



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES  
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

# Strategic Digest

Vol. 2 | No. 3 | 24 February 2020

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## Qatar is Acquiring Submarines



**A Type-212 Todaro-class submarine**

Source: <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/02/09/618236/Qatar-submarine-Persian-Gulf>

Qatar has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Italian firm *Fincantieri* to acquire submarines, making it possibly the first-ever Arabian state to operate this naval platform. *Fincantieri* is Europe's largest shipbuilding company. The submarines that Qatar is acquiring are likely to be based on the Type 212 – developed by *Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft AG* (HDW) for the German and Italian navies.

Qatar's acquisition of submarines is reported to be part of a much larger EUR 5 billion deal with *Fincantieri* signed in 2017. The larger deal includes a Landing Platform Dock (LPD) that can carry helicopters, four warships and two patrol boats as well as shore support and help with a new offshore naval base.



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With Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) also contemplating the acquisition of submarines, a mini naval race appears to be afoot in the Persian Gulf. The Qatari Emiri Navy presently consists of fast attack craft and patrol boats that are ostensibly being used for protecting territorial waters and offshore oil rigs. The UAE Navy is almost the same size as its Qatari counterpart and operates modern corvettes and patrol boats. The Royal Saudi Navy is, however, almost 10 times the size of its Qatari counterpart, with modern frigates, large patrol boats and a relatively large aviation arm. Qatar has testy relations with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt. It is not only building up its military capabilities but is also forging close defence ties with Turkey.

### Oman under the New Sultan



Source: [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)

On 10 January 2020, Sultan Qaboos— a close friend of India — passed away after ruling Oman for nearly five decades. He was succeeded by his 65-year-old cousin Haitham bin Tariq al-Said.

Sultan Qaboos was a close friend of India. He is reported to have granted citizenship to at least a thousand Hindus and took personal care of two temples in Oman. During his official visit to Oman in 2018, Prime Minister Modi

visited a 250-year-old Shiv temple in the country. Qaboos had also provided the Indian Navy access to the strategic Duqm port, about 550 km south of Muscat. The Port of Duqm Special Economic Zone, earmarked to be the Indian Ocean's largest deep-sea port, is the site for an Indo-Oman joint venture, Sebacic Oman — a USD 1.2 billion project to set up the largest sebacic acid plant in the Middle East. Another agreement to develop Little India, an integrated tourism complex project in Duqm worth USD 748 million, has been signed between the two countries. India has become the second largest (after China) importer of oil from Oman, and Indian Oil Corporation has acquired a 17 per cent stake in Royal Dutch Shell's Mukhaizna oilfield for USD 329 million. Oman is also a potential partner for augmenting India's Strategic Oil Reserves.

### Erdogan Visit Consolidates the Pakistan-Turkey Enduring Partnership

Lack of support for its anti-India agenda from patron Saudi Arabia is prompting Pakistan to cultivate deeper ties with Turkey, which has aspirations for a leadership role in the Islamic world. Turkey, under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has repeatedly supported Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, including during his two-day visit to Pakistan on 13-14 February. Turkey and Malaysia were the only countries to support Pakistan in the context of the listing by the Financial Action Task Force.



Source: <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-s-president-erdogan-arrives-in-pakistan-on-two-day-official-visit-33766>

Erdoğan and Imran Khan co-chaired the sixth session of their bilateral High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council and decided to establish two new Joint Working Groups including one on Defence Industry. Pakistan and Turkey have agreed to deepen and broaden cooperation through defence purchases and cooperative research, development and production ventures. Other areas of envisaged cooperation are law enforcement, counter-terrorism, cyber-terrorism and cyber-crime.

### Imran Khan Visit Deepens the Pakistan-Malaysia Strategic Partnership

After cancelling his participation in the December 2019 Kuala Lumpur Summit of Muslim countries at the very last minute under Saudi pressure, Imran Khan undertook his



Source: [www.dawn.com](http://www.dawn.com)

second prime ministerial visit to Malaysia in early February. His first visit took place in November 2018, months after being elected as Prime Minister, during which Pakistan and Malaysia established a bilateral consultation mechanism between senior foreign ministry officials to intensify engagement. At the first round of these consultations in February 2019, the two sides also discussed bilateral defence cooperation.

Mahathir Mohamad's reciprocal visit to Pakistan in March 2019 saw the elevation of bilateral ties to a strategic partnership. The Malaysian Prime Minister received Pakistan's highest civilian honour, the *Nishan-e-Pakistan*.

Among the significant bilateral outcomes of Khan's February 2020 visit was the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation. In a further sign of Malaysian meddling in the Kashmir issue, the Joint Statement, in contrast to those issued during the previous two Imran Khan-Mahathir Mohamad meetings in 2018 and 2019, clubbed the Jammu and Kashmir issue with the Palestine and Rohingya issues and called for a settlement in accordance with relevant UN Resolutions.

## Problems in Myanmar's Civil-Military Relations

The complex and complicated relationship between the Tatmadaw (Myanmar armed forces) and the government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) is facing problems in the wake of Parliament's Joint Committee on Constitutional Amendment submitting two bills to amend the 2008 Constitution that would reduce the number of military officers in the house. At present, 25 per cent of seats in parliament, 110 out of 440, are reserved for the Myanmar military, and the Commander-in-Chief handpicks officers to serve as the military members of parliament (MPs).



Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/parliament-forms-committee-study-charter-amendment-bills.html>

While the NLD is expected to use this as a campaign promise in the upcoming elections, the Tatmadaw is likely to reject the proposed legislation. Myanmar slipping back from democratic processes and progress would have unwelcome geopolitical consequences. The country's relationship with the West is already under strain on the Rohingya issue, and it may reach breaking point if the Tatmadaw were to initiate any drastic measure in the internal political set-up. Myanmar's strained ties with the West on the Rohingya issue has already enabled China

to regain some of the influence it had lost during the past few years. Further tension in ties with the West would help China regain the pole position it had in Myanmar during the 1990s and 2000s.

## Philippines Terminates Visiting Forces Agreement with United States

President Rodrigo Duterte's decision on 11 February to terminate the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) between the Philippines and the United States could have significant geopolitical ramifications. Signed in 1998, the VFA details the ground rules and procedures to be followed when US forces visit the Philippines on official business including for bilateral training and military exercises. The agreement is deemed terminated 180 days after either party's written notice of its intention to end the agreement. If that were to happen, more than 300 activities and joint training sessions between the Filipino and US military will stop. But the Philippines-US alliance itself continues, governed



Source: <https://in.news.yahoo.com/trump-really-wants-duterte-attend-100737180.html>

by the Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951 and the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement signed in 2014 to advance the implementation of the 1951 treaty.

Duterte’s decision to terminate the VFA comes in the wake of America’s cancellation of the visa issued to Senator Ronald dela Rosa. In his previous position as the chief of the Philippine National Police, dela Rosa had spearheaded Duterte’s ‘war on drugs’, resulting in extrajudicial killings and the death of thousands of Filipinos.



© Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, GIS Section. Map not to scale.

There is also, however, a broader context to the decision to terminate the VFA. It creates a gulf between the Philippines and the United States, thus reinforcing Duterte's pursuit of an independent foreign policy, the other elements of which are an outreach to Russia including the purchase of weaponry and the development of stronger economic and diplomatic relations with China. It is not yet clear whether this policy would ultimately result in the Philippines opting out of the alliance with the United States, thus initiating a break in the first island chain around China.

### Revised Logistics Interoperability Framework between US and Japanese Navies



*Vice Adm. Rick Williamson, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, US Navy, and Rear Adm. Masatomi Dairiki, Director General of the Logistics Department of the Maritime Support Office, Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, signing the revised framework.*

On 5 February, the United States Navy (USN) and the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) signed a revised framework to improve cooperation and interoperability for maritime logistics. The Logistics Interoperability and Integration Strategic Framework establishes a strategic approach to integrated logistics in support of shared areas of concern such as potential threats, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and other peacetime operations. The framework aims to create solutions for using limited resources as effectively as possible and reduce obstacles in meeting the requirements of operational commanders.

Some initial target areas include exercises and war games; fuel distribution, ordnance and food stocks; acquisition agreements; and the possibility of additional personnel exchanges. The staffs of the two services will also explore opportunities to share logistics information, improve radiological screening procedures, and integrate emerging technologies such as additive manufacturing and unmanned systems that can enhance lethality and sustainability. The revised framework is expected to advance the goal of alliance co-operation with a view to ensuring peace and security in a free and open Indo-Pacific.