Ailing India Navy

What is the issue?

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India’s navy is beginning to see the end product of decades of confusion and a continuing neglect of strategic planning.

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How vulnerable is India’s Navy?

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- With the decommissioning of INS Viraat, India is down to a single aircraft carrier.
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- Meanwhile, the People’s Liberation Army (Navy) of China will soon have two of these, its existing Liaoning, and the Shandong, which is to be officially launched shortly.
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- China, which already outclasses India in terms of the number of its submarines, will soon have more aircraft carriers, too.
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- China has clearly learned from India’s worrisome carrier-first strategy, which had cost India very dearly.
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- Recently, the Navy indicated that the indigenous light combat aircraft, Tejas, was not suitable for carriers because it was “too heavy”.
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- But the MiG-29s which Indian carrier’s house is known to be problematic and unreliable.
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- India also overpaid Russia for INS Vikramaditya; and INS Vikrant is eight years behind schedule.
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- It will only be fully operational by 2023 when it was supposed to be completed by 2015.
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- It has been reported that the Indian Navy nevertheless intends to commission INS Vikrant by 2018 without its “aviation complex”, or flight operations control.
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- It might not even have LR-SAM anti-ship missiles at that point.
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- Launching an aircraft carrier without crucial offensive or defensive weaponry is a truly mystifying decision.
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- Two new Scorpene submarines INS Kalvari and INS khanderi made in Mazagon Docks are to be launched this year.
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- Both are undergoing sea tests, but they have essentially no anti-sub torpedoes, since the Black Shark systems they were supposed to be fitted by an Italian conglomerate has been blacklisted.
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- The fate of the 98 Black Sharks to be bought continues to be uncertain.
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- The Scorpenes essential data was reportedly leaked last year that may make them easier to identify adds more worries.
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- It is also being reported that none of the six Scorpenes planned will have air-independent propulsion, which extends endurance.
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- The last two were supposed to have it, but DRDO, missed its deadline for integration.
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- The level of the crisis should be clear from the fact that India has only 13 conventional submarines in service, of which 11 are older than 25 years.
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- As for nuclear submarines, India is living essentially on loans from Russia; the Akula II-class INS Chakra is leased for 10 years, till 2022.
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- China may have about 70 submarines, as compared to India’s 15; but India’s fleet is short even of anti-submarine helicopters.
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- Over two dozen ships have only 26 obsolete medium multi-role helicopters.
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- The light utility helicopters, Chetaks, also need to be replaced in their dozens.
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- INS Kolkata was commissioned in 2014 without Barak-8 air defence

missiles and towed array sonars.
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- Fixing these gaps is not just a question of money, but also of careful thought and planning.
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- But clearly this is not a priority for the government – after all, there isn't even a full-time defence minister.
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Source: Business Standard

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