



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

Strategic Digest

Vol. 3 | No. 10 | 01 June 2021

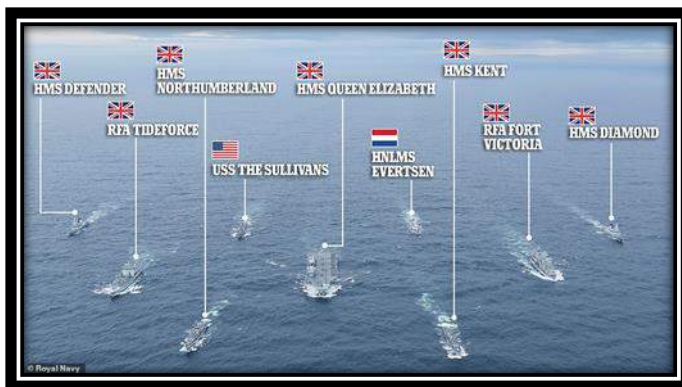
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Deployment of UK Carrier Strike Group in the Indo-Pacific

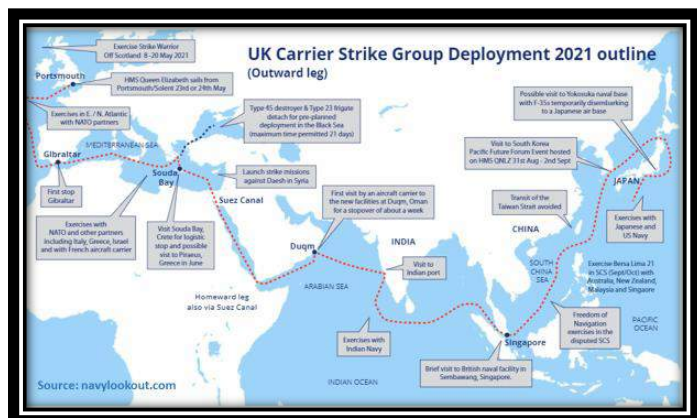
Led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, the UK’s Carrier Strike Group (CSG), departed Portsmouth for a seven-month-long operational deployment. The CSG will visit 40 nations in a deployment covering 26,000 nautical miles. Defence Secretary Ben Wallace had said, “The U.K.’s Carrier Strike Group sets sail to write Britain’s name in the next chapter of history — a truly global Britain that steps forward to tackle the challenges of tomorrow, working hand-in-hand with our friends to defend our shared values and uphold the rules-based international order.”



Joining HMS Queen Elizabeth on her maiden deployment are destroyers HMS Diamond and Defender; frigates HMS Richmond and Kent; an Astute-class submarine; and Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ships RFA Fort Victoria and RFA Tidespring. Apart from Royal Navy Ships, U.S. Navy destroyer USS The

Sullivans and the Royal Netherlands Navy’s frigate HNLMS Evertsen have been integrated with the CSG. More than 30 aircraft will also embark across the task group including F-35 jets from 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, and the US Marine Corps’ VMFA-211; Wildcat helicopters from 815 Naval Air Squadron and Merlin helicopters from 820 and 845 Naval Air Squadrons.

The seven-month global deployment will extend through the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean and on to the Indo-Pacific, interacting with more than one-fifth of the world’s nations. Working alongside another key NATO ally, the CSG will be joined by French aircraft carrier Charles De



Gaulle in the Mediterranean and will also take part in NATO’s Exercise Steadfast Defender. The CSG will provide support to the Alliance’s Operation Sea Guardian and maritime security operations in the Black Sea. The ship will conduct a series of joint exercises with Indian military forces in the Indian Ocean including bilateral naval exercise Konkan. Elements of the CSG will also participate in Exercise Bersama Lima to mark the 50th anniversary of the Five Powers Defence Arrangements between Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New

Zealand and the United Kingdom. The Carrier Strike Group will visit Singapore, the Republic of Korea and Japan to strengthen Britain's security relationships and reinforce political ties.

The strike group will sail through the South China Sea where China has been expanding its claim to territorial waters. However, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace argued that Britain is not looking for a "confrontation". Instead, he says the CSG will exercise its right to freedom of navigation.

The deployment aims to establish the UK as a credible geopolitical actor in the Post-Brexit world. Some observers have argued that engagements and exercises with the key Indo-Pacific powers, during the CSG deployment, are a reiteration of its Indo-Pacific tilt.

SADC Summit: Combat terrorism and ensure peace in Mozambique

Southern African Development Community (SADC) Extraordinary Double Troika Summit of Heads of State and Government was held in Mozambique's capital of Maputo to discuss the growing terrorism and instability in Cabo Delgado province in northern Mozambique. Leaders of the SADC reaffirmed their solidarity with Mozambique late Thursday, saying they will continue with efforts to address terrorism in that country. However, the official communique made no mention of proposals for a military intervention



Members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), including neighbouring South Africa, have favoured the idea of regional military action as the violence has worsened and the threat to regional stability has grown. Since 2008, SADC has had provision for a standby brigade,

part of a regional defence pact that allows military intervention to prevent the spread of conflict.

After the capture of the key northern town of Palma by Islamic Insurgents in March 2021, which killed dozens and displaced over 50,000 people, had exacerbated concern among Southern African countries about a potential threat to regional stability. It's not just Southern African states that find themselves

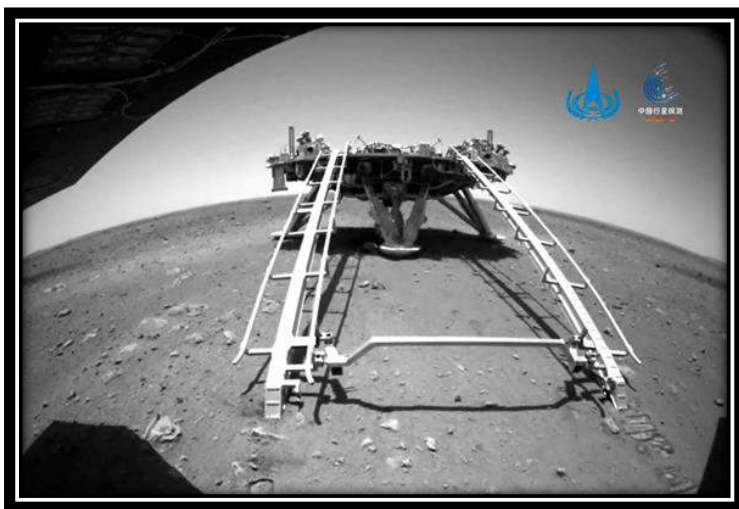
confronted with the ramifications of Mozambique's instability, potential fallout may adversely impact maritime security in the Mozambique Channel, an important global shipping route.

SADC had sent a technical assessment mission to Mozambique in March 2021 to assess the situation and kind of assistance required in combating terrorism. The assessment mission comprised South African, Angolan, Botswanan, Malawian, Tanzanian and Zimbabwean experts in intelligence; air, ground and maritime military operations; communications and logisticians. It has been reported that the mission had proposed deployment of a 3000-strong regional rapid response force into Cabo Delgado province to help Mozambique combat and neutralise Islamic State insurgents and recapture territory they have seized.

While South Africa has been pressing for urgent military intervention in the conflict, Mozambique has been extremely lukewarm to this idea. Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi, however, has said in past that Mozambique should handle certain aspects of the response alone for reasons of sovereignty. Mozambique has thus far resisted suggestions about hosting a regional military force while remaining open to accepting material and training support in its counter-insurgency effort.

China's Mars Mission

On May 22, 2021, China became the second country after the United States to operate a rover on Mars, when its 'Zhurong' rover emerged from the belly of the lander and began to explore the surface of the Red Planet. Earlier, a Chinese lander containing 'rover had successfully landed on its predesignated sight on May 14, 2021.



China's journey to Mars began on July 23, 2020, with the launch of Tianwen-1, which is a satellite (known as orbiter) carrying a lander/rover system inside it. After a seven-month-long journey, Tianwen-1 entered the Martian orbit successfully on Feb 10, 2021. The orbiter took around three months to carefully analyse the terrain and weather conditions and

then undertook the landing of the lander/rover system on the predesignated site on the Martian surface. After making a successful landing, it waited almost for a

week to allow the dust and soil raised during the landing to settle down before rolling down a six-wheeled Zhurong rover weighing 240 kg.

The rover has a subsurface radar, which would penetrate the Martian ground to search for signs of ice water beneath the surface. This rover would operate for three months and map the Martian terrain and try to analyse the chemical properties of the Martian rocks and soil. Mars is famous for sand storms and any such storm during the next three months could impact the efficiency of power generation and hinder the operations of the rover. For this purpose, the rover also has a weather station connected to it, which would also undertake continuous weather observations.

China has a well-structured Mars programme and is also known to be simultaneously working on various space projects. The next mission for them to Mars would happen during 2028, which would be a sample (soil and rock samples) return mission. During Dec 2020, their Chang'e 5 mission has managed to return to earth with 2 kg of soil from the surface of the Moon. Presently, the world's attention is focused on their Tiangong Space Station programme. In Apr 2021, China has launched a key module of a new permanent space station. They hope to have this station operational by 2022, which would be situated in low Earth orbit around 400 km above the earth's surface.