSA**