

ROYAL NAVY STRATEGIC STUDIES CENTRE
(RNSSC)

Strategic Digest

January 2024



Highlights This Month

Welcome to the New Era of Global Sea Power

Article, *The Economist*

11 January 2024

Welcome to the first RNSSC Strategic Digest of 2024, and according to *The Economist*, the New Era of Global Sea Power! Competition and conflict have brought sea power back to the forefront of geopolitics, but can the West still compete?

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Ocean Under Pressure: China's Challenge to the Maritime Order

Journal Article, *Council on Geostrategy*

Peter Alan Dutton | 23 January 2024

"Until the PRC's challenged, UNCLOS had brought decades of steadily advancing maritime order and stability...". In this pithy piece, Peter Alan Dutton analyses the key tenants of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and how China undermines them.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Ten Conflicts to Watch in 2024

Podcast, *International Crisis Group*

Richard Atwood | 22 January 2024

In this episode, Crisis Group's CEO/President and Chief of Policy talk through Crisis Group's famous "10 Conflicts to Watch in 2024". The list this year includes Gaza, the wider Middle East, Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, Ethiopia, the Sahel, Haiti, Armenia-Azerbaijan and the U.S.-China rivalry. They also look at wider trends

underpinning the uptick in conflict over recent years and what U.S. elections this year mean for world affairs and the U.S.'s global role.

[Listen to the Podcast Here ...](#)

Docked Ships and Shrinking Fleets: Just How Strong is Our Royal Navy?

Journal Article, *The Times*
Tom Calver | 21 January 2024

Featuring comments from the Head of the RNSSC, Captain Kevin Rowlands, this article focuses on the present state of the Royal Navy. In particular, it looks at how naval warfare has changed in recent years, how the Royal Navy's fleet has adapted to this, and finally what its current challenges are, particularly around tight budgets.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Before Larger or More Lethal, the U.S. Navy First Needs a Maritime Strategy

Article, Centre for Maritime Strategy
Dr Steven Wills | 22 January 2024

A recent [Washington Post editorial](#) made the case for a larger, or certainly a more lethal U.S. Navy in order to combat the rise of China's navy and for important contingency operations. The editorial also contends that the Navy needs to do a better job maintaining the ships it has before asking for a larger, more capable fleet. But, as Dr Steven Wills argues, what is missing in the discussion about the right size Navy needed to counter these threats is a defined maritime strategy.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Securing the Red Sea: How Can Houthi Maritime Strikes be Countered?

Journal Article, *RUSI*
Sam Cranny-Evans and Dr Sidharth Kaushal | 10 January 2024

Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Middle East have been rudimentary, despite using theoretically advanced weaponry. However, as Sam Cranny-Evans and Dr Sidharth Kaushal explain, it may prove difficult for the West to effectively degrade Houthi capabilities.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Surveying the Experts: U.S. and Taiwan Views on China's Approach to Taiwan

Report, *CSIS*

Bonny Lin, Brian Hart, Chen Ming-Chi, Shen Ming-Shih, Samantha Lu, Truly Tinsley and Yu-Jie (Grace) Liao | 22 January 2024

Amid mounting tensions in the Taiwan Strait, there are critical questions about how China might coerce Taiwan or force unification. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies' China Power Project surveys leading U.S. and Taiwan experts and former officials to better understand China's approach to Taiwan.

Israel-Gaza: Is it Turning into a Regional Conflict?

Podcast, *BBC Radio 4*

David Aaronovitch | 12 January 2024

As if the conflict in Gaza wasn't bad enough, the fighting has ignited old and new tensions elsewhere across the region. Since the surprise attack by Hamas on 7th October, clashes on the Lebanon-Israel border have restarted, attacks on US troops stationed in Syria and Iraq have escalated and a group of Houthi armed rebels from Yemen has started firing rockets at cargo ships trying to access the Suez Canal from the Red Sea. In this excellent episode of *The Briefing Room*, David Aaronovitch asks experts how close the war in Gaza is to becoming a wider conflict across the Middle East.

[Listen to the Podcast Here ...](#)

Why U.S. Naval Power Needs Asian Allies

Journal Article, *War on the Rocks*

Choi Kang And Peter K. Lee | 12 January 2024

The United States is unlikely to resolve its naval shipbuilding dilemma vis-à-vis China by itself. In this thought-provoking article, Choi Kang and Peter K. Lee make the case that just as China harnessed its commercial and naval shipbuilding industries, so too should the United States fully harness the untapped potential of its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Events and Notices

Empathy in Decision Making

Dr Claire Yorke
13 February 2024
13:00 - 14:00 GMT
MS Teams

The RNSSC are delighted to host Claire, Visiting Research Fellow at KCL's Centre for Grand Strategy, for the **February Lunchtime Lecture**. Please find the link on the RNSSC's SharePoint. Alternatively, contact the RNSSC mailbox.

Read or listened to something that merits inclusion in this Digest?

Please send, with a summary, to the RNSSC mailbox (NavyStratPol-RNSSC@mod.gov.uk).

The Digest is sent to the RN's senior leadership team, with the request to **please cascade**. To contact us with questions, feedback or to be added to or unsubscribe from the mailing list please send an email to NavyStratPol-RNSSC@mod.gov.uk.