



Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series

BLUE SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Edited by
Ian Hall, Troy Lee-Brown and Rebecca Strating



Blue Security in the Indo-Pacific

This book advances a holistic conceptualisation of maritime security under the term ‘Blue Security’ and situates it in states across the Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific encompasses a vast space, incorporating two of the planet’s biggest oceans, the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, as well as littoral and hinterland states home to half the world’s population. Security challenges abound across the maritime Indo-Pacific, ranging from the risk of inter-state war at sea to so-called blue crimes, like piracy, smuggling, and illegal fishing. Climate change and marine pollution, as well as the over-exploitation of scarce, and sometimes fragile resources, also pose threats to human security, sustainability, and biodiversity. Using the concept of ‘Blue Security’, this book assesses these various challenges and analyses the approaches to their management used by Indo-Pacific states. It argues that we should embrace a holistic understanding of maritime security, incorporating national, regional, international, human, and environmental dimensions. To that end, it explores the Blue Security strategies of 18 Indo-Pacific states, examining their changing perceptions of threat, their approaches to managing those challenges, and their capabilities. The volume makes an innovative contribution to our knowledge of a region crucial to global security and prosperity.

This book will be of interest to students of maritime strategy, security studies, Asian politics, and International Relations.

Ian Hall is a Professor of International Relations at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.

Troy Lee-Brown is a Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia’s Defence and Security Institute, Australia.

Rebecca Strating is the Director of La Trobe Asia and a Professor of International Relations at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

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Blue Security in the Indo-Pacific

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Blue Security in the Indo-Pacific

**Edited by Ian Hall, Troy Lee-Brown
and Rebecca Strating**



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2025
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Open Access funding was provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade Regional Maritime Exchange program.

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-69289-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-69292-0 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-69290-6 (ebk)

DOI: [10.4324/9781032692906](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032692906)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by KnowledgeWorks Global Ltd.

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Acknowledgements

This book has emerged from the Blue Security programme, a network that engages with and facilitates high-quality research on issues of critical maritime security across the Indo-Pacific region. The editors and authors are grateful for the funding that Blue Security has received from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which has enabled the publication of this open-access book.

Blue Security is a collaboration among La Trobe Asia, Griffith Asia Institute (GAI), University of New South Wales Canberra (ADFA), University of Western Australia's Defence and Security Institute (DSI), United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney and the Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue (AP4D). The editors are particularly grateful for the support given by our Blue Security co-leads Professor Peter Dean, Professor Douglas Guilfoyle, and Melissa Conley Tyler.

We are very much indebted to Kate Clayton, Senior Programme Coordinator at La Trobe Asia and Research Officer for Blue Security who provided us with all kinds of valuable research and administrative support.

The editors would also like to thank the authors for their outstanding contributions and professionalism. It has been a pleasure to edit this collection.

Contributors

Chulanee Attanayake is a researcher with expertise in China and South Asia, Politics, Geopolitics, and Security in the Indo-Pacific, as well as Sri Lanka's Foreign Relations. Her current research focuses on maritime security and maritime sovereignty of small states, with a special focus on underwater military technology development and its implications.

Pooja Bhatt is Associate Professor at Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, India. She is the author of *Nine-Dash Line: Deciphering the South China Sea Conundrum*. She works on maritime security and governance issues and regional security architectures. Previously, she worked with the Ministry of External Affairs, Rashtriya Raksha University Gandhinagar, Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), and the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi. She is a Visiting Fellow at CAPS.

Justin Burke is a Senior Policy Advisor at the National Security College, ANU. He was the 2022 Thawley Scholar in International Security at CSIS and the Lowy Institute in Sydney, Australia, and is also a non-resident fellow at the Center for Maritime Strategy and Security at the ISPK, Germany. Previously, he was a journalist with *The Australian* newspaper and the Yomiuri Shimbun of Japan.

David Capie is Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies and Professor of International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He works on security issues in the Indo-Pacific, regional institutions, and New Zealand's foreign and defence policy. David was a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum Experts and Eminent Persons Group (2012–2019) and a co-editor of *Political Science* (2010–2021).

Edward Sing Yue Chan is a Postdoctoral Fellow in China Studies at the Australian Centre on China in the World, the Australian National University. He is also the Associate Editor of *The China Journal* and a non-residential Research Fellow at Sea Power Centre Australia. Edward is the author of *China's Maritime Security Strategy: The Evolution of a Growing Sea Power* (2021). His articles also appear in *Asian Security*, *Marine Policy*, and *Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs*. His current research examines the role of China's evolving role in ocean governance.

Ruhanas Harun is a Professor at the Department of International Relations, Security & Law, National Defence University of Malaysia. She is a graduate of the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur and the University of Sorbonne, Paris. Her areas of specialisation include Malaysia's foreign policy and national security, politics, security and regionalism in Southeast Asia, terrorism and peace-building in post-conflict areas.

Kyoko Hatakeyama is a Professor of International Relations at the Graduate School of International Studies and Regional Development, University of Niigata Prefecture. Professor Hatakeyama's research interests include Japan's foreign and security policy, international relations in Asia and maritime affairs. Her recent publications include *Japan's Evolving Security Policy: Militarisation within a Pacifist Tradition* (2021).

Sanghoon Kim is a PhD student in Political Science at Rutgers University. He received his MA in International Studies and BA in Political Science at Korea University. Prior to pursuing his doctorate degree at Rutgers University, he worked as a researcher at the Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy (KIMS) and as a naval officer at the ROK Navy.

Dita Liliansa is a Research Fellow at the NUS Centre for International Law, holds an LLB from the University of Indonesia and an LLM from the University of Washington as a Fulbright scholar. She won the second prize in the 2021 Asian Society of International Law Junior Scholar Award. She is a member of the ILA Committee on Protection of People at Sea.

Nguyen Thi Lan Anh is an Associate Professor, Director General of the East Sea Institute, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, is an expert in international law and the law of the sea. Her research area includes issues related to ocean law and policy, maritime boundary delimitation, maritime security and safety, and Vietnam's foreign policy with a focus on the South China Sea.

Ilai (Jack) Moceica is a former senior civil servant and military officer of the Fijian Government. His military career had seen him deployed to various missions in the Middle East, Africa, and East Timor. A graduate of Nanjing Command and Staff College CPLA, China and holds a MBA from the University of the South Pacific. He has been involved in research works for academics. His interest lies in a broad field of investigation.

Michael O'Keefe is the Director of the Master of International Relations at La Trobe University. Michael's research focuses on Australian foreign policy and Fijian foreign policy. His latest book is *Australian Foreign Policy: Relationships, Issues and Strategic Culture* (2023). His latest report is *Australian Defence Force International Engagement and Re-engagement with Fiji*, Australian Army Research Centre, Canberra, 2023.

Gregory B. Poling directs the Southeast Asia Programme and Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He is the author of *On Dangerous Ground: America's Century in the South China Sea* (2022), along with works on the United States relations with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Southeast Asia at large.

Kitti Prasirtsuk is a Professor of international relations at Thammasat University and an advisory committee for the International Studies Center (ISC) at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His writings include Japan-Southeast Asia relations, the US-Thai security alliance, ASEAN, and soft power. He is a fellow at the Center on Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California.

Harrison Prétat is deputy director and fellow with the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. His research focuses on maritime security, U.S.-China relations, international law, and multilateralism in Asia. He holds a MA in international relations from Syracuse University.

Mélodie Ruwet is a research fellow at Griffith University. She holds a PhD from Griffith University, School of Government and International Relations, and a MA in International Relations from the Catholic University of Louvain (UCLouvain).

Nilanthi Samaranayake is a Visiting Expert at the US Institute of Peace and Adjunct Fellow at the East-West Center in Washington. Previously, Samaranayake served as Director of CNA's Strategy and Policy Analysis Programme. Before joining CNA, she analysed public opinion at the Pew Research Center in Washington and completed a fellowship at the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) in Seattle.

Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby is an Associate Professor in the Department of International Studies at De La Salle University in Manila, Philippines. She holds fellowships at Carnegie China and Agora Strategy Group.

Lailufar Yasmin is a Professor and the current Chairperson at the Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She has received the US Fulbright, the British Chevening, and the Australian International Post-Graduate Research Scholarship (IPRS). Her research areas include Bangladesh's politics, economy and foreign policy, South Asian Affairs, China's Rise, maritime security and the Indo-Pacific Region, and women's participation in the UN Peacekeeping, among others.

Bernard Yegiora is an academic specialising in international relations and foreign policy at Divine Word University, and he holds a Master's from Jilin University. His research focuses on Chinese economic reforms and soft power for both Honours and Master's theses. He also earned a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Political Science from the University of Papua New Guinea.



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1 Introduction

Blue Security in the Indo-Pacific

Ian Hall, Troy Lee-Brown and Rebecca Strating

Maritime security challenges abound in the Indo-Pacific, a region that is home to ‘half of the world’s people, nearly two-thirds of the world’s economy and seven of the world’s largest militaries’.¹ Some of these challenges are longstanding and some are more dynamic, shaped by unexpected events and bigger developments.

Naval militarisation, maritime and territorial disputes and the use of coercive ‘grey zone’ tactics in East Asia, attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and blockades cutting off supply lines in the Black Sea all suggest that we have entered a ‘new era of global sea power’ where the oceans are becoming more significant for geopolitics and great power competition.²

Yet maritime insecurity is not just generated by states, militaries or militias. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, had significant effects on maritime activities. While it led to an ‘unprecedented’ decline in all forms of commercial shipping,³ ‘blue crime’⁴ – already widespread – surged. The rise in poverty and inequality coupled with institutional incapacity helped to fuel maritime piracy as states struggled to manage the pandemic.⁵ Over a longer timeframe, climate change has also been linked to an upsurge in maritime crime, especially illegal fishing. Increased piracy, climate displacement, poverty, and overfishing have all been connected to climate-induced pollution, ocean warming, and acidification.⁶ In parallel, natural disasters continue to affect maritime security. In Tonga, for instance, a volcano eruption in 2022 disrupted its one undersea cable and cut off the island nation’s internet connection to the rest of the world for at least five weeks.⁷

For states charged with the responsibility of protecting and advancing their maritime interests on behalf of their citizens, regional maritime security challenges are varied and interconnected. A large and diverse range of threats and challenges have become bundled under the umbrella of maritime security ‘ranging from the risk of major war arising from territorial and maritime disputes to significant human and environmental threats to ecosystems’.⁸ For good reason, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN) *Maritime Outlook* observes ‘the challenges that have emerged in ASEAN’s maritime domain have become more complex, multidimensional and interconnected. While disputes related to Southeast Asia’s maritime waters sometimes appear in the headlines, what should not be overlooked are the other equally or if not more important challenges that directly affect the welfare of the people of ASEAN’.⁹ While homeland defence and deterring

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armed conflict over land features and maritime areas remain important for regional states, so too do a range of other priorities. These include: protecting, accessing, and managing ocean-based resources and sea lines of communication (SLOCs); preventing and deterring blue crimes such as piracy, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and drugs, arms and human trafficking; tackling environmental threats such as climate change, rising sea levels, and threats to sustainability and biodiversity; promoting human security, including through food security and safe labour and migration practices; and dealing with global pandemics affecting sea-borne trade and safety at sea.

This book assesses these maritime security challenges and outlines the approaches of regional states to managing them. It evaluates the differences and similarities between the strategies adopted by Indo-Pacific states to better understand areas of convergence that might provide foundations for cooperation in strengthening maritime order as well as areas of weakness. Given the wide range of maritime security threats in the Indo-Pacific, we argue that it is imperative to develop a stronger account of how regional states perceive them and conceptualise their vital interests. How do states prioritise their activities in pursuit of national, regional, and international maritime interests? How do they seek to shape and promote maritime order? And what elements do they bring to bear on sustaining, enhancing, and defending their maritime rights and interests?

This introductory chapter discusses the concept of Blue Security and outlines its utility for understanding maritime security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region – a politico-regional construct that emerged in the early part of the 21st century and that now shapes the security strategies of most, if not all, regional states.¹⁰ It describes the five dimensions of the Blue Security concept – strategic, legal, civil, economic and environmental – that inform the chapters in this collection. The final section of the chapter provides an overview of the key questions addressed by each chapter as they examine how regional states in the Indo-Pacific perceive and manage the maritime security challenges they face.

Blue Security in international relations

There is no single clear definition of maritime security. To make matters worse, an unhelpful dichotomy is often drawn between conventional (military) and unconventional (non-military) security threats. This can obscure the interconnectedness of the security challenges faced by states and peoples, as well as their policies and responses, which commonly blend military and non-military instruments.

This disconnect between military and non-military challenges has been partly reinforced by the scholarly literature. Much of the realist-oriented literature in International Relations has tended to focus more on geopolitics and territorial defence, naval warfare, and the protection of economic interests in the maritime domain, and on the material, military capabilities necessary for meeting defensive and strategic ends.¹¹ ‘Seapower’ – defined by commercial and naval strength, the importance of maritime power projection and maritime strategy – is seen as the basis of establishing or undermining maritime orders.¹² High-profile and high-stakes

cases of disputes in the Indo-Pacific, such as in the South and East China Seas, have been largely interpreted through a realist frame of power and resources.¹³

While these understandings about how states perceive maritime threats are important, national defence is not the only way of defining maritime security interests. The literature on maritime law enforcement or 'holistic' maritime security has focused less on naval power and more on how states govern their jurisdictions at sea and deal with 'blue crimes'.¹⁴ Such crimes are not necessarily caused by other state actors, but often by non-state actors that engage in piracy, IUU fishing, forced labour and trafficking in the 'outlaw oceans'.¹⁵ These 'crimes' might also be committed unknowingly as overfishing, environmental degradation and conflict push fishers further out to sea. Yet, the divisions between military on the one hand and law enforcement on the other have never been especially clear cut. Navies, after all, provide assets and personnel to assist with law enforcement. The divisions have become increasingly blurred as 'grey zone' threats and the use of a 'maritime militia' of conventionally non-military vessels, such as fishing boats and coastguards, create new strategic, operational and 'lawfare' opportunities and challenges for maritime states.¹⁶

While the conventional security literature has tended to focus on great naval powers, many coastal and island states are not great powers. They are not likely to achieve 'sea control' in a way that great naval powers might. Those that have navies must instead weigh up the need for 'warfare functions' with those capabilities that are required for the more quotidian or everyday requirements of governing maritime jurisdiction – their 'maritime security functions'.¹⁷ How these states determine their security interests and seek to shape maritime and regional order is important. Smaller and middle powers make choices about who to ally or partner with that can have profound consequences for the geostrategic balance of power, for example through the location of military bases. They can also play outsized roles in shaping international institutions, rules and norms that help set the global standards of behaviour, resource distribution and dispute resolution that underpin maritime order. Small island states, for example, were instrumental in the negotiations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the guiding legal framework for generating maritime order internationally.¹⁸ Such rules and norms can have the effect of constraining the behaviours of bigger powers, as even great and rising powers seek to explain themselves to different audiences using the language of norms and order.¹⁹

Beyond realism, there are approaches to thinking about maritime security that might assist with a fuller notion of maritime order that has not been widely or consistently applied in that area. The most notable omission is English School theory, which focuses directly on the underpinnings, maintenance, and transformation of order in what it calls 'international society'.²⁰ This approach has been applied with success in a series of studies of the security order in East Asia.²¹ Yet, with some important exceptions, including a recent collection edited by Patalano, Grant and Russell,²² the English School has been largely neglected by scholars concerned with Indo-Pacific maritime affairs, despite its obvious potential for establishing a more robust understanding of the sources of order

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in international relations at sea, as well as on land.²³ The English School's approach recognises that power, institutions, rules, and norms all shape the nature and quality of order in any given domain of international relations but focuses attention on how states and other actors interpret these constraints and act to change them. It is concerned, in other words, with how order is purposefully, if not always successfully, created and shaped by individual and collective actors, interacting with others. It recognises that order is not just given by a distribution of power, a set of rules, or the respective identities of states, as realists, liberals, and constructivists maintain, but rather it is made and unmade by agents using material power, legal and normative argument, and diplomatic action.²⁴ Blue Security aims to develop and demonstrate at least some of that potential. Our chapters highlight that states and sub-state agencies are critical actors in the establishment, maintenance, and destabilisation of global and regional maritime order.

Our concept of Blue Security also draws upon the work of the Copenhagen School, especially its insistence on a broad and holistic understanding of security. As with English School thinking, this thinking has been applied by some scholars in International Relations to the concept of maritime security, most notably Bueger in his 2015 article "What is Maritime Security?"²⁵ The Copenhagen School offers a broader understanding of security to conventional realist, liberal, or constructivist understandings – a notion that we argue is better suited to an area in which there is a wide range of varied and interconnected threats and challenges. The Copenhagen School has long made clear that there are different 'sectors' of security, such as military security, political security, economic security, societal security, and environmental security. Such an approach challenges traditional notions of security and offers new ways to conceptualise and analyse security issues, expanding the study of security beyond the military to include economic, societal, human, and environmental dimensions, and providing a more holistic and integrated understanding of the complex nature of security threats and responses to them.²⁶

In this book, we build on this existing literature by using the concept of 'Blue Security' to capture the multifaceted, interrelated and integrated nature of contemporary maritime security challenges and the actions taken by states and peoples to manage them. It acknowledges that 'there is more to seapower than grey painted ships with numbers on the side', as Geoffrey Till argues.²⁷ Inspired by the existing concepts of 'Blue Economy' and 'Good Order at Sea',²⁸ the concept of Blue Security entails:

- 1 A normative commitment to shaping a peaceful, stable and equitable maritime order;
- 2 An understanding of maritime security based on the inter-related nature of contemporary security challenges;
- 3 An integrated and comprehensive approach to maritime security that can shape better understanding of how states envisage and pursue maritime order in and beyond the Indo-Pacific.

While the concept of the Blue Economy seeks to advance 'socially equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economic viable ocean sectors' and has become

a dominant idea shaping ocean futures,²⁹ our concept of Blue Security focuses on the strategic challenges and threats emerging in and from the seas from states, non-state actors or environmental forces; the use of hard, sharp and soft power in maritime domains; and the importance of international cooperation and a shared commitment to international law and norms in managing and mitigating conflict and threats. As such, it embodies a holistic concept of security, incorporating national, regional, international, human, and environmental dimensions.

Dimensions of Blue Security

We define Blue Security as a maritime order that is peaceful, stable, and equitable across multiple domains: strategic, legal, civil, economic, and environmental. We recognise that such an order requires high levels of commitment from elites and public, as well as ongoing maintenance by states and other actors. Blue Security is a created order, not a given order – it requires action to create, sustain, and improve it. Across the Indo-Pacific, coastal states have different priorities and policies depending on a range of factors – including political and strategic culture, geography, marine resources and capabilities – that feed into how they approach maritime security, governance and order more generally.

The strategic dimension of Blue Security relates to what might be considered conventional geopolitical and security challenges that arise from the shifting balance of seapower, the role of the world's oceans as a site of great power competition, the presence of territorial and maritime disputes, and the role of the maritime in national defence. Whilst not ends in themselves, sea control, sea denial, and derivatives of them can be imperative for defence of the nation.³⁰ If efforts to achieve deterrence fail, a coastal state's navy in tandem with its other forces across all domains may be called upon to effectively carry out sea denial operations to deny an adversary entry into its littoral waters or landmass. A navy can deploy surface ships, submarines and sea mines in a layered defence with distributed lethality.³¹ In this sense, securing the maritime domain is an important consideration for the territorial defence of states with coastlines.

International law is also an important pillar of Blue Security for maritime states. The legal dimension concerns the role of international law and norms in ensuring maritime security, governance, and order. There are several issues here. First, there are differences in the ways that states and scholars conceptualise and operationalise the 'rules' of the 'rules-based' maritime order. Ambiguity plays a role: grey areas within UNCLOS permit disputes and differences in interpretation among states across a wide range of areas, including where and how baselines should be drawn for the purposes of measuring maritime jurisdiction, appropriate principles for determining the limits of exclusive economic zones (EEZ)³² and continental shelves in cases where they overlap and the extent of coastal state rights in governing military activities or marine research conducted in their EEZs.³³ Second, there is a range of new and emerging challenges that also exist as 'grey zones' under international law, including climate change, the use of underwater drones and threats to submarine cables. Pacific Island state leaders, for instance, are trying to achieve consensus in international law

so that they can ‘fix’ their current maritime baselines so they do not move as their territory erodes from sea-level rise. Creating and adapting laws for new challenges is thus a Blue Security priority for some states. Third, one of the defining problems for contemporary maritime order is the extent to which certain powers will continue to undermine international law of the sea through the use of exceptionalism (that is, excluding themselves from abiding by specific rules, or carving out areas of exemption such as China’s use of the nine-dash line in the South China Sea) and/or through efforts to replace existing laws with new laws. Such dynamics at the intersection of power and rules have significant implications for smaller and middle powers that rely upon the legitimacy of UNCLOS to protect their maritime rights and entitlements, as well as the nature of maritime order in the Indo-Pacific.

The civil dimension relates to the governing of maritime areas by states. Commonly, states prioritise ‘civil’ or law enforcement and criminal issues in maritime security; indeed, some are argued to be ‘engrossed’ with the day-to-day challenge of identifying and deterring maritime crimes.³⁴ Yet across the Indo-Pacific, states have substantially different capabilities and needs in maritime governance – that is, enforcing laws, regulations, policies, and institutions within a specific jurisdiction, such as a territorial sea or EEZ. Many states lack the law enforcement resources needed to deter and punish crime, protect citizens and secure valuable marine resources across their often vast maritime jurisdictions. In particular, island states commonly have to govern a much larger maritime area than territory. While Tuvalu, for instance, has only 26 square kilometres of land, its maritime area is more than 900,000 square kilometres.

Moreover, as mentioned above, some of the assumptions about civil-military relationships have been called under question as some states increasingly use non-naval assets for strategic ends. China’s overarching maritime power, for example, increasingly stems from this broader ‘civil and military fusion’. The use of so-called grey zone tactics presents legal and operational complications for how states respond. That is, regional states do not always know how to counter these tactics, nor do they necessarily share common approaches or resources. With the build-up of its coastguard fleet, China is logging more hours of patrol and creating new domestic laws, such as the 2021 Coast Guard Law (and amendments), to support jurisdictional claims over the contested waters of the East and South China Sea. China has also increasingly used fishing vessels as a ‘maritime militia’. While ostensibly engaged in fishing, these vessels ‘operate alongside Chinese law enforcement and military to achieve political objectives in disputed waters’.³⁵ These vessels enhance Beijing’s control of maritime area by flooding the waters to prevent others from accessing their maritime rights and wearing down the other claimant states.³⁶ China appears to conceptualise most of the South China Sea as its maritime jurisdiction, with coastguards increasingly treating it as an area of domestic law enforcement. This presents problems for how smaller powers in Southeast Asia might assert their legitimate rights to maritime governance in contested maritime areas, and how non-claimants might best support the international legal order that underpins those rights.

The economic dimension of maritime security is also increasingly salient. In the 2010s, the concept of Blue Economy emerged as a term associated with the

economic use of the ocean and industries such as energy, shipping, and fishing. It has proven to be popular among Indo-Pacific states. Designed as a complement to the 'green economy' concept, across the Indo-Pacific, leaders have invoked the Blue Economy concept 'to capture the multi-sectoral and multi-scalar objectives of ocean governance'.³⁷ According to the World Bank, the concept seeks to 'promote economic growth, social inclusion, and the preservation or improvement of livelihoods while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas'.³⁸ Blue Economy is normative, linked with the UN's sustainable development goals, as those who use it seek to advance 'socially equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economic viable ocean sectors' and has become a dominant narrative of ocean governance.³⁹ We must recognise, however, that 'not all ocean-based activities are consistent with the Blue Economy concept, because many ocean activities are not sustainable'.⁴⁰ Climate change poses a significant challenge to blue economies. Overexploitation and environmental harm can be exacerbated by difficulties faced by states in regulating their maritime jurisdictions and resources. Geopolitical disputes and conflicts involving maritime boundaries can undermine the Blue Economy.

For smaller island states in particular, it is not the strategic challenges presented by rising powers that are considered the key security threat, but rather climate change and deteriorating environmental conditions on the habitability of islands and coastal areas. For some low-lying states across the Indo-Pacific, climate change is the existential security challenge, as sea-level rise threatens their entitlement to maritime resources that their economies largely rely upon.⁴¹ The commitment to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in regional groupings such as the Quad demonstrates an awareness that natural disasters affecting maritime areas are likely to become even more pronounced due to climate change, and maritime domains such as the Indian Ocean struggle to deal with refugees fleeing conflict and disaster by sea. A threat multiplier, climate change is and will continue to affect traditional and non-traditional security in and beyond the maritime domains of the Indo-Pacific.

Why the Indo-Pacific?

The Indo-Pacific region provides a useful backdrop for examining the complex Blue Security challenges that states face, how they prioritise their interests, and how they seek to defend them. The Indo-Pacific is, at its heart, a maritime region, incorporating two of the planet's biggest oceans, the Indian and Pacific Oceans and all the sea-based linkages drawing these subregions together.⁴² Linkages across the seas and waterways are crucial for the security and prosperity of this region. Currently, over 60 per cent of global maritime trade is shipped through the Indo-Pacific.⁴³ The sea lines of communication (SLOC) that connect the hydrocarbons of the Middle East with the factories of East Asia are a particular concern. Global trade depends upon open SLOCs across the Indo-Pacific and through its various chokepoints and contested spaces, from the Strait of Hormuz to the Malacca Strait, and on into the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.

For these reasons, most regional states now perceive the Indo-Pacific as a connected strategic space. But they disagree about its geographical boundaries. Some see it reaching from ‘Hollywood to Bollywood’, while others extend it further to shores of East Africa.⁴⁴ Australia, among others, has a more limited understanding, conceiving the Indo-Pacific as a zone stretching from the Eastern Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific.⁴⁵ Despite these differences, the Indo-Pacific has become increasingly accepted in policy circles across the region – with the notable exceptions of China and Russia – as a way of describing maritime Asia and the Pacific. Organisations such as ASEAN⁴⁶ and the European Union⁴⁷ have developed Indo-Pacific policies.

Over the coming decades, five of the world’s largest economies will be Indo-Pacific states: the People’s Republic of China, the United States, India, Japan, and Indonesia. The region is also home to some of the world’s biggest defence spenders.⁴⁸ Existing tensions between these and other regional states are already major concerns and the maritime domain is an increasingly contested arena for major power competition. The seas of the Indo-Pacific are an area of insecurity for regional states and peoples and a theatre of strategic and normative contestation. They are domains where states seek to assert territorial claims, protect shipping routes using navies, coastguards, and irregular forces and police serious criminal activity. They are rich in resources where there is intensifying competition to exploit fisheries and undersea hydrocarbon and mineral deposits. They are ecosystems affected by climate change and pollution, with knock-on effects – some existential – on coastal communities.

Maritime disputes in the Indo-Pacific have considerable implications for regional stability and the capacities of international law of the sea (underpinned by the 1982 UNCLOS) to maintain a maritime order based on generally accepted rules and principles. Regional ‘flashpoints’ like the South China Sea receive significant media and scholarly attention and are often framed within the context of the rivalry between the regions two major powers, China and the United States.⁴⁹ They are often treated as laboratories for answering the big questions around regional security, such as how China will pursue its great power ambitions and whether the US commitment to Asia is credible and durable. Yet, for many smaller and middle-power states – even those with territorial and maritime claims in contested areas – it is often the day-to-day challenge of governing and patrolling maritime zones, preventing and prosecuting blue crimes, and coping with environmental and economic challenges that are at the forefront of mind, rather than major power contestation.

The interests and strategies of coastal states across the Indo-Pacific can also depend on the sub-region they inhabit. Maritime geography is central to the Indo-Pacific concept,⁵⁰ yet within this supra-regional construct lies distinct maritime regions with their unique geographies that can establish sub-regional patterns of order and governance. These various maritime domains retain distinctiveness in their maritime heritage and histories, political culture, norms and customs, and region-specific rules. As such, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to Indo-Pacific maritime security. Pacific Island and Indian Ocean Region states, for instance, have different priorities from those that abut the South China Sea. Indo-Pacific states understand and define maritime security and threats that emerge in and from the maritime domain in very

different ways, and consequently adopt distinctive approaches to ensuring maritime security and maritime order. This book explores these approaches.

The chapters

Given the vast range of maritime security threats, it is imperative to develop a deeper understanding of how states across the region conceptualise their vital interests and the key threats to them. How do they prioritise their activities in pursuit of national, regional and international maritime interests? How do they seek to shape and promote maritime order? And what elements do they bring to bear on sustaining, enhancing and defending their maritime rights and interests?

The chapters in this book address these questions by examining the individual maritime security strategies of littoral and island states across the Indo-Pacific, using the dimensions of Blue Security outlined above. Each chapter addresses a specific Indo-Pacific country. We have included a range of smaller, middle and great powers from South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam), Northeast Asia (China, Japan, South Korea), and Oceania (Australia, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the United States)

The chapters first address the question of how these states view their key Blue Security interests and priorities? A wide range of interests may be prioritised by Indo-Pacific states, including national security and defence issues, maritime trade, crime and environmental issues. While all states are concerned with combatting blue crime, when it comes to how they prioritise regional security challenges, we find three broadly defined categories: first, those that are focused on their own territorial and maritime disputes (Southeast Asia, China, Japan, South Korea); second, those concerned about regional order shifts including power and rules (the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, India); and third, those primarily concerned about climate change, environment and resources (Pacific Island states, Indian Ocean Island states).

The chapters then consider the strategies and/or approaches that states adopt to defend their maritime interests. States across the Pacific and Indian Oceans take different approaches to Blue Security based on a range of factors, including their size, capabilities, strategic cultures, and geographies. While the maritime might be increasingly important for coastal states' security, the analysis of the chapters demonstrates that this is not always accompanied by an increase in naval resources or influence within militaries. States also take a range of approaches to declaring their maritime policies – some have a clearly articulated maritime security strategy (such as New Zealand), while others do not even attempt to officially define maritime security. There is also a wide gap between states that have integrated agencies for dealing with maritime security (see for example, Indonesia) and those that have multiple departments, actors, and agencies involved in maritime security (such as Australia, which has over 20 agencies). Across different countries, we find that non-state actors – such as businesses, trade unions and civil society organisations – can play important roles in operationalising (or derailing) maritime policy.

There is also a diverse range of international engagements at bilateral, minilateral and multilateral levels. While many of the states pre-occupied with regional security order have turned to new ‘strategic minilaterals’ (Quad and AUKUS), a number of states across the region already had minilateral arrangements for combatting maritime crime (such as Malacca Strait Patrols). While the Indo-Pacific lacks an institution that covers the whole region, Southeast Asian states continue to look to the ASEAN and Pacific Island Countries emphasise the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) in maritime affairs as well as generally. In the Indian Ocean, however, the main institution – the Indian Ocean Rim Association – remains somewhat moribund, raising questions about how mini- and multilateral forums develop differently across maritime sub-regions to deal with security challenges.

Lastly, the contributions consider what are the gaps in the approaches of their designated state. In order words: what do they need to do better? The contributions consider issues such as state capacity and capability in defence, coast guard, justice, maritime domain awareness, policy gaps, ‘joined-upness’ – that is, the extent to which actors and agencies engaged in Blue Security work well together – and international cooperation and jurisdictional gaps. The contributions reveal different priorities and approaches to Blue Security of the small, middle, regional, and great powers that inhabit this vast maritime region.

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2 Australia

Justin Burke

Introduction

Despite possessing the world's third largest exclusive economic zone (EEZ), it is commonplace for Australians to lament their national 'sea blindness'¹ though in truth it largely conforms to the Enlightenment trope of modern nations comparing themselves unfavourably with ancient ones; and no one measures up to Athens and Themistocles. To be sure, Australia has had the settlement and internal development of a vast landmass to focus on across the past two centuries. The risks of being the world's largest island continent 'girt by sea' in the words of the national anthem,² lying between the Southern, Pacific and Indian oceans, enclosed in the north and east by the Timor, Arafura, Coral and Tasman seas and dependent on oceanic trade and sea lines of communication (SLOC) for its prosperity³ were helpfully ameliorated by the great naval powers of the day.

But things are changing. The sea is not as overlooked as is often claimed. Globalisation's implicit risks have become more explicit. The United States is no longer the unipolar leader of the Indo-Pacific, and China's rise has heralded the return of great power conflict.⁴ So-called non-traditional security issues such as climate change are increasingly seen as equally – if not more – alarming than traditional ones in some contexts. Accordingly, new 'blue paradigms' are arising, with notions such as blue economy, blue justice⁵ and now Blue Security (maritime security).

This chapter will examine how Australia views its Blue Security interests and priorities, what approaches and strategies it has taken to address them, identify the gaps and make recommendations. These will centre on the creation of a dedicated office in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, not only to produce an integrated Blue Security strategy but to ensure that the growing push towards a national security strategy⁶ yields a sufficiently 'blue' outcome.

Australia's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Is Blue Security the appropriate lens through which to view Australia's maritime interests and priorities? There are tensions to consider, namely the enduring bifurcation between traditional and non-traditional security issues.⁷ The former perspective argues that analysts should focus on matters related to armed conflict

and the threat and use of military force,⁸ while the latter allows that if security is supposed to be about alleviating the most serious and immediate threats that prevent people from pursuing their cherished values, other issues must be included.⁹ Some have observed that incentives have existed for various non-traditional issues such as the environment to append ‘security’ to their nomenclature to add a sense of seriousness, urgency and priority to their claims and recommendations,¹⁰ though it is increasingly common to hear advocates talk of ‘de-securing’ various issues when an association with the military, for example, is seen as counterproductive. Paradigmatic and methodological approaches continue to divide traditional and non-traditional security issues. In practice, the interactions and linkages are complex. (Consider simultaneously the effect of Australia’s conventionally fuelled navy, protecting fossil fuel exports, versus the risks of climate change and sea-level rises; ‘where to begin?’) Intermittent attempts have been made to measure and index maritime security.¹¹ But as choices and trade-offs are unavoidable for policymakers, we must persist.

In terms of traditional security, it was only in 2000 that an Australian Defence White Paper actually employed the term ‘maritime strategy’ for the first time.¹² But across the last 25 years, Australia’s security interests in the maritime domain have been elevated to centrality in defence thinking. The Defence Strategic Review 2023 used the word ‘maritime’ 36 times and named Australia’s strategic geography as ‘the immediate region encompassing the north-eastern Indian Ocean through maritime Southeast Asia into the Pacific. This region includes our northern approaches’. It cited China’s military build-up, China’s assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea, and China’s strategic competition in Australia’s nearby neighbourhood (namely the Solomon Islands) as risks, as well as the potential for major power conflict.¹³ It identified protecting SLOC and maritime trade as strategic priorities.¹⁴ It prescribed a strategy of deterrence through denial, with sea denial operations and localised sea control specifically mentioned.¹⁵ The army has also seen several capability decisions modified or cancelled to prioritise amphibious over terrestrial capabilities due to the likelihood of maritime domain operations.¹⁶ It comes after the AUKUS trilateral security pact was finalised earlier in 2023, detailing the pathway for Australia to obtain nuclear-powered submarines from the early 2030s, an awesome increase in under-sea warfighting capability but also a major undertaking in terms of in terms of cost, complexity and workforce.¹⁷ A lack of detail in the unclassified public version on Australia’s Antarctic claims and Southern Ocean was noted.¹⁸

Trade and SLOC are another key interest. In the 1980s, Australia began deregulating its economy and liberalising trade. Today, trade as a whole is equivalent to 45 per cent of Australian gross domestic product.¹⁹ More than 80 per cent of trade by value, and a substantial proportion of domestic freight, transits through the maritime domain.²⁰ It is estimated that Australian seaports move \$1.2 billion of trade every day.²¹ However, as the economy has become more interconnected with trading partners in the region, it has also highlighted the risks in maintaining our physical connections to the world.²² The supply chain disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and China’s campaign of economic coercion against Australia have provided a wake-up call. The latter featured unofficial trade sanctions on Australian copper, cotton, lobster, timber, wine and coal – previously worth more than \$20 billion a year – some of which continued for more than three years.²³ Australia has significant reliance on imports

including refined petroleum products,²⁴ pharmaceuticals and technology such as microchips, amongst others. Physical connections include maritime infrastructure such as undersea communication, data and energy cables;²⁵ an area of growing concern globally after the sabotage of Baltic Sea pipelines in 2022 and 2023.

Australia views crime such as irregular (sometimes described as illegal) maritime migration as perhaps the most serious maritime security issue. Certainly, it has been a defining political question in Australia across the past two decades. During the most recent episode between 2008 and 2013, more than 50,000 people travelled irregularly to Australia on more than 800 individual boat voyages; more than 1200 drowned in the attempt. The Australian Government's current policy – Operation Sovereign Borders – is to intercept any vessel seeking to reach Australia irregularly and to return those on board to their point of departure or country of origin.²⁶ Australia has previously used detention facilities on Pacific Islands including Nauru and Manus Island for offshore or regional processing and has had third-country resettlement agreements with the United States and New Zealand.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is treated with great seriousness, with interdictions across the north of Australia currently at levels not seen for more than 15 years. Enforcement (including forfeitures of catch and fishing equipment and disposal of captured vessels at sea) is coupled with in-country education with neighbouring nations, improving their ability to monitor and control fishing activities in their own waters, and strengthening regional fishing frameworks and the exchange of information.²⁷ Piracy is an issue for Australia's neighbours, and therefore a concern. The scale of drug transshipment through the maritime domain is perhaps the least appreciated issue.

Environmental issues came to the fore with the election of the Albanese government, which has moved Australia's climate change policies closer to the international consensus since taking office in 2022. Climate change legislation was passed enshrining an emissions reduction target of 43 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.²⁸ It has also investigated the security linkages, tasking the Office of National Intelligence (ONI) to examine risks posed by climate change as the region grapples with increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather events, such as 'creating massive movements of people that may become unmanageable' and 'food and energy shortages'.²⁹ The government has also promised to bid to host a future UN Climate Summit with the Pacific Islands.³⁰ At present, Australia remains ambivalent about deep-sea mining.

Australia's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

While Australia has no maritime security strategy, nor even an official definition for maritime security (a range of government departments and authorities use the term, but invariably without a consistent definition)³¹ it has several pieces of the puzzle in disaggregated form. Most recently, Australia's Defence Strategic Review 2023 was released, stating that the immediate region encompassing the northeastern Indian Ocean through maritime Southeast Asia into the Pacific is Australia's primary area of military interest. Prior to that came the Australian Government Civilian Maritime Security Strategy (2021), which defines civilian maritime security

as that which ‘advances and protects Australia’s interests by actively managing non-military risks to Australia and Australia’s maritime domain’. It identifies strategic interests, strategic objectives, pillars (methods) and enablers. It includes issues such as illegal foreign fishing, irregular migration and drug importation. It excludes military operations and the Maritime Safety regime of vessel safety, search and rescue and combating ship-sourced pollution. It makes valiant attempts to define ‘what success looks like’ and proposes methods of measurement and review.³² It was released with little fanfare³³ and while promulgated throughout the Home Affairs, Border Force and the Marine Unit in particular, received little public analysis or comment.

Australia’s Oceans Policy, released in 1998, was an important historical initiative. It sought to integrate sectoral and jurisdictional interests with an ecosystem-based management approach, with the main focus was on EEZ management, Australia’s interests in the high seas and maritime aspects of our relations with our neighbours. Institutional barriers prevented the hoped-for integration, and some key institutional arrangements were dismantled. Rather than reflecting an integrated approach to the oceans, by 2009, Australia’s Oceans Policy was reduced to an environmental policy focussed on implementing a system of bioregional marine plans.³⁴

There are between 9³⁵ and 21³⁶ Australian government departments and agencies with involvement in maritime security policy. The variation is partly explained by the creation of the Home Affairs ‘super portfolio’ in 2017, and whether organisations such as Bureau of Meteorology, and Australian Antarctic Division are acknowledged and counted separately. The most frequently cited are Home Affairs (containing Australian Border Force Marine Unit inter alia), Department of Defence and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Australia puts significant efforts into maritime security engagement with other nations. While it comprises the efforts of many departments, agencies and actors, the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper perhaps gave the highest-level expression to its breadth.³⁷ Australia makes investments in maritime security capacity building in Southeast Asia. Specific mention is made of regional fora including the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), though bilateral initiatives are also common. Maritime Domain Awareness initiatives between Australia and India are mentioned, a topic which has been escalated to a priority for the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue of Australia, India, the United States and Japan.³⁸ Others have noted a new Asian ‘maritime minilateralism’ and hailed the emergence of security triangles such as the United States-Japan-Australia, the United States-Japan-India and Japan-India-Australia.³⁹ The White Paper also adds:

Through our diplomatic and operational engagement, we will strive to ensure international law, especially UNCLOS, is respected and implemented to protect freedom of navigation and uphold the sovereign rights of coastal states in their exclusive economic zones. Australia will continue to exercise our rights to freedom of navigation and overflight, consistent with long-standing policy, and conduct cooperative activities with other countries consistent with international law.⁴⁰

Non-state actors such as Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue (AP4D) foster important collaborations in maritime security engagement with Southeast Asia⁴¹ and IUU fishing amongst others.⁴² A recent maritime industry task force report has supported the Albanese government's policy of establishing a strategic fleet of at least 12 Australian-flagged and crewed merchant ships, which may ultimately comprise tankers, cargo, container, and roll-on-roll-off vessels.⁴³

Gaps in Australia's approach

As stated above, the major policy gap in Australia's approach is the absence of a maritime or Blue Security strategy.

Joined-upness is an ongoing challenge, especially as responsibility for Blue Security and oceans are spread across many departments and agencies, requiring cooperation. However, there are positive examples, such as the highly effective interface between the Department of Defence and the Border Force's maritime unit.⁴⁴

A lack of focus is an issue cited by some. While Australia puts significant efforts into maritime security engagement with many nations in the region – across bilateral, trilateral, minilateral and multilateral fora – some experts have argued that Australia should focus principally on 'ramping up Defence Diplomacy with Indonesia, focusing squarely on maritime security' because the perennial goal of keeping any potential adversary's military at a distance would be much harder to achieve without Indonesia's help.⁴⁵

But ultimately the most serious gap in Australia's approach is a shortage of vessels and firepower to enforce Blue Security policies. A somewhat crude measure of fleet firepower is the number of vertical launch system cells deployable. In 1995, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) possessed 368 missile cells on its major surface combatants, but by 2020, that had reduced to 208, a 43 per cent reduction.⁴⁶ A challenging ratio also emerges when considering the relatively small number of naval and patrol vessels available, versus the responsibility for the third largest exclusive economic zone in the world. In fact, for this reason, Australia ranked 'unexpectedly' poorly in one of the rare attempts to index maritime enforcement capacity.⁴⁷ And in relation to trade protection and SLOC – depending on the threat – the story is again of 'insufficient ADF assets to protect all essential merchant shipping'.⁴⁸ Accordingly, the 2024 Independent Analysis into Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet 2024 called for 7-11 general purpose frigates to replace the retiring ANZAC class ships, for 6 Large Optionally Crewed Surface Vessels (LOSVs) and a total force of 25 minor vessels.⁴⁹

Recommendations and conclusion

This chapter's key recommendation is the creation of an Office of Oceans and Maritime Affairs (OOMA) located in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, a proposal best articulated by Bateman and Bergin in 2009. Such an office could drive the production of a Blue Security strategy, integrating traditional and non-traditional maritime issues, and encompassing the whole-of-government

efforts.⁵⁰ There have been repeated calls for a maritime strategy in recent years, one which focusses not just on traditional threats and military responses, but ‘recognising the broad sweep of Australia’s maritime security interests and building on opportunities for regional partnerships and cooperation in the maritime domain’.⁵¹ Australia needs to foreground the nature and extent of the security threats it faces across its crucial maritime domains.⁵² There has been longstanding, but increasing calls for a clearly articulated national maritime security strategy for engagement in the Indo-Pacific.⁵³

Further, it would be crucial that a Blue Security strategy be vertically integrated into a National Security Strategy, a pinnacle document which would analyse the full range of security challenges that Australia confronts from great power war to cyber-attacks, transnational crime and the challenges posed by climate change.⁵⁴ Not only would the goal be to ensure the National Security Strategy is sufficiently ‘blue’. However, the integrated maritime security-to-national security strategy described could also yield a rare species of situation: maritime issues with terrestrial solutions. For example, Australia’s lack of domestic liquid fuel production, refining or storage capacity is well known. The reliance on refined products from Asian ‘mega-refineries’ in locations such as Singapore and South Korea present obvious complications in time of conflict.⁵⁵ From a purely maritime security perspective, it is often seen as an issue of SLOC and naval trade protection. Considering the problem beyond the maritime lens, we can see the obvious land-based solution that increasing domestic reserves of refined petroleum would reduce the risk to maritime trade and the potential burden on the navy. And from the environmental perspective, for example, efforts already underway to create a sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry in Australia could similarly reduce the risks of reliance on maritime-borne petroleum supplies.⁵⁶

Such an office would provide the ‘joined-upness’ central coordination of maritime policy and high-level public–private sector advice on marine industry and ocean affairs.⁵⁷ It could study lessons learned from the interface between the Defence and Border Force marine unit for application to similar bureaucratic situations.

Additionally, it would serve as a much-needed single point of contact for international maritime security cooperation,⁵⁸ but also having the potential to drive focused maritime diplomacy with important neighbours like Indonesia. One example of the latent possibilities is the annual Maritime Strategic Studies Period, a two-week course in maritime law and naval strategy delivered to emerging leaders in the TNI-AL at Seskoal, Jakarta. The little-known course has been taught by RAN officers and Australian academics for more than two decades, and is precisely the kind of high-trust partnership which could benefit from high-level focus and expansion.

The chapter’s second key recommendation is for an expansion in Australia’s navy and patrol boat fleet. The ambitions outlined in the Independent Analysis into Navy’s Surface Combatant Fleet released in early 2024 are welcome, but much more work remains in selecting a general-purpose frigate design and funding its

construction, let alone the realisation of actual LOSVs from the prototypes which currently exist.

In conclusion, Australia has little choice but to leave behind self-criticism over historical sea blindness and look forward through a Blue Security lens. No longer can the nation entirely rely on great and powerful allies to make up the shortfall in maritime capability. Nor can the debate remain siloed in traditional vs non-traditional maritime security perspectives, a choice venue for academic point scoring, but one which leaves policy-makers in the dark. An office to develop a Blue Security strategy is just a crucial first step, before ensuring it ultimately informs and influences a national security strategy, and ultimately backed by a fleet adequate to the task.

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3 Bangladesh

*Lailufar Yasmin*¹

Bangladesh recently unveiled its own Indo-Pacific Outlook (IOU),² an important maritime document that has been in development for a while. The focus on Bangladesh's policies and priorities has been a matter of discussion since Bangladesh ensured its unfettered maritime access to the Bay of Bengal through the resolution of two maritime boundary settlements with its large neighbours, Myanmar and India, in 2012 and 2014, respectively. Often identified as a 'victim of geography', Bangladesh's geographical reality has not been favourable, to say the least. In a quirk of history and the consequent partition of the subcontinent, Bangladesh found itself wedged between India and Myanmar, bound to share the fifth largest land boundary in the world with India and a concave nature of coastal belt contested by both its neighbours. Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific era truly began with finding its 'third neighbor',³ the Bay of Bengal, as it was identified so by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). Bangladesh decided to redefine the concept of the neighbourhood by including both land-centric and maritime perspectives as this provided the country a unique edge, given its geographic constraints. Its geographic location turned into a boon and a perfect entry point into the Bay of Bengal for the two landlocked countries of South Asia – Nepal and Bhutan, and also for landlocked Northeast India.

This chapter takes its key analysis from the perspectives of 'Blue Security', an emerging concept that offers a fresh look at strategic issues emerging from the seas. While 'maritime security' is more frequently used to refer to different types of security threats emerging from the seas, scholars now believe that a fresh look is required to understand and explain the entire gamut of strategic challenges of a similar nature. Using 'Blue Security' as a new framework of analysis is not simply a terminological shift but also introducing a 'holistic concept of security'⁴ that has rather remained fragmented and sporadic. This concept of Blue Security speaks of state and non-state cooperation and tying the relationships between traditional and non-traditional security threats. From this perspective, the Blue Security outlook is a 21st-century concept that plans to contextualise multifaceted dimensions of security. Consequently, this chapter examines Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific moment, and Bangladesh's key Blue Security interests and priorities and how these have geopolitical implications regionally and outside the region as well. These shall be discussed in the context of its priorities and interests as set forth in Bangladesh's IOU,

and the approaches adopted by Bangladesh to deal with its Blue Security interests, priorities and the process of operationalisation. The chapter also explains that Bangladesh requires capacity-building to fulfil its maritime goals and objectives.

Bangladesh's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Each actor looks at the Indo-Pacific region from its own vantage point. For the United States (US), the Pacific Ocean is the key to the Indo-Pacific region, while for India, it is the Indian Ocean. For Bangladesh, its concern begins from the Bay of Bengal and extends towards the Indo-Pacific, albeit with some pragmatic considerations.

The IOU, which is a key document outlining Bangladesh's maritime interests and priorities, takes a strategic approach in defining the region. This can be identified as a key *strategic pillar* of the document that carefully clarifies the interests, objectives and implementation areas in the Indo-Pacific without categorising it as a 'region'. In other words, Bangladesh recognises the fluidity of the region and therefore, carefully keeps itself away from strictly defining the boundaries or content of the region. Thus, Bangladesh does not overtly subscribe to any particular country's definition of the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific strategy papers of the US, India, Canada and France are but a few examples of incongruity in defining the Indo-Pacific region. For Bangladesh, thus, the IOU not only represents a strategic message conveyed to the world but also a way to identify the fragmentation of the Indo-Pacific from its own vantage point.

Bangladesh's maritime interests involve two maritime geographic regions – its immediate neighbourhood in the Bay of Bengal and the broader and more comprehensive Indo-Pacific neighbourhood. As stated before, for an immediate littoral state of the Bay, Bangladesh has traditional and non-traditional security interests, although for obvious reasons the emphasis weighs more on non-traditional security issues. Bangladesh successfully resolved maritime boundary disputes with Myanmar and India in 2012 and 2014, respectively, both using international maritime dispute resolution processes under the auspices of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. For Bangladesh, this has ensured defining its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf, both its inner and outer perimeters contributing to ensuring its sovereign access to the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh has gained 118,813 square kilometres of liquid territories in the sea as a result of resolving the disputes.

Security for Bangladesh means securing development priorities for its growing population, where coordination between its land-based and ocean-based resources is a necessity. The Outlook clearly states the interests and priorities of Bangladesh, which seeks to achieve 'a free, open, peaceful, secure, and inclusive Indo-Pacific for the shared prosperity for all'. For Bangladesh, the question of inclusivity emerges from its engagement with a number of actors who may have competing interests. Bangladesh's conceptualisation of the issue dates back to two key events. In the very first International Workshop organised by the MoFA on Blue Economy, the question of inclusivity and people-centrism were highlighted.⁵ Bangladesh

continued on the same trajectory in its joint declaration with France during the state visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in November 2021, where Bangladesh emphasised the issue of inclusivity. The Joint Communique of Bangladesh and France, therefore, identified the need for an ‘inclusive’ Indo-Pacific, which later was reflected in France’s Indo-Pacific Strategy, France being one of the few Western nations to really emphasise the concept of inclusivity of all the actors in the Indo-Pacific region. Although Japan does not have any Indo-Pacific strategy as such, one of the key markers of its Free and Open Indo-Pacific is also inclusivity.⁶

In the maritime domain, the term ‘secure’ has a broader understanding from Bangladesh’s point of view, one that reflects the multifaceted ‘Blue Security’ concept outlined in this book. The concept of Blue Security recognises that challenges in the maritime domain are complex and interconnected. It requires concerted efforts from all actors concerned, which refer to both state and non-state actors. The transnational nature of maritime security challenges compels international actors to join hands together in understanding various nuances of security, which refers to a ‘blue turn’ and consequently to ‘Blue Security’ lexicons of international security.

Bangladesh refers to ‘security’ being not only a military-centric concept but also the security threats that emanate from non-state actors as well as transnational actors. In other words, it aims to prioritise non-traditional sources of security, which is quite an addition to how the contemporary global outlook on ‘security’ is shaped. With the rising geostrategic rivalry coming to the Indo-Pacific, views on security traversed back to the Cold War era of high politics. It is once again driven by geopolitical competition and the creation of bloc-centric views, where shades of grey do not matter. The latest statements issued after the end of the G-7 Summit is a testament to this point. Instead, from the perspective of Bangladesh, such a view once again is set to create a dividing line between countries, which is a path increasingly being shunned by many. For Bangladesh, security does not entail such divisive international politics rather the act of utterance of ‘security’ is indicative of a comprehensive understanding of security. Bangladesh has a number of central concerns in this context, including in terms of Blue Security specifically.

Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies of the world and the second largest economy with the highest per capita income in South Asia. For a country that started off with zero foreign currency, this is no mean feat. This drew the attention of the world – particularly to learn about Bangladesh’s secret to success. Bangladesh’s economists have emphasised that key areas such as agriculture, paying attention to the rural economy, involvement of women in the workforce and ensuring local-level health issues have paid off for Bangladesh in the long run. As a prominent Bangladesh economist pointed out, Bangladesh has simply ‘done it’ its own way, experimenting with its knowledge and the resources at hand instead of blindly following western practices.⁷

Bangladesh’s economy, however, has a unique characteristic or vulnerability as its import and export destinations are in opposite parts of the world. Bangladesh’s major export items are destined for the Global North – the United States, Europe and Japan. On the other hand, its major import items come from Asian countries, primarily India and China. Along with this vulnerability, Bangladesh lacks its own

deep-sea port and maintains a traditional dependence on ports in Sri Lanka and Singapore. This led to Bangladesh taking the initiative in building its own deep-sea port, which brought about strategic competition among different actors in Bangladesh. After the Sonadia deep-sea port project, to be constructed by China, was cancelled, Bangladesh is now building its first deep sea port in Matarbari with Japanese assistance. This has a major geopolitical significance since this shall make Bangladesh's deep-sea port operational for the land-locked countries of South Asia – Nepal and Bhutan – as well as for the landlocked region of India – Northeast India. This, for the first time, has led to a trilateral initiative involving Bangladesh, India and Japan in South Asia, which is considered as 'new' for India to delve into such a cooperative framework in the region with a third party.⁸ Bangladesh's geographical location is central, as the arrangement shows, to the development of the Northeast region of India, given India's own deep-sea ports have little or no value for that region. The Moheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI),⁹ supported by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) identifies Bangladesh's geopolitical centrality in the region.¹⁰

Bangladesh's infrastructural development has also led to reinvigorating its other ports, such as increasing efficiency of the Chittagong Port and building of Bay Terminals. In addition, increasing operations at the Mongla port after the inauguration of the Padma bridge, makes the southwestern part of the region more accessible for the rest of the country. Bangladesh's maritime interests in the region are inextricably linked with overland strategic implications. A region that has the least economic integration – around 5.5 per cent only – needs more connectivity and ports that can ensure its economic growth. Bangladesh's long-term strategic interest and growth potential are keenly tied to this.

For Bangladesh, the complexities between traditional and non-traditional aspects of security are another area that has received less attention. There is an indelible link between resource depletion in territorial waters and joblessness of the dependents that may have wider impacts on both maritime domains or in the adjacent land areas in terms of rising criminal activities. Although piracy in Bangladesh's coastal water has reduced significantly, areas of resource depletion and its impacts have been a less studied area so far.¹¹ Similarly, maritime mixed migration is another area of concern for Bangladesh. The area between Teknaf in Bangladesh and Maungdaw in Myanmar is where maritime mixed migration of refugees and persecuted Rohingyas takes place. This is one of the areas that creates multifaceted challenges for Bangladesh.

Global climate change has localised impacts and the Bay of Bengal is not immune to this. The Bay is one of the most cyclone-prone regions of the world. Similarly, pollution of different kinds is increasing in the Bay, which needs to be attended to not only through statist lenses but also through a regional approach. According to the Global Climate Index, Bangladesh stands as the seventh most vulnerable country in the world. Bangladesh's interests, therefore, lie in identifying issues that result from global climate change and consequently building a regional framework of cooperation, which will be discussed in the last substantive section. Bangladesh's maritime interests and priorities are, thus, deftly woven into a multifaceted understanding of security.

Bangladesh's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

Bangladesh's entry to the maritime domain has hinged on its maritime boundary delimitation issues with its neighbours. As soon as these issues were resolved, the Bay of Bengal stood as an untapped opportunity for Bangladesh to cultivate. A country whose narrative used to be a 'riverine country' in its textbooks, due to the crisscrossing of rivers in its deltaic land, started to identify itself as a 'maritime country'. Bangladesh's total sea area was 1.4 times bigger than its total land area after it established its sovereign rights in the Bay of Bengal. While 94 per cent of Bangladesh's international trade is carried out by sea, about 30 million people of the country are directly dependent on the sea economy in the coastal belts of Bangladesh.¹² To this end, the government of Bangladesh (GoB) initiated 'Blue Economy Initiative' to fully harness the potential of its oceanic resources. For Bangladesh, the key areas would be in-depth research and policy development in the areas of shipping and port facilities, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, energy, biotechnology and marine genetic resources and submarine mining, as outlined by the MoFA. Developing the Blue Ocean initiative is seen as 'the maritime pillar of the future strategy',¹³ which outlines inclusive growth for Bangladesh keeping its short-term and long-term maritime objectives in mind. At the policy-making level, research initiatives are pursued through organising international workshops on Blue Economy in 2014 and 2017, where experts from all around the world shared their research experiences and how these can be relevant and contextualised for Bangladesh. The shipping sector is a shining example among many in the context of the blue economy initiative. Bangladesh's shipping sector is not only booming but is also indicating positive growth in terms of income and revitalising Bangladesh's trade. Since the rise in trade, the shipping sector showed a trend of continuous growth in 2021 and 2022,¹⁴ along with opening up direct shipping to European destinations, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain.¹⁵ Bangladesh's ship-breaking and ship-building industries have picked up pace in recent years. While Bangladesh has the largest ship-breaking industry in the world, it is not immune to challenges. While there are allegations of human rights violations in this sector, Bangladesh's adoption of the Hong Kong Convention is set to propel Bangladesh into a 'green' ship-recycling era.¹⁶

While work on the areas of blue economy continues, one cannot shy away from recognising the strategic game coming to Bangladesh over the access to Bangladesh's ports and how contests over these strategic assets may have greater implications for regional security dynamics in future. Bangladesh's growing geopolitical significance in the region of South Asia, and especially as lynchpin at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal, did not escape the eyes of international observers, including the great powers of the US and China. It is in this context that Bangladesh decided to outline its own understanding, priorities and objectives about the Indo-Pacific as the 'Indo-Pacific Outlook'. The IOU contains four guiding principles and 15 objectives. It clearly outlines Bangladesh's core interests as a sovereign country and identifies the immediate and outer areas of interests that are pertinent for the people

of Bangladesh. In other words, the document outlines a people-centric approach that deftly blends Bangladesh's maritime and land-centric interests into one thread. This is important because there cannot be any clear demarcation between threats where there are strong interlinkages of the issues, even if they originate exclusively in the maritime domain. Therefore, issues like bringing gender perspectives in security in line with Bangladesh's international commitments to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) and fighting against terrorism – which one may argue falls within the broader perimeter of security – are also significant objectives for Bangladesh to identify and achieve in its IOU.

The IOU clearly declares Bangladesh's founding foreign policy principle of neutrality once again – 'Friendship towards all, malice toward none' – as well as maintaining territorial sovereignty as one of the key principles. Alongside this, the document also reiterates Bangladesh's commitment to multilateralism by declaring that it adheres 'to the relevant UN treaties and international conventions, as applicable, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)'. While MoFA stands as the diplomatic wing for outlining Bangladesh's international policies, in terms of carrying these out in the field, it is the Bangladesh Navy (BN) that is in charge of operationalising a secure maritime domain. The Bangladesh Coast Guard directly looks into enforcing law and order in the territorial waters of the country, while the BN works on securing the outer perimeter of Bangladesh's sovereign waters, where maritime patrol aircraft support its long-range surveillance. Also, the Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) has maritime search and rescue (SAR) capacity using its AW139 helicopters. Bangladesh Navy also carries out joint naval operations with navies of other countries, such as military exercises and patrolling in the Bay of Bengal. A number of foreign naval vessels also came to Bangladesh to pay goodwill visits, including those from the United Kingdom, Australia and China. Australia, in particular, has been keen on developing a defence partnership with Bangladesh given Australia's Defence Strategic Update of 2020 identified the northeast Indian Ocean as a priority area for the country.¹⁷

Bangladesh's merchant shipping is under the direct supervision of the Bangladesh Shipping Ministry, which also oversees the inland and maritime ports. There has been phenomenal growth in the number of Bangladesh's merchant ships being 43 in 2019 to 80 in 2021. This is indicative of the growth in the ports and logistics infrastructure and the kind of business opportunities that are going to unfold in this sector in the near future.¹⁸ The Shipping Ministry has short-term, medium-term and long-term strategy papers on the blue economy keeping in mind Bangladesh's growing maritime needs.¹⁹ This particular document identifies bilateral as well as multilateral regional cooperation that will enhance Bangladesh's capacity building as well as explore resources in the maritime domain that can further Bangladesh's development goals.

Gaps in Bangladesh's approach

Bangladesh is set to emerge as a major maritime nation in South Asia. To fulfil this particular objective, a number of areas may need more attention than are usually given. One of the key areas is building a local knowledge base based on

more endowment in the areas of research and development (R&D). In the maritime policy-making area, indigenous knowledge building (IKB) can inform solid policy-making and identify the areas where particular international cooperation is needed and if such cooperation can be obtained through bilateral and/or multilateral frameworks.

The IOU is only the beginning of Bangladesh formulating its specific maritime-area documents, strategies and outlooks. It is in this context that Bangladesh first needs to formulate a 'National Strategic Outlook/National Strategy Paper' through which broader areas of security threats, the changing geopolitical landscape and possible black swan events can be identified. The next step would be formulating its maritime strategic outlook. Such an outlook can be formulated keeping in mind two particular areas – 'Naval Strategic Outlook', about Bangladesh's hard power, and 'Non-Traditional Security Outlook in the Region and Beyond', which is more pertinent for promoting maritime cooperation among the Bay of Bengal littorals as well as among Indo-Pacific countries. Through a thorough study, as stated before, the areas of technical and technological cooperation are identified to meet Bangladesh's particular needs.

The areas of humanitarian disaster and management, especially in the coastal areas, where cooperation among Indo-Pacific actors can solidify more and grow. The Sundarbans, the wall that often protects Bangladesh from major cyclones, needs to be studied more deeply through IKB and learning from the locals. This particular understanding leads to the next issue – the connection between the centre and the periphery. Often, policies are made in Dhaka – the capital city – which may not be aware of local sensitivities of coastal areas. Bangladesh has started paying attention to this, which is reflected in its building of a marine museum in Kuakata (a southwestern beach city) and a river museum, showcasing Bangladesh's rivers in Patuakhali. What is required now is a marine museum and research centre based in Cox's Bazar with different departments and research cells. This would indicate the country's changing attitude and look into harnessing a 'blue growth' comprehensively, where both inland and oceanic marine resources would be paid keen attention.

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is another critical area for Bangladesh. While it entails a comprehensive knowledge of the maritime domain including inland waters and seas, there has been a traditional hesitation of Bengalis to sail through the seas, which was a direct product of colonialism. The cultural construction of crossing the sea as a religiously prohibited act as well as the rupture created in terms of the Bay of Bengal's connectivity with the other regions during the colonial period together have shaped a sea blindness especially in the Bengal region.²⁰ On the other hand, the Bay of Bengal has been a thriving area of connection among different communities across the sea – it was the colonial intrusion that limited such interactions. It has been argued that in contemporary times, there has been a limited MDA in Bangladesh's discourse, where collaborations with other countries may positively contribute to increasing MDA.²¹ Bangladesh Navy is working periodically in developing MDA among the sailors and other actors, often on its own and often in collaboration with other external actors.²² Despite this, Bangladesh needs more MDA activities both within the naval force and at the societal level to create holistic knowledge about MDA.

In the areas of climate change, Bangladesh is working to build ‘climate defence’ and ‘disaster defence’ mechanisms. Its internal resilience building and response strategy to natural disasters have already caught global attention.²³ Despite this, Bangladesh needs external funding to respond to challenges of global climate change and other associated environmental problems. To address and mitigate the challenges emanating from global climate change, Bangladesh’s appeal to three funding forums such as Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund and Least Developed Countries Fund has led to the country receiving only \$597.4 million. What Bangladesh needs is assistance in the areas of technology transfer to adapt to the challenges caused by climate change and other environmental hazards including but not limited to sea-level rise, saline intrusion, drought, flooding, desertification and air pollution. It is worth mentioning that France’s recognition of the first climate vulnerable refugee originated from Bangladesh in December 2021. Investing in improving environmental conditions in Bangladesh, therefore, would work for the benefit of the global community. Despite Bangladesh being the first developing country to adopt a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in 2009 and the key role played in addressing climate change,²⁴ it still has a long way to go where a concerted and long-term partnership with the Indo-Pacific nations can hold benefit for all and reduce the risk of a growing climate refugees in the region.

The existence of a ‘dead zone’ in the Bay of Bengal has recently been discovered.²⁵ A dead zone, or hypoxia, refers to maritime areas where there are reduced levels of oxygen in the water. Marine life can either die in these zones, or they will (if they can) leave the area. The size of the dead zone in the Bay is about half the size of Bangladesh, 70 metres deep and still widening. This calls for both regional and extra-regional collaboration as this is neither Bangladesh’s exclusive problem and Bangladesh cannot address this alone. This issue once again brings into question cross-disciplinary issues as it involves at least ‘physical, biological and geochemical, and through observation, experiments and modeling’ to understand and address the situation.²⁶

For the Indian Ocean region, an issue of utmost urgency is for countries to invest in strengthening maritime SAR in the region. There are but a few maritime SAR centres in the entire India Ocean region, although the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has highlighted and taken up the initiative for strengthening SAR in the region. For Bangladesh, this is an area where actors with knowledge and technical know-how can contribute. Similarly, what Bangladesh needs in its maritime area is a 3D seismic survey to tap the potential of offshore hydrocarbon reserve exploration.²⁷

The coastal belt of the Bay of Bengal is home to about 200 million people, whose living and livelihood largely depend on harnessing sea resources. This often leads to unsustainable fishing practices – a glaring example could be the ‘pink gold rush’ (increase in the farming of prawns) – in the coastal lands as well as unsustainable fishing in the territorial waters.²⁸ This exacerbated the existing environmental crisis due to climate change, leading to increasing salinity and rising of the sea beds. What is required is not always scientific knowledge but to make the scientific knowledge palatable for the local community so it will be more

acceptable to those who have to deal with these challenges on a day-to-day basis. Connecting the centre and the periphery with a bottom-up approach is required to address these issues. This is where state and non-state actors must work hand-in-hand to understand the reality and reflect that into the policy-making process.

Recommendations and conclusion

As a littoral to the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is not a minor actor in the region, and it has significant national and regional Blue Security interests. Rather, its geopolitical location makes it quite an indispensable actor in the region, especially in the context of regional connectivity. At the policy-making level, these issues are increasingly being reflected, although Bangladesh still lacks any strategy paper on the Indo-Pacific or on the Bay of Bengal.

Both an Indo-Pacific strategy paper and a Bay of Bengal maritime strategy are needed in a changing world order, where the nature of Blue Security threats are interwoven and are transnational. Bangladesh's clear perspectives and official documents would serve as a guide for identifying areas that would need immediate, medium-term and long-term attention. The need for collaborative efforts in a globalised world cannot be ignored. Oceans, *mare liberum*, make us all one. The challenges emanating from the oceans need collective responses. Beyond the territorial sea and the EEZ lies another reality, where multinational cooperation would make life easier for all. Not all countries have similar capabilities – cooperation, therefore, is the order of the day. As Bangladesh's strategic significance increases, so does the need for its own capacity-building. Some of these areas are identified in this chapter. There can be a number of friends for Bangladesh with whom it can work to create the sea as a safe environment for all.

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4 China

Edward Sing Yue Chan

The People's Republic of China (hereafter 'China') has historically been considered as a continental power with limited interest in maritime politics. The focus of the Chinese civilisation was primarily on maritime trade and coastal defence, indicating a limited ambition in exploring the oceans or prioritising maritime security. However, with the rise of China's maritime economy and the escalation of tensions around maritime disputes in the region, scholars, and policymakers from China began to engage in discussions of maritime security and sea power in the mid-2000s.¹

In 2012, China announced its intention to 'construct a strong maritime state' (*jianshe haiyang qiangguo*). However, China does not officially define maritime security. Instead, it is typically viewed as a subfield within two policy areas: firstly, as a subset of maritime policy focusing on security distinct from other subfields, such as economy, culture, technology, and environment; and secondly, as a subfield within geopolitical policy specific to maritime domains.² This comprehensive understanding of maritime security in China reflects its association with multiple policy areas. This chapter demonstrates how China's maritime ambitions, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, have become more evident, and how the Chinese government has revealed its aspirations in various dimensions of Blue Security, including national security, ensuring the safety of sea lanes, and addressing blue crimes.

China's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

China's interests in Blue Security stem from concerns over territorial disputes and economic development, and its aspiration to become a more significant regional power in the Indo-Pacific. The Chinese government often employs the phrase 'safeguard maritime rights and interests' (*weihu haiyang quan yi*), although there is no definitive interpretation of this concept. The discourse of these 'rights and interests' can generally be categorised into two types.

The first pertains to sovereign rights. In China, this is understood as the legitimate authority of an independent state to administer or govern within a certain 'blue territory' (*lanse guotu*) under international law. It encompasses the privilege to occupy,

safeguard, develop, and exploit maritime resources within the designated area.³ Policy documents often reference the legal aspect of international laws, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to justify China's sovereign claims at sea. In addition, China asserts certain forms of 'historic rights' (*lishixing quanyi*) within the nine-dash line in the South China Sea and Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. However, there is no uniform understanding of these rights, nor has the government provided a comprehensive explanation of their implications.⁴ Maintaining territorial integrity has always been a top priority for the Communist Party of China (CPC), as it is closely linked to the party legitimacy and the political narrative of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation from the century of humiliation.

The second type of interest centres around economic interests and rights. Chinese scholars generally interpret China's blue economic rights broadly as the freedom to conduct maritime activities.⁵ This encompasses the right to access natural resources in the seabed, construct artificial islands, conduct scientific research, protect and preserve marine environment, and develop maritime industries and technology.⁶ China's Blue Security concerns arise from the expansion of economic interests. With a significant dependence on sea lines of communications (SLOCs) for its economic well-being, China has an increasing need to protect its maritime trade and exports. Over 64 per cent of China's maritime trade transited the South China Sea in 2016, totalling approximately US\$874 billion.⁷ Beyond the adjacent waters, China has established trade links with over 600 international ports, and Chinese firms own one or more terminals at 96 ports, many of which are located along the Indian Ocean.⁸ The importance of SLOCs is reflected in the Belt and Road Initiative, which highlights the strategic and economic importance of sea lanes for China. Consequently, as stated in the 2013 National Defence White Paper (NDWP), China is committed to safeguarding its citizens' personal and property safety, ensuring access of marine resource (particularly energy resources), and securing strategic sea lanes. These interests are often referred to as 'overseas interests' (*haiwai liyi*).⁹

There is an additional strategic dimension to China's Blue Security interests. While China refrains from adopting the term 'Indo-Pacific' as part of its geopolitical narrative, China promotes its maritime rights and interests in part to gain respect and legitimacy as a regional maritime power.¹⁰ China participates in the construction of ocean governance mechanisms, such as environmental protection and fighting against blue crimes, to ensure that its own economic, political, and environmental rights and interests at sea are respected and addressed within the maritime order.¹¹ For instance, during the negotiation of the 2020 *Distant Water Fisheries Management Regulation*, China argued that the governance of the global commons should not apply to maritime areas involving disputes concerning territoriality, sovereignty or maritime jurisdiction.¹² The rationale was to protect China's sovereign interests in the South China Sea. Blue crimes and environmental sustainability are only selectively addressed by China depending on their other national security priorities.

China's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

While the Chinese government has not officially released a comprehensive maritime strategy, it has published several documents that address some aspects of maritime security. For instance, the State Council issued the *China's 21st Century Maritime Agenda* in 1996, then the *Development of China's Maritime Industries* in 1998, which outlined China's sustainable development policy.¹³ Since 2003, the State Council has issued the *National Maritime Economic Development Proposal* in conjunction with each Five-Year Plan (FYP) – a series of social and economic development initiatives issued by the CPC every five years, some of which relate to the maritime.¹⁴

The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) also has a naval doctrine outlined in the NDWP from time to time.¹⁵ The PLAN plays a pivotal role in China's approach to maritime security given that it has been a dominant player in coastal and offshore defence for decades. Since the mid-1980s, the Chinese navy has adopted the 'near sea active defence' strategy, which tasks the PLAN with defending China's territorial and maritime interests within the Bohai Sea, Yellow Sea, and the East and South China Seas.¹⁶ In 2015, the NDWP further introduced the strategy of 'far sea protection' as an extension of the near sea defence in China's naval doctrine.¹⁷ It emphasises the need for the navy to be capable of safeguarding China's maritime rights and interests beyond its adjacent waters. Over the past decade, the PLAN has made significant advancements in its ocean navigation capabilities. From 2013 to 2020, the PLAN commissioned several long-distance travel vessels, including aircraft carriers, cruisers, and destroyers. Furthermore, in 2017, China established its first offshore base in Djibouti, citing the need for logistic support during far sea operations. This move also facilitated an expansion of PLAN presence in the Indian Ocean, further strengthening China's maritime capabilities and influence in those regions.

Beside the Navy, various government agencies, play maritime roles. Relevant central government bodies include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Defence, alongside several other departments responsible for specific policy areas such as economic development, law enforcement, and resource management.¹⁸ The overlapping areas of authority among these agencies sometimes result in delayed or conflicting policy responses. In fact, the Chinese government has attempted to enhance coordination in maritime policy at the national level, but this has not been effective. The Central Committee of the CPC established the Maritime Rights and Interests Leading Small Group in late 2012, but it was disbanded in 2018.¹⁹ Discussions about creating the National Maritime Committee under the State Council have not been implemented.²⁰

China's current primary maritime law enforcement agency is the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG), which operates under supervision of the People's Armed Police, under the dual command of the Ministry of Public Security and the Central Military Commission. The CCG organisational structure is inspired by the US Coast Guard model.²¹ It is an integrated law enforcement body responsible for safeguarding China's security interests in claimed maritime jurisdiction. The CCG is now one

of the largest and best-equipped coastguards globally, effectively functioning as a paramilitary agency capable of competing with smaller navies in Southeast Asia.²² The People's Armed Force Maritime Militia (PAFMM) also functions as a 'third sea force', with reports of Chinese militia vessels appearing in the South China Sea to harass fishing boats and oil and gas vessels from other countries, preventing them from exploiting marine resources in the region.²³ While the PAFMM is not under formal military command, it is organised and trained by the PLAN.²⁴

China also seeks to expand its influence in ocean governance by addressing Blue Security issues. China has demonstrated a willingness to cooperate in various maritime security affairs, particularly in areas unrelated to territorial disputes, such as in joint law enforcement training.

The 2021 FYP emphasised China's goal of promoting the 'establishment of a fair and reasonable international maritime order' and formulating a 'maritime community of common destiny' (*haiyang mingyun gongtong ti*).²⁵ This stems from a perception in China that it lacks 'discourse power' (*huayu quan*). That is, debates over the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration ruling or the United States' freedom of navigation operations have harmed China's regional and global reputation.²⁶ Consequently, China has established platforms to articulate China's Blue Security interests and present itself as a reformer of the existing maritime order. China's use of 'discourse power' aims to earn respect and understanding from other countries, advance its national interests and elevate its international status through active involvement in maritime affairs.²⁷

Gaps in China's approach

China's approach to Blue Security as a rising maritime power faces several limitations. Firstly, there is competition among different ministries and departments vying for resources and influence. Although the MFA is not directly responsible for maritime affairs, it must be consulted on any foreign affairs-related activities. Given that maritime security is considered a geopolitical issue in China, the MFA is involved in territorial disputes negotiations, regional and international agreements, and maritime cooperation with other countries.²⁸ Yet, coordination of resources among domestic maritime actors remains weak, with fragmented maritime enforcement authorities. This phenomenon is usually described in a derogatory fashion by many Chinese experts as 'five dragons stirring up the sea' (*wulong naohai*).²⁹ Even after the CCG was established, and institutional reform occurred in 2018, the Maritime Safety Administration under the Ministry of Transport has not been merged, and still retains responsibilities for port control, supervision of maritime traffic safety and inspection of ships. Furthermore, national policy sometimes cannot be effectively implemented at the provincial level. For example, when China attempts to address illegal reclamation as a blue crime, national law enforcement agencies often do not have sufficient authority due to the lack of a legal framework. There are also cases where some grassroots governments are reluctant to follow the guideline due to economic interests and corruption, or even their involvement in illegal reclamation projects.³⁰

Secondly, China's focus on economic development often prioritises resource access over marine ecological concerns. Although the government does demonstrate its efforts in environmental sustainability, such as addressing climate change, marine ecological concerns have often been neglected. For example, China has been criticised for the lack of effort in addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, one of the prominent concerns in Blue Security, and has led to global food insecurity.³¹ Domestically, excessive reclamation has long been a problem because some coastal provinces depend on new land for economic profit, such as tourism and real estate. Although the government has recognised the issue, there are still obstacles for policy implementation, leading to prolonged durations to address the problems effectively.³²

Thirdly, China's presence in maritime security cooperation beyond East Asia is relatively limited due to the lack of operational experience for long-distance navigation. The escort mission in the Gulf of Aden has been the primary operation of the Chinese navy beyond the South China Sea. Accumulating overseas experience is an ongoing process for the PLAN as a maritime power. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted China's engagement in international maritime security cooperation by pausing some of its interactions with foreign navies.

China's naval expansion has generated concerns among regional powers, especially the United States, in the Indo-Pacific region. Although the US Navy still surpasses the PLAN in terms of the number of ships, fleet size, weaponry systems, offshore naval bases, and operational experience, it remains apprehensive about potential challenges to its status as a sole global maritime power since World War II.³³ Similarly, Japan, Australia, and India also share similar concerns, reflected in the revitalisation of the Quad.³⁴ Smaller states in Southeast Asia may be cautious about not openly antagonising China because of their economic ties, but they do recognise the importance of collective action and cooperation to counterbalance China's influence and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific. Accordingly, a dilemma arises from China's involvement in international maritime security affairs and its pursuit of overseas expansion.

One significant factor contributing to this dilemma is China's ambiguous distinction between law enforcement and military utilisation, which affects regional stability. For instance, the significant increase of patrol coastal combatants has blurred the boundary between coastguards and warships.³⁵ It may potentially lead to an arms race among law enforcement agencies in the South China Sea. Additionally, Article Six of the *Coast Guard Law*, enacted in 2021, authorises the CCG to 'use armed force, including shipborne or airborne weapons, in circumstances such as counter-terrorism missions or serious violence at sea'.³⁶ This law elicited controversy among foreign experts, suggesting that it 'contain[s] provisions that [are] clearly inconsistent with the freedoms of navigation that are expressly provided by UNCLOS'.³⁷ Consequently, countries in the Indo-Pacific region express concerns about China's interpretation of the rule of law, as it may challenge the existing maritime order or pose a threat to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Recommendations and conclusion

This chapter has suggested that China primarily seeks to advance its interests in Blue Security to safeguard maritime territory and economic development as it rises as a maritime power. As such, the state has developed a multifaceted strategy to bolster its naval, legal, and diplomatic advantage in the maritime domain. While some of the policies or activities, as discussed, have significantly contributed to the heightened instability in the region, often conflicting with the norms and interests of other countries, maritime engagement is imperative for both China and the Indo-Pacific. This chapter presents three policy recommendations for such engagement.

Firstly, it is crucial for China to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its interests and true intentions in maritime security from other countries. It is worth noting that although China rejects the adoption of concepts such as ‘Indo-Pacific’ and ‘maritime rules-based order’, its notion of ‘Blue Security’ bears relative similarity to many others. It encompasses a normative commitment to shaping a peaceful, stable, and equitable maritime order, alongside an integrated understanding of maritime security that acknowledges the interrelated nature of contemporary security challenges. On the one hand, Beijing must make its intentions and policy more transparent, allowing broader, and constructive public debates to ensure regional security in its broader sense. It also needs to accept other countries being critical to China’s efforts in asserting territorial control over global commons.

Secondly, China must recognise the growing significance of lawfare in maritime disputes. While focusing on asserting jurisdiction and exercising regulatory power as a means of projecting sea power, China has paid greater attention to issues such as interpretation of the rule of law, justification for the use of law enforcement agencies, and authorisation of the use of force. These activities have resulted in growing resentment among stakeholders in the region, contributing to heightened regional security concerns. As a responsible global player, China must play a crucial role in preserving regional prosperity and stability. Rather than treating regional flashpoints as testing grounds for addressing the big questions around regional security, Beijing should prioritise engaging in active dialogues with asymmetric countries in the region. This approach aligns with China’s own rhetoric and could possibly reduce ambiguity, misunderstanding, and coercion.

Thirdly, China should actively seek opportunities for more effective collaboration with other countries on non-disputed maritime security issues. Addressing maritime security challenges necessitates a multilateral approach, which contributes to the wider stability and governance of the ocean. Using China’s own rhetoric, it has made efforts to highlight its contribution to international security, particularly in environmental sustainability. Based on shared interests, China’s state and non-state actors should work towards more substantially addressing issues such as climate change, overfishing, and pollution, beyond the rhetoric.

Notes

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5 Fiji

Michael O'Keefe and Ilai (Jack) Moceica

Introduction

Fiji's outlook towards Blue Security is shaped by the fact that it has a small landmass but a large exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Fiji's national interests focus on the maritime domain, involving human, economic, and environmental security. However, maritime domain awareness is not mirrored in the security apparatus. Since independence in 1970, Fiji's security apparatus has focussed on the land domain; maintaining domestic security and United Nation's (UN) peacekeeping deployments. Despite operating several patrol craft its capacity for policing its EEZ is limited.

By contrast, at the regional level Fiji has a highly institutionalised response to managing maritime resources. Fiji ascribes to the Pacific Island Forum's *2050 Blue Pacific Strategy* and is an active member of regional fora, such as the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). Fiji's maritime security concerns are supported by aid donors. However, many donors also support the maintenance of a traditional security apparatus to counter geopolitical threats which are not a priority for Fiji. This mismatch in focus on internal and international security and human security reveals limitations in the capacity of the state to respond to Blue Insecurity.

This chapter will begin by outlining Fiji's security interests where the primary sources of both security and insecurity are located in the maritime domain. This leads to an extended discussion of how history and geography have shaped policy responses with a focus on how Fiji has responded to maritime insecurity independently through bilateral initiatives, regionalism, and internationalism. Despite the focus on marshalling resources from numerous sources, Fiji's capacity to respond to Blue Security challenges remains uncertain.

Fiji's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Fiji is an archipelagic state consisting of more than 300 islands in the South Pacific. At approximately 1.3 million square kilometres Fiji's EEZ is large, but the landmass of 18,300 square kilometres is relatively small.¹ Fiji's maritime interests focus on an orthodox approach to sovereignty in the maritime domain. This is reflected in Fiji's policing of its EEZ with respect to two of its core

threats: illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing and transnational crime. As is the case with other Pacific Island Countries (PICs) the orthodox view of analysing the state's strategic landscape is better conceptualised as its seascape.

Fiji's key interests and priorities focus on the maritime domain. It is the seascape that is the focus on Blue Security and *Insecurity* in Fiji. The Blue Security concept – as a multidimensional approach to security within the maritime domain focussed on law, order, and power – captures the essence of an approach that has evolved over decades. It connects very closely with the identification of maritime interests by PICs and aligns with the development of the Blue Pacific Narrative and the concept of a Blue Continent in the South Pacific.² Consequently, military security threats are but one aspect of Fiji's security outlook alongside human, environmental, and economic security.

It is noteworthy that Fiji's approach to sovereignty within its seascape is not focussed on defending the state from military threats. Fiji does not identify threat perceptions focussed on other states. An existential threat from a foreign military is treated as so unlikely that it is not identified as a policy priority.³ The overarching foreign and defence policy focus is on being 'Friends to all, enemies to none'. If there is an existential threat to Fiji then it is from climate change, and the threat is a human, environmental, and economic threat. Climate change is perceived as a multidimensional threat involving issues such as increased climactic events, rising sea levels, declining agricultural production, and fish migration.

The priority areas with respect to securing Fiji's maritime interests are combating transnational crime and maintaining sustainable fisheries in the face of IUU fishing. In the absence of territorial threats, Fiji's international interests reflect its position as a beneficiary of international laws and norms – with respect to regulating fisheries, and managing climate change. Fiji partners with states and international organisations to achieve its Blue Security objectives at domestic, regional, and international levels.

Fiji's core international security interests include:

- Support for the rules-based order.
- Support for international peace and security through UN peacekeeping.

Notably, support for the rules-based order does not equate to support for the ideologically charged 'Rules-Based Order', which helps drive the United States or Australian foreign policy.⁴ Rather it is an acknowledgement of the fact that small states approach international affairs from a different vantage to large states.⁵ Small states are net beneficiaries of the complex web of arrangements that regulate interstate behaviour. As such there is a coincidence of interests with Western perspectives, but far more flexibility with respect to human, environmental, and economic issues that align with Blue Security. In this respect, Fiji is very active on the international stage and has acted to support international governance. For example, in 2016 Fiji was elected to the Presidency of the UN General Assembly and was elected Chair of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change Conference of the Parties (COP23). These roles are unprecedented for a Pacific Small Island Developing State (PSIDS) and are reflective of Fiji's strategic culture.

Fiji's commitment to maintaining international peace and security also derives from its position as a potentially vulnerable state. At independence in 1970, there was debate in the international community over whether small states would be able to contribute as part of the obligations of statehood.⁶ Fiji inherited a British garrison force structure and decided to contribute to UN peacekeeping. This contribution has been longstanding and highly valued by the UN. It has also been a valid nation-building strategy with respect to the development of skills and remittances. However, the maintenance of army elements for peacekeeping and civil order has shaped Fiji's force structure whereby maritime forces have been relatively under-developed.

In December 2022 Fiji elected a new Coalition government, which replaced a party that had been in office for eight years and ruled by decree for another eight years. However, despite this significant shift in domestic politics, no revolution in Fiji's approach to Blue Security is expected. Given the domestic context it is understandable that the Coalition is focussed on domestic constituencies and challenges and has been largely reactive in foreign affairs. It is acknowledged that geopolitical tension between China and the west is framing how the region is viewed. As Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad noted, 'The Blue Pacific is only the frontline of the fault-lines of a new geopolitical order'.⁷ However, while geopolitics is viewed as the purview of China, the United States, and its allies, it is also acknowledged that Fiji can leverage the rising tensions and provide greater opportunities to further its national interests.

Other government declaratory policy statements highlight how Fiji both identifies climate change as its primary threat and how the maritime domain is at the forefront of national security considerations. For example, Prasad noted, 'No one knows more than us about the devastating impacts of climate change on our oceans – from collapsing reef systems to collapsing marine life, migrating fish stocks and deteriorating food security'.⁸ Fiji's security focus is firmly on the nexus of human, environmental and economic security issues in Fiji and the Pacific 'commonwealth'.

Rather than identifying as a PSIDS, Fiji labels itself as a 'large ocean state' amongst many. As such, government declaratory policy is aligned with the overarching approach of the PIF captured in the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*.⁹ In this conceptualisation the Blue Pacific continent is the world's largest continent with stewardship over 20 per cent of the world's EEZs. Stewardship is an important aspect of this conceptualisation of area and identity as, 'In a climate and food stressed future, blue foods from the Blue Pacific will play an important role for food security for all humanity'.¹⁰ This form of stewardship is consistent with maintaining communal indigenous resource rights that are enshrined in the constitution. While indigenous rights focus on 'ridge to reef' the state takes responsibility for the EEZ, and this is a key driver of maritime interests.

Fiji's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

The mainstay of Fiji's approach to foreign affairs is to maintain an outlook based on being 'friends to all, enemies to none'. This approach is based on its own unique strategic culture derived from historical and geographical attributes.

Historical legacies loom large in Fiji's strategic culture. Fiji was a colony of the British Empire from 1874 to 1971. Fiji was governed in a similar fashion to other colonies, with a few notable differences based on its 'late' colonisation and the fact that it voluntarily ceded sovereignty to the British.¹¹ Indigenous culture and rights were privileged due to the international state of play at the time, and this is reflected in the management of maritime resources to this day.

During this time Fiji became an important maritime waypoint in journeys across the Pacific with the associated investments in infrastructure that outpaced the outposts of other Empires in the Pacific. During World War II, Fiji became a strategic focal point first for New Zealand (NZ) and then US forces. This led to an increased focus on infrastructure including ports and airfields. Fijian forces were involved in garrison work and that provides the foundation for the organisation of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) today. Maritime defence was provided by allied forces, and this also has an impact to this day. Fijian forces also joined US forces in active combat in the strategic Solomons campaign and fought with distinction.¹² In fact, the Japanese forces that were bogged down and ultimately exhausted at Guadalcanal and the Battle of the Coral Sea were earmarked for an invasion of Fiji. This highlighted the value that Japan placed on the possession of Fiji as a regional hub.

Fiji's geostrategic position also strongly influences its foreign policy outlook. Fiji evolved into the 'hub of the Pacific' and this was reinforced by headquartering numerous key regional institutions that were developed as the region de-colonised from the 1970s. This includes Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies, such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) (1971) and the University of the South Pacific (1968). From the standpoint of trade it also includes head offices of major shipping, petroleum, and banking firms. This position meant that greater resources flowed into Fiji, with the attendant opportunities, but also led to the potential for increased vulnerability.

Fiji is the centre of regional diplomatic activity. The capital Suva is the conduit for engagement with large neighbours (Australia and NZ), new friends (China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea), and old friends who have rediscovered the Pacific (the United States and the United Kingdom). Being a diplomatic hub has led to relatively high investments in human capital, such as healthcare and education. It is also a gateway for foreign trade and investment in the region.

The vulnerabilities associated with the centralisation of institutional activity and trade in Fiji include increased population and urbanisation, transnational crime, human trafficking, drug smuggling, cybercrime, and unsustainable development such as overfishing, environmental degradation, and pollution. Clearly, these intersect with climate vulnerabilities¹³ and the *Blue Insecurity*.

Fiji defends its maritime security interests through active engagement in international and regional fora. For example, Fiji signed the *Convention on Biological*

Diversity in 1992 and produced a *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* in 2003, but it was not endorsed by the Cabinet until 2007. Fiji has also signed a range of associated biological diversity instruments, such as the *Cartagena Protocol* (2002), and *Nagoya Protocol* (2012). Fiji has also been active in the development of the World Trade Organisations (WTO)'s *Fisheries Subsidies Agreement*, which targets IUU fishing. Most international agreements are focussed on territorial ecology, but some include marine biodiversity. This emphasis on terrestrial diversity does not reflect Fiji's focus, but rather the state of play in the area. However, Fiji has taken advantage of the impetus in the international arena to further a Blue Security agenda.

A good example of leadership is Fiji's introduction of a unilateral moratorium on Deep Seabed Mining (DSM) in 2019. It followed this up at the 2022 Lisbon Oceans Conference by calling for a ten-year global moratorium to allow for adequate research to be conducted. Fiji also advocated for other PICs to follow suit. This issue is still playing out, but regardless of the outcome, it highlights Fiji's willingness to elevate Blue Security issues in its foreign policy and advocate for them amongst other PICs.

Fijian government activities in domestic and international arenas align with most PICs, which take a regional approach to maritime security. Fiji is a long-standing supporter of Pacific regionalism in its many forms. Suva is committed to the principles enshrined in various guiding documents of the pre-eminent regional institution, the PIF. For example, Fiji endorsed the 2003 *Pacific Plan*, which aimed to 'maximise sustainable returns from fisheries'.¹⁴ Fiji also endorsed every regional plan to strengthen cooperation in the face of what because to be known as Blue Security challenges: *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape* (2010), *The Framework for Pacific Regionalism* (2014), *The Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries* (2015), *The Blue Pacific Narrative* (2017), and *The Boe Declaration* (2018).

The current regional policy aligns with the PIF's *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. Fiji's strategy reinforces its longstanding commitment to collaboration in driving Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific Narrative. Fiji's approach to security is captured by the 2050 Strategy's emphasis on enhanced regionalism and human-centred development.¹⁵ The 2050 Strategy places threats from climate change; biodiversity loss and pollution at the top of the agenda, and this means that Blue Security is central to considerations.¹⁶

Fiji is also active in Blue Security collaboration beyond the Pacific. For example, it enthusiastically joined US President Joe Biden's *Partners in the Blue Pacific* (PBP) initiative in 2022.¹⁷ The PBP aligns with Fiji's maritime interests, namely the 'Protection of the Ocean and Environment ... (and) ... Climate Change Resilience, Adaptation, and Disasters'.¹⁸ As such, Fiji has leveraged off geopolitical conflict to gain resources to support its maritime security interests. This points to a longstanding pattern of maximising the benefits Fiji can accrue through engagement in the international arena, both multilaterally and bilaterally.

Compared with most PICs Fiji has significant capacity and intent to independently protect its maritime security interests. Unlike most PICs who don't possess a military, Fiji has utilised military forces to respond to national threats and regional natural disasters and also to engage with international peace and security through peacekeeping.

Fiji has a significant domestic capacity to respond to Blue Security challenges, including the increased incidence of climactic events associated with climate change such as cyclones. The Fijian National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), coordinates the RFMF, and territorial units to respond quickly and efficiently to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR). This capability involves specialist units, such as engineers, as well as large numbers of personnel to undertake clearance activities. The RFMF evolved from an imperial garrison force and was adapted to undertake UN peacekeeping operations, which have increased in complexity over time. These forces can be considered dual-use in so far as they are structured and trained to also undertake HADR. Furthermore, this capability allows Fiji to respond across the broader region, as evidenced in recent support for Tonga and Vanuatu. These forces also connect with foreign donors who regularly assist PICs during natural disasters.

As Fiji is an archipelagic state, maritime forces are needed to reach outlying islands that are often isolated during disasters. Fiji operates two patrol boats donated by Australia as part of its Pacific Maritime Security Program.¹⁹ These were designed to be operated independently in HADR operations and also alongside Australian defence force assets that regularly act as first responders during natural disasters. Fiji does not possess an air force and this presents a significant gap in the capacity to respond to the key sources of Blue Insecurity, such as IUU fishing and transnational crime. Furthermore, the cost of maintaining a fixed wing or rotary capability is prohibitive given resource constraints and other competing demands on the national budget. Acquiring unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has been mooted over the last few years but has not progressed beyond scoping studies and trials of short-range assets.²⁰

Gaps in Fiji's approach

Fiji's approach to national security has not been based on specific strategic planning documents such as white papers for decades. Attempts have been made to develop a strategic planning framework but it has not come to fruition. This highlights division within the domestic agencies responsible for responding to various threats and challenges. Fiji's first *National Security Strategy 2016 and Beyond* (NSS) was produced in 2018 to provide guidance for the security aspects of the 2017 *25-year National Development Plan*.²¹ The NSS was to be the foundation document for Fiji's national security setting, which was intended to build a strong and cohesive national security system. The implementation plan for the NSS took longer to develop due to the complexity of the task and was overtaken by events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and a change of government.

While the NSS was not fully implemented it remains a declaratory statement of Fiji's security priorities. The NSS can be viewed as a comprehensive security strategy that focuses on local issues and aggregates them up to the national level.²² This means that the identification of interests and priorities required triangulation across agencies. This perspective highlights that most sources of insecurity for ordinary Fijians fit under the umbrella of human, economic, and environmental security.

As such, national security is not the focus, but security services do have a key role in responding to human security related threats. For example, the military plays a significant role in supporting rural and maritime development such as the construction of medical facilities, schools, and roads and through HADR operations following natural disasters such as cyclones.

The local focus that was expressed in the NSS has numerous connections to the maritime domain beginning with onshore activities that impact the maritime environment through to coastal management. The legislative framework is the *Fisheries Act* (1942), *Marine Spaces Act* (1977), *Fiji Environment Management Act* (EMA) (2005), which has jurisdiction ‘ridge to reef’ and to the edge of the EEZ. The *Fisheries Act* regulates the marine tenure of coastal villages. Under the auspices of the EMA Fiji’s developed an *Integrated Coastal Management Plan* (2011).

The 2013 *Constitution* guaranteed citizens the right to a ‘healthy environment’ and while maritime resources are the property of the state, it protected traditional fishing rights.²³ The place of environmental security in Fijian policy evolved with the creation of a *Green Growth Strategy for Fiji in 2014*, which identified sustainable ocean resources as a central priority.²⁴ Fisheries management was also further codified through the *Offshore Fisheries Decree* (2014) and the *Offshore Fisheries Management Regulations* (2014). This placed the Ministry of Waterways and Environment as the key actor in the management of Fiji’s maritime interests in the EEZ alongside the Ministry of Defence, which became the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2023.

Prior to the UN Oceans Conference in 2017, Fiji also developed an Oceans Policy Framework which could be viewed as a precursor to an Integrated Oceans Management (IOM) policy.²⁵ These policy initiatives culminated in the *2020–2030 National Ocean Policy* (2021) which committed Fiji to developing a sustainable fishery. Fiji’s *National Ocean Policy* points the way to achieving a ‘healthy ocean that sustains the livelihoods and aspirations of current and future generations for Fiji’. The government is steadily strengthening legislation and policy and committing resources to ensure a healthy and productive ocean. At its core, this policy lays out Fiji’s commitment to the 100 per cent sustainable management of Fiji’s oceans and a designation of 30 per cent marine protected areas (MPA) by 2030.²⁶ Fiji’s prosperity and maritime security are inextricably linked. The former derives sustainable economic benefits and livelihoods provided by the ocean while maritime security threat perceptions identify potential dangers that undermine the prosperity derived from maritime resources. Taken together these policy initiatives represent an evolution in the domestic codification and regulation of Blue Security interests. These domestic developments were influenced by Fiji’s engagement with international efforts to elevate the security of the marine environment and maintaining this connection is in Fiji’s security interests.

Fisheries are significant to Fiji’s society and economy, and therefore, policing them is a core Blue Security interest. However, policing the EEZ remains a challenge for Fiji. According to the Global Fishing Index, it is estimated that Fiji had a total catch of 56,986 MT in 2018. Fijians rely on fisheries for over 11 per cent of their protein intake²⁷ so maintaining sustainable fisheries is a core human security

issue. As fisheries provide 15 per cent of Fijian exports then policing them is a crucial economic security issue.

Bilateral defence cooperation acts as a force multiplier to counter Blue Insecurity and has been prioritised by the Fijian navy. Just as Fiji has collaborated effectively in regional and international multilateral fora, it has also collaborated with bilateral donors to fill gaps in its capacity to respond to Blue Security challenges. Australia has been Fiji's most significant partner, amongst many, and this bilateral relationship provides a useful case study of Fiji's explicit strategy to maximise the benefits of bilateral defence cooperation.²⁸

The post-2014 re-engagement with Australia led to a significant increase in institutionalised defence cooperation, which Fiji ensured focussed on its Blue Security interests. During the eight years from 2006 to 2014 when Australia imposed sanctions against Fiji, Suva found new security cooperation partners, such as China. However, these have not met previous or emerging security needs. Australia was interested in strengthening relations for geopolitical reasons and provided a range of capabilities, such as patrol boats, and training in core areas such as HADR.²⁹ In addition, Australia provided security services, such as maritime patrol overwatch, which are essential to policing Fiji's large EEZ.

In part due to its interaction with donors, such as Australia, Fiji is considered to have a medium capacity to govern its oceans, but a low score for restocking fisheries to restore sustainability within its EEZ. Overall Fiji is given a 'D' grade on these measures in the Global Fishing Index.³⁰ This incapacity to shape conditions beyond its EEZ reinforces Fiji's emphasis on regional approaches to managing *Blue Insecurity*. For example, the new Coalition government has highlighted its intention to strengthen the FFA to 'become better at curtailing IUU and fisheries-related crime in our waters and on the high seas between our EEZs'.³¹ Given Fiji's longstanding focus on self-reliance (within a constrained budgetary environment) an emphasis on strengthening bilateral, regional, and international cooperation is likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

Conclusion and recommendations

Fiji has a highly developed national, regional and international approach to responding to Blue Insecurity. This approach has evolved over time and aligns with the regional Blue Pacific Narrative. Fiji's 2018 NSS went further than regional initiatives and posited a comprehensive security approach involving a focus on human, environmental, and economic security. It acknowledged that the Blue Insecurity occurs locally at the village level and is aggregated to the national and regional levels. Furthermore, insecurity is focussed on the maritime environment and is exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

The comprehensive security approach posited by the NSS demanded an ambitious whole of government response, but it was not finalised and institutionalised. The present government is undertaking an independent review of national security issues, and it is expected to focus on what Prime Minister Rabuka calls a 'zone of peace'. This may point to a shift away from framing security through

the geopolitical conflict between China and the United States to focussing on the core Blue Security challenges posed by climate change.³² Fiji is also producing a maritime security strategy, which will focus on Blue Security.

The overarching strategic challenge for Fiji is to provide a practical implementation plan and capabilities to operationalise the long-standing emphasis on human, economic, and environmental security. Fiji has made the most of Pacific regionalism and often leads attempts to respond to maritime security challenges. However, there are significant domestic policy gaps. For example, it has been many years since Defence and Intelligence White Papers have been produced and the NSS needs to be updated to respond to the Blue Pacific Narrative. The new Coalition government's review of defence and security interests and policy will likely continue the evolution in Fiji's regional leadership of the Blue Security agenda. As climate change has been identified as an existential threat to the Pacific broadly, and Fiji, reorganising the state security apparatus to respond is a priority. In the post-COVID resource-poor environment, the development of doctrine and dual-use equipment to cater for UN peacekeeping operations and HADR is a priority, and operating effectively in the maritime environment is essential to Fiji's future security.

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6 France

Mélodie Ruwet

France is present in all oceans due to its overseas territories and possesses the second-largest maritime territory on Earth. This situation leads to a series of opportunities stemming from ocean resources and the development of the French blue economy, but also to security challenges to enforcing French sovereignty in distant waters. France considers itself an Indo-Pacific nation due to its overseas territories, seven of which are located in the region, and is involved in many partnerships. After being left feeling blindsided by the creation of AUKUS, France has to rethink some of its approach to the Indo-Pacific in order to fulfil its strategic objectives. This contribution outlines how France sees its maritime security challenges and assesses the French effort to address such challenges, focussing on Paris' key interests and priorities at sea. It then evaluates the French strategy, particularly in terms of its partnerships, and offers recommendations.

In December 2019, during one of the major maritime-oriented French events of the year, the Assises de l'économie de la Mer, French President Emmanuel Macron declared that the '20th century was continental, but the 21st century will be maritime, and France needs to assume its maritime power over the seas and oceans, crucial spaces for the global balance of tomorrow'.¹

The French maritime territory is the second largest in the world,² covering 10.9 million km². Most of this maritime territory is located far from metropolitan France (which only accounts for 3 per cent of the total), around the different French overseas territories. There is a French presence across all of the world's oceans. Recently, France has become more explicit about its 'Blue ambitions'. Considering the extent of this maritime jurisdiction, it is not surprising that Macron would emphasise the strategic importance of the maritime for France – or the Indo-Pacific. However, whilst such an important and wide maritime jurisdiction comes with opportunities, it also presents multifaceted and interconnected 'Blue' Security challenges.

Aside from its sheer size, the *global* nature of its jurisdiction means it can be difficult for France to maintain an effective presence without overstretching its resources. Out of any state across the world, France is the one with the most maritime neighbours: it shares a maritime border with 30 different states, for a total of 22,860 km.³ Additionally, most of this area is located around French *outremers* – meaning its distant lands – leading to increased complexity as it involves a multitude of actors and regimes.

Whilst metropolitan France is located far from the Indo-Pacific, France considers itself an Indo-Pacific sovereign nation and regional power and wants to contribute to stability in the region, protect its sovereign interests, and ensure the security of its citizens. To that effect, France has designed a strategy for the Indo-Pacific, which was announced in 2018 in Sydney and is now based on four pillars (security and defence; economy connectivity research and innovation; multilateralism and the rule of law; climate change, biodiversity, sustainable management of oceans).⁴ However, it included strong relations with states such as Australia, and a contract to sell nuclear-powered submarines was terminated by Australia, leading France to rethink its approach slightly.⁵

This chapter aims to unpack the security challenges related to the French maritime domain, as well as to assess the French efforts to address the said challenges. To do so, it will first outline the French key interests and priorities at sea. It will then discuss the response adopted by France to safeguard its oceanic interests, as well as the different actors involved. It will then assess the French approach to maritime security, analysing policy gaps and capacities. Lastly, it will offer some recommendations.

France's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

The 'Blue Security' concept proposes to adopt a wider understanding of security at sea and from the sea, including looking at how states perceive threats but also how they conceive their vital interests, and offers an ideal prism through which the French approach can be analysed. In the Indo-Pacific, France is primarily concerned with preserving its sovereignty interests whilst also seeking to offer a third way between the United States and China competition.

The 2019 National Security Strategy for the Maritime Areas is the main document offering insights into how France views its key maritime interest and priorities broadly, whilst France's Indo-Pacific Strategy report provides information regarding the French view of its interests and priorities in the Indo-Pacific, more specifically. One of the main particularities of the French maritime domain, is that most of it is located far from Paris around 13 French-administered overseas territories. Overseas France is also referred to as DROM-COM, which means *Départements, Régions et Collectivités d'Outre-mer* (overseas departments, regions, and collectivities). The departments and regions have the same status as French metropolitan regions and follow the same law, however those can be adapted to suit the needs of the particularities of each of these territories. Collectivities have their own local laws, unique to each of them.⁶ In these territories, 'economic and sovereignty stakes are very sensitive'.⁷ The exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of French Polynesia and New Caledonia, respectively account for 46 per cent and 13 per cent of the French Maritime Territory,⁸ which means most of the French Maritime Territory is located in the Pacific. Five more territories are located in the Indian Ocean, and 93 per cent of the French EEZ is in the Indo-Pacific region.

In 2021, the French government published its Indo-Pacific Strategy document. The report highlights the importance of the maritime dimension of the Indo-Pacific

and mentions the securing of shipping lanes and the fight against drugs and weapons trafficking, as well as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing as priorities for action in the region. The tensions around borders and maritime delimitation in the South China Sea and East China Sea and the ‘global strategic competition’ between the United States and China are equally identified as risks for escalation in the region.⁹

More generally expanding on the broader French maritime interest and priorities, the National Security Strategy for the Maritime Areas report notes that the safety of the maritime strategic space is paramount to the security of France, including for dissuasion.¹⁰ The priorities established in the document are:

- 1 The control over the French maritime spaces.
- 2 The protection of French nationals and French ships.
- 3 The fight against illegal trafficking at seas.
- 4 The defence of economic interests.
- 5 The promotion of a safe international space.

The report notes that French maritime spaces are ‘simultaneously extension and surroundings, with a depth varying according to the risk or threat in terms of the time required to implement a parade’ and that this double function sits within a land-sea continuum.¹¹ In the French case, this, for instance, can relate to enduring maritime boundaries issues.¹²

The second priority refers to the protection of people and their properties at sea, for instance, against piracy. Over the last two decades, French ships have incurred 40 attacks or attempted attacks. Aside from civil ships being targeted by pirates, French military ships are likely to be targeted by terrorist groups, and it also identifies cyberthreats as a potential danger to monitor both at sea and in ports.¹³

The third priority relates to the dangers related to illegal trafficking of weapons and drugs, but also to human trafficking. French overseas territories are an attractive destination for migrants. In Mayotte, for instance, French authorities rescue around 8000 migrants and apprehend 200 smugglers on an annual basis.¹⁴

The fourth priority refers to the interrelation of French economic interests and security at sea. This relates first to strategic supplies: France imports most of its oil product supply using maritime transport. Additionally, the provision of supplies to overseas departments also occurs by sea. Whilst, to date, France has little offshore energy infrastructure, it is developing its wind power capacity and is looking into developing ocean thermal energy conversions in its overseas territories. Interestingly, the economic priority also includes environmental considerations, from sustainable development to climate change.¹⁵

Lastly, the fifth priority outlines how France sees its role and responsibilities as a maritime power. France plays a role in the establishment and enforcement of the Law of the Sea and maritime law, as well as its institutions. France speaks against any restriction of the right of innocent passage and the holding of ‘historical rights’, which are claimed by ‘some countries’ but absent from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).¹⁶ Whilst France cooperates with states needing support to control their maritime spaces, the multiplication of threats

leads the surveillance and intervention means to be often no longer sufficient. As a member of the European Union, Paris also establishes bilateral and multilateral agreements with other European states and ensures that maritime security stays on the agenda of the organisation. Working with its private sector of the maritime economy is also of strategic interest to France.¹⁷

Aside from its maritime security interests, France has key economic and environmental interests at sea. The maritime sector accounted for around 1.5 per cent of the French GDP in 2021,¹⁸ and for 1.8 per cent of national jobs.¹⁹ Coastal tourism accounts for most of the French economic maritime activity and provides a large amount of employment, mostly through small companies. The rest of the maritime economic activity is split between five different sectors: naval construction; sea-related public sector; seafood production (aquaculture and fisheries); maritime and river transport; processing and trade; and offshore oil production.²⁰ Whilst the French ports are located at the crossroads of world shipping routes, the infrastructures of these ports will need to be improved if they are to become regional hubs.²¹

France is seeking to become a leader in marine conservation. The French maritime jurisdiction contains 10 per cent of coral reefs and 20 per cent of atolls on Earth.²² The ‘One Ocean Summit’, an international summit to take action to protect the oceans, was organised in February 2022 in Brest, France. French President Emmanuel Macron has been vocal on the necessity of protecting the marine environment. In June 2022, he declared, ‘I believe we need to establish a legal framework to put a stop to deep sea mining in the high seas and not allow new activities that could endanger the ecosystems’.²³ He reiterated this position at the COP27 in Egypt in November 2022 where he said that ‘France supports the interdiction of any exploitation of the deep sea’,²⁴ which has become an increasingly important issue in the South Pacific where France has territorial and resource interests.

France’s strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

The main document currently underpinning French Maritime Security is the National Security Strategy for the Maritime Areas mentioned in the previous section.²⁵ In particular, three recent documents are important to understand France’s maritime security strategy: ‘France’s Indo-Pacific Strategy’,²⁶ ‘France’s Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific’²⁷ as well as a ‘Seabed Warfare strategy’ report.²⁸

The 2019 ‘French Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific’ document is itself based on the White Paper on Defence and National Security from 2013 and the Defence and National Security Strategic Review from 2017. One of the crucial aspects of France’s strategy is its overseas territories, which host military bases and capacities. France has four specific strategic ambitions in the region, as outlined on page 5:

- 1 ‘Defend and ensure the integrity of our sovereignty, and the protection of our nationals, territories, and EEZ.
- 2 Contribute to the security of regional environments through military and security cooperation.

- 3 Maintain a free and open access to the commons, in cooperation with our partners, in a context of global strategic competition and challenging military environments.
- 4 Assist in maintaining strategic stability and balances through a comprehensive and multilateral action'.²⁹

The 'Seabed Warfare Strategy' report offers a framework for seabed warfare operation around three main functions: 'developing knowledge of the seabed, monitoring the seabed and ocean space, and taking action on, from, and towards the seabed'.³⁰ Some of the actions planned in terms of capacity building are developing the ability to operate in depths down to 6000 m, including through the acquisition of automated underwater vehicles (AUV) and robots (ROV).

The actors involved in maritime security are the *Secretariat d'Etat Charge de la Mer* (State Secretary in charge of the Sea), which is directly under the authority of the Prime Minister and the Army. A Ministry of the Sea was briefly reinstated between 2020 and 2022 but was removed.³¹ The *Secretariat d'Etat Charge de la Mer* includes the Maritime Affairs Directory (DAM), which is tasked with establishing all the rules and regulations related to safety at sea, as well as inspecting ships and organising rescue missions at sea, within existing international and regional frameworks.³²

The French Navy (*la Marine Nationale*) is the main actor tasked with maritime security. It is organised around six branches:

- 1 The *Force d'Action Navale* (FAN) – Naval action force, surface fleet with 98 ships; 10,500 personnel, as well as three groups of demining divers, the amphibious flotilla, the Nuclear Naval Air Force, the Air Maritime Rapid Reaction Force, and overseas and foreign naval bases.
- 2 The *forces sous-marines* and the *force océanique stratégique* (FOST) – the submarine forces and the strategic oceanic forces, include 4000 personnel (some civil), tasked with operating four ballistic missile submarines (SNLE – *sous-marins lanceurs d'engins*), and six SSN.
- 3 The *Force Maritime des fusiliers Marins et Commandos* (FORFUSCO) – Maritime Force of Marine and Commandos, which includes 2600 personnel.
- 4 The *Aéronautique Navale* (ALAVIA) includes 200 aircraft.
- 5 The *Gendarmerie Maritime* (Coast Guard), includes 1157 personnel.
- 6 Le *Bataillon de marin-pompier de Marseille* (BMPM) – The Battalion of marine firefighters of Marseille, includes 2400 personnel.

Specifically in the Indo-Pacific, French troops are present in three 'Forces de Souveraineté' (sovereignty forces) and two 'Forces de Présence' (presence forces), split as follows (Table 6.1).

Aside from these permanent forces, 700 additional personnel are periodically involved whilst on missions. The French presence in the Indo-Pacific also includes 18 defence attachés.

Table 6.1 Sovereignty forces and presence forces

Sovereignty Forces	Forces Armées de la zone sud de l’Océan Indien (FAZSOI) – Indian Ocean Armed Forces	Around 2000 personnel, 5 ships, 2 surveillance/transport aircrafts, 2 helicopters
	Forces Armées en Polynésie Française (FAPF) – French Polynesia Armed Forces.	Around 1180 personnel, 3 ships, 3 helicopters, 5 surveillance/transport aircraft.
	Forces Armées de Nouvelle-Calédonie (NCAF) – New Caledonia Armed Forces.	Around 1660 personnel, 4 ships, 4 surveillance/transport aircraft, 4 helicopters.
Presence Forces	French Forces in the UAE (FFEAU).	Around 650 personnel, 6 combat aircrafts, 1 surveillance/transport aircraft, and a naval base.
	French Forces in Djibouti (FFDj).	Around 1450 personnel, 4 combat aircrafts, 1 surveillance/transport aircraft, and 8 helicopters.

In the Indo-Pacific, France has said to be seeking to reinforce or create bilateral ties with a number of states, including India, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

In 2016, Australia made a AUD\$50 billion deal with the French Naval Group for 12 Barracuda submarines to be constructed. This led the two countries to declare a reinforcement of their strategic partnership. However, in September 2021, Australia unveiled its new trilateral AUKUS partnership with the United States and the United Kingdom and cancelled the deal, leading to a diplomatic row that culminated with France recalling its ambassadors in Washington and Canberra. Under the new Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, tensions between the two countries have eased, and in June 2022, it was announced that the Australian government and the French Naval Group reached a settlement for \$830 million AUD and that the two countries were committed to ‘building a closer and stronger bilateral relationship based on mutual trust and respect’.³³

India has been described as France’s ‘oldest strategic partner in Asia’ – the two countries entered into a strategic partnership in 1998.³⁴ The two countries have participated in several joint exercises, and France has sold six Scorpène-class submarines and 36 Dassault Rafales to India. France also has a close bilateral relationship with Japan, characterised by a strategic partnership established in 1995 and upgraded to an exceptional partnership in 2013.³⁵

The decline of multilateralism due to the United States-China competition and to growing tensions and crisis is an element often underlined in the French strategic documents, and therefore, the French approach in the Indo-Pacific has prioritised multilateral and ad-hoc groups. In 2018, Macron called for the creation of a Paris-Delhi-Canberra axis of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The trilateral cooperation is focussed on maritime security, marine resource management, and deepening cooperation within multilateral institutions.³⁶ In January 2023, France and Australia reiterated their commitment to cooperate with India.³⁷ France, together with Australia and New Zealand, has also implemented a mechanism called FRANZ to respond to natural disasters in the region.

France has been a development partner of ASEAN since 2020, and is a founding member of the Pacific Community. France is also a party to some multilateral organisations through its overseas territories. French Polynesia and New Caledonia are members of the Pacific Islands Forum. In the Indian Ocean, France is invested in the Indian Ocean Commission, with Réunion being a member. France also joined the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in December 2020, and is a member of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

Naval Group (formerly called DCNS – Direction des Construction Navales) is an important actor which is partly owned by the French State (62.49 per cent) and Thales (35 per cent). A ‘global player in naval defence’, which serves ‘50 navies around the world’ (including partners in the region such as India and Malaysia) the Naval Group was founded 400 years ago.³⁸ French maritime interests are therefore also related to its industrial military interests.

Gaps in France’s approach

An important question is whether France will be able to mobilise resources to match its ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. This is the case in terms of the capabilities deployed, but also in terms of how Paris manages to coordinate its efforts with the overseas territories and whether France can be successful in driving the EU efforts in the region, as well as consolidating its partnerships with other states and organisations.

Whilst France has the advantage of having national, sovereign bases far from Paris, which allows it to project power into distant waters, this capacity is still too low to tackle many of the challenges at sea. France’s infrastructure and equipment has aged, and the personnel deployed diminished over time. The reorganisation of the Seventy Forces led to a capacity gap that will persist until 2025. Between 2009 and 2020, nine out of ten of the P400-class patrol vessels have been decommissioned or removed from service. This has led to a capacity gap to monitor the EEZ, to an extent compared to having the equivalent of two police vehicles to monitor the entire French metropolitan territory.³⁹ High-seas amphibious transport is another area needing improvement; the BATRAL ships have recently been replaced by the d’Entrecasteaux multi-mission ships, which no longer have high-sea amphibious capacities.⁴⁰

Recently, France has commissioned six additional patrol vessels to be based in Noumea which should be ready in 2025. However, this will not be sufficient. Additionally, whilst France is working on its drone capacity, it needs to stay on top of technologies which is not currently the case, according to Yann Briand, member of the Chief of Staff of the French Navy.⁴¹

Whilst France has a maritime strategy, rather than having one comprehensive document to outline it, a multitude of documents focussing on specific aspects have rendered the strategy ‘illegible’.⁴² France has more than ten strategic documents around the maritime domain, all touching on different aspects. Aside from the documents discussed in the previous section, for instance, there is a Marine Protected Area (MPA) strategy, a deep-sea exploration and exploitation strategy, and a port strategy.⁴³ This complexity translates into different actors from different ministries, or diplomats in different postings understanding the strategy slightly differently.⁴⁴

Another issue around maritime security and policy is the relative enduring lack of interest in sea affairs. One of the main recommendations stemming from a report to the Senate by the Overseas delegation is that there needs to be a cultural revolution around the oceans, as French citizens tend to overlook ‘the archipelagic nature of their country’.⁴⁵ Education in overseas territories will need to be focussing on maritime subjects and leading to maritime qualifications to meet the future demand.

Lastly, France’s maritime strategy would benefit from better communication between the different ministries, but also territories, which can all play a part in elaborating the strategy. Most of the French oceanic territories are around overseas territories, which have often been overlooked when national strategies were drafted. As expressed in a note from a French Polynesia senator, France tends to be ‘*metropolitan-centric*’⁴⁶ – in other words, focusing on metropolitan France to the detriment of its overseas territories. Additionally, two territories, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, have competencies over their EEZ, and therefore, coordination is important between the metropolitan state and those territories to ensure policy coherence.

Whilst the French Indo-Pacific strategy was banking on a tight-knit partnership with Canberra, trust between the two countries was negatively impacted by the announcement of AUKUS. Prior to this, a report to the French Senate had already been advocating for closer links with India.⁴⁷ More emphasis needs to be put on reinforcing existing and creating new key partnerships within the region, including Indonesia and Malaysia, to avoid being reliant on other partners. Additionally, at present, there is a disconnect between Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, including in terms of cooperation between the French territories.

France, as the only EU member to have territories in the Indo-Pacific, has been pushing the organisation to become a more active role in the region. The EU published its Indo-Pacific strategy for cooperation in April 2021, arguing that it should ‘reinforce its strategic focus, presence, and actions in the Indo-Pacific with the aim of contributing to the stability, security, prosperity, and sustainable development of the region, based on the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and international law’.⁴⁸ There are ways the European Union could help foster maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. This could be through enhanced naval presence and joint patrols in the region, but also through technology and capacity building for regional navies of the Indo-Pacific. As the only state with sovereign interests in the region, France will need to play its cards correctly in Brussels to convince its fellow EU members that more engagement there is in everybody’s interests.

Recommendations and conclusion

The French approach to Blue Security in the Indo-Pacific is intrinsically linked to good order at sea and normative considerations. A self-proclaimed Indo-Pacific power, France is determined to offer a third path in the Indo-Pacific, at a time where the power competition between the United States and China is high. It does have an important military presence in the region, and has invested in designing strategies for how to engage with other states in tackling Blue Security challenges. But if Paris wants to steer away from becoming a leader without followers, it has a few

challenges to tackle. Firstly, it will need to continue upgrading its own capacities in the region, and to enhance its surveillance capacities in its EEZ, to discourage and prevent IUU fishing as well as other crimes. Investing in more capacity building for coast guards in the region would equally be important.

Secondly, Paris needs to harmonise maritime policies with its overseas territories and the European Union. There is a need for an approach that can address the specific needs of each territory whilst aligning with the broader regional strategy in the region. Whilst France wants to be seen as belonging to the Indo-Pacific, not having included the DROM-COM in the formulation of the last Indo-Pacific strategy, and deploying military capacity on the territories without consulting the local elected officials, can be seen negatively in the region,⁴⁹ particularly considering the French colonial legacy and the referendums in New Caledonia.

Thirdly, France needs to be pragmatic in its ambition of becoming a third path for the Indo-Pacific. A senatorial report note ‘The French discourse is at times counterproductive: the French position seem ambiguous and our ambitions of being a balancing power are not in adequation with our actual weight, which presents *in fine* questions around the credibility of the French strategy’.⁵⁰ Paris will need to continue working on an integrated approach, building partnerships with like-minded states and demonstrating long-term commitments to its allies to be seen as a credible partner on Blue Security challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

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7 India

Pooja Bhatt

Introduction

With 80 per cent of India's external trade and 90 per cent of energy trade passing through the Indian Ocean region, New Delhi recognises that the economic growth, prosperity, stability, and collaboration of the region is interlinked with the security of the maritime domain.¹ For India, a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific is important for the economic development of not only the region but also the wider global community.² Emerging transnational challenges such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread deprivation of resources make it imperative for countries to cooperate for regional and global solutions.³ Finding solutions to common problems, building cooperation on transnational threats and prospering together with the sharing of global goods requires countries to harmonise and align their approaches towards the Indo-Pacific region. While several regional and extra-regional countries have released their Indo-Pacific strategic documents outlining key threats, opportunities and strategies, India has a vision document but still lacks a White Paper, doctrine, or strategy concerning the Indo-Pacific. This chapter contends that New Delhi has a solid, multifaceted maritime approach enunciated in the seven pillars of India's Indo-Pacific Initiative (IPOI). It argues India's approach towards maritime security and governance aligns with the *Blue Security* approach of its like-minded regional partners that seeks a rules-based maritime order and structures.

Apart from economic motivations, a wide range of challenges and opportunities that emerge from and within the maritime domain have shaped India's maritime approach. The chapter briefly presents the country's key maritime interests and objectives, its domestic and foreign policy strategies to achieve peace, growth, and development and to leverage maritime resources sustainably in the region, and highlights some of the gaps that need attention in the years to come.

India's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Despite its powerful, historical maritime presence, Indian security has remained predominantly land-centric. After an era of 'sea-blindness' in Indian foreign policy-making, the leadership is acknowledging its maritime history and also its tradition of shipbuilding, cultural, and economic exchanges as a maritime nation as well presenting a blue print for maritime led development.⁴

DOI: [10.4324/9781032692906-7](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032692906-7)

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India's contemporary maritime policy has been driven by its main goal of achieving economic development through exploring its geographical potential in the maritime domain.⁵ The Indian peninsula with its coastline of approximately 7517 km has nine coastal states, and four union territories (including island territories) that face the Bay of Bengal in the East, the Indian Ocean in the South and the Arabian Sea in the West. The country shares its maritime borders with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Maldives.

Indian coastal regions are huge economic assets. The major and non-major ports facilitated the establishment of special economic zones across several coastal industrial cities. Similarly, increased import of crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) and offshore oil installations have led to the emergence of oil refineries in several coastal cities. Not to mention, Indian coastlines also house several strategic installations such as naval bases, nuclear power plants, satellite, and missile launching ranges and 12 majors as well as over 200 non-major ports that handle 90 per cent of India's maritime trade.⁶ India also sits astride crucial global chokepoints on both its Eastern and Western seaboard, which leads to consistent challenges such as maritime piracy and attacks, including those witnessed in early 2024. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has the highest density of maritime traffic of any ocean through the Malacca Strait and therefore, protection of sea lines of communication (SLOCs) is vital.⁷

India also faces complex security threats emanating from the maritime domain such as the issues of drug and arms trafficking occurring between the *Golden Crescent* (Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan) and the *Golden Triangle* (Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos). The issues became acute during and after the pandemic when land borders between countries were sealed, shifting the trafficking to porous and unhindered waters surrounding the country. Illegal migration from conflict-prone neighbouring states such as Bangladesh and Myanmar to the Northeastern part of India has now shifted from land to sea.⁸ Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and other maritime crimes are other serious issues where regional countries including India⁹ face legislative, jurisdictional, and resource impediments that limit India's ability to tackle it at the regional levels, as discussed later. Disruptive technologies such as drones that are available to non-state actors have added to the complexities for seafarers. It is pertinent to add that rising sea levels and climate change related disasters due to global warming has become a constant reality to all coastal nations in the region including India.¹⁰ To tackle these issues, countries need a unified approach towards the maritime domain.

India's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

India's maritime interests evolved from the coast to the high seas due to interconnected issues. The holistic development of India's coastline and maritime sector envisioned under *Sagarmala Project* in 2015 was transformed into an overarching *Maritime Vision 2030* covering over 150 initiatives using ports and coastal infrastructure for the country's economic well-being and growth. It also became a full-fledged regional and global initiative focused on maritime security.

Under the United Nations' approach towards the use of ocean resources for economic growth and sustainable development of the planet, the Government of India released its *Vision of New India by 2030*¹¹ in February 2019 that envisions India becoming \$5 trillion economy by utilising the Indian coastline and ocean waters for development through port projects.¹²

India's draft of its *Blue Economy Policy*¹³ envisages the optimal utilisation of all sectors of the maritime domain (living, non-living resources, tourism, ocean energy, and so on) for the sustainable development of coastal areas. Currently, several initiatives are informed, guided by, and support the country's Blue Economy vision ranging from shipbuilding to fisheries development to deep ocean missions, and other critical maritime sectors. In October 2023, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the '*Amrit Kaal Vision 2047*', the long-term blueprint for the Indian maritime blue economy. The blueprint outlines strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing port facilities, promoting sustainable practices, and facilitating international collaboration.¹⁴

Realising that socio-economic development also requires safeguarding India from threats emanating from seas. The Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative became the country's Indian Ocean operating template in the maritime domain. Announced in 2015 by Prime Minister Modi, SAGAR envisages the security of Indian territorial and maritime interests in the IOR as well as making its capabilities available to help other countries in the region.¹⁵ India seeks to avail its geographical position and other endowments such as size, economy, and the largest democracy in the world with its aspirations to be the 'net/preferred security partner' in the region, to present itself as a suitable regional partner for like-minded countries seeking peace, stability, and growth in the region. It also became the vehicle for the delivery of global public goods within and outside the region. In May 2020, Mission Sagar, under Vision SAGAR was India's initiative to deliver COVID-19-related assistance such as vaccines to countries in the IOR. India has sought to present itself as a proactive partner to regional countries in supporting them with Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief (HADR) and Search and Rescue (SAR) operations and similar activities during crises, albeit with its limited resources. India has been actively playing a role as first responder, including assisting following a cyclone in Myanmar, fighting in Sudan, and assisting with food shortages in Afghanistan and health demands in Africa.¹⁶ Over the years, the Indian Navy has established a role for itself in providing assistance during natural disasters and human-made crises such as the recent Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea.

India's *Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)* can be seen as the next step in its maritime approach, connecting it to the larger region. IPOI resonates with similar strategies of various like-minded countries such as Japan, stressing that the region must be a free, open, and *inclusive* Indo-Pacific region—'FOIIP' building on 'FOIP'. It draws on existing regional cooperation architecture and mechanisms to focus on seven central pillars conceived around—*Maritime Security; Maritime Ecology; Maritime Resources; Capacity Building and Resource Sharing; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport*.¹⁷ Based on these pillars,

IPOI seeks multi-shareholder cooperation with like-minded countries on various priority areas for cooperative and collaborative solutions to the common challenges in the region.¹⁸ Australia-India IPOI is one such programme where the two countries are working together on the Maritime Ecology pillar.¹⁹

A recognition of the fallouts of climate change and sea-level rise that has threatened the flora, fauna, and coastal communities but also led to an increasing number of natural disasters year-on-year, led India to seek a global partnership under *Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure Initiative (CDRI)* at the UN Summit in 2019.²⁰ CDRI aims to ‘promote resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks’. It also provides a transnational, regional strategy and approach for assisting developing and even developed states of the Indian Ocean that struggle to address some of these emerging issues on their own.

With an aim of building international cooperation in the maritime domain, Prime Minister Modi hosted a high-level open debate at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in August 2021, putting forward the *five* basic principles of maritime security, namely free maritime trade, the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes based upon international law, responsible maritime connectivity, collectively combatting maritime threats posed by non-state actors and natural calamities, and preserving maritime environment and resources.²¹

India’s approach towards safeguarding its maritime rights and interests is a work in progress. From a security perspective, the terrorist attack on Mumbai on 11 September 2008, demonstrated India’s mismanaged approach towards its coastal and maritime security. This rude shock brought change towards maritime security and shaped its current architecture, and the legislative, executive and operational pillars of India’s maritime security framework within its jurisdictional waters.

Legislatively, India’s domestic maritime regulation architecture is primarily based upon its Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone, and Other Maritime Zones Act (also called the Maritime Zones of India Act, 1976 or MZI Act, 1976 that provides for matters relating to these zones). While India ratified United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1995, the MZI Act follows similar limits to maritime zones as UNCLOS.

The revised MZI (*Regulation of Fishing by Foreign Vessels*) Act 1981 authorised Indian Coast Guard (ICG) officers to investigate only foreign fishing vessels in India’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The EEZ refers to an area of the ocean, generally extending 200 nautical miles (230 miles) beyond a nation’s territorial sea, within which a coastal nation has jurisdiction over both living and non-living resources. In the face of emerging maritime threats, in addition to the Navy, these domestic legislations were revised to empower the coastguard and navy to *Visit, Board, Search and Seize* (VBSS) suspicious vessels within India’s internal waters, territorial sea, EEZ and continental shelf, and to make arrests in cases of piracy within the EEZ. These laws have multiplied the powers of maritime law enforcement agencies.

At the execution level, the Group of Ministers (GoM) Report on National Security in 2001 led to several institutional shifts over the years and India welcomed its first National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) in February 2022 headed by Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar (Retd). The constitution of the NMSC under the office of the National Security Advisor establishes a ‘whole-of-government approach to “enable multi-agency coordination” to evaluate issues and facilitate development and implementation of maritime-related policies’.²² Currently, India has as many as 28 institutions working in maritime-related sectors that include departments within central ministries, authorities, academic and research institutions as well as state-level authorities, operating from different locations. NMSC administers between these maritime institutions for a coherent maritime approach. The Multi Agency Maritime Security Group (MAMSG) headed by National Security Advisor Doval also has been established to develop common protocols, standard operating procedures and an operational framework among various stakeholders to ‘build a very strong maritime system’.²³

Operationally, there exists a three-tiered law enforcement structure comprised of the Marine Police, the Coast Guard and the Indian Navy for maritime surveillance and patrolling of Indian waters. As part of coastal security mechanisms, the Coastal Surveillance Network (CSN), as well as 38 additional radar stations and eight mobile surveillance systems have been installed along the coastline and island territories by the ICG.

The re-emergence of ‘maritime consciousness’ at the multilateral level has been supported by India’s member or observer status in several maritime-related organisations/bodies/structures such the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). India has also initiated other groupings, such as the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC). To address the challenges of piracy in the Western Indian Ocean, it had joined several multilateral initiatives such as the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), Djibouti Code of Conduct Jeddah Amendment (DCOC JA), Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++FOGG), Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) to name a few. Most of these initiatives have now broadened their scope to cover a range of illegal activities at sea such as smuggling, maritime terrorism, IUU Fishing and so on to ensure a holistic maritime security approach. India’s multilateral engagements with other organisations such as the Quad and ASEAN are seen as a way for India to collaboratively work on maritime security issues and deliver global goods in order to secure supply chains, strengthen Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), and protect undersea cables. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) defines MDA as ‘the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could affect . . . security, safety, economy, or environment’. Within the multilateral engagements on maritime cooperation, issue-based trilateral initiatives between India-France-Australia, India-Indonesia-Australia, and others have been seen as emerging and welcome phenomena. In recent times, India has been voicing its maritime concerns such as the threat of maritime militia, dangerous use of coast guards, militarisation of disputed features, and so forth in the East and South China

Sea. While it is seeking to enhance capabilities against ‘grey zone warfare’ on land and cyber domain the leadership needs to recognise the threat in the maritime domain as well. Several recent incidents involved threats to maritime rights and assets in the South China Sea and even Europe, and there is little reason to think that such issues cannot expand to the larger Indo-Pacific region in the future.

At the bilateral level, India carries out numerous bilateral and multilateral military exercises in several formats to enhance interoperability and cooperation with the maritime law enforcement forces of other countries. Over the years, both the scope as well as participation in these exercises have increased, highlighting the commonality in maritime vision between India and its like-minded partners.

Gaps in India’s approach

The security capacities of the militaries and law enforcement agencies across the world are the result of a combination of factors, including their legislative powers, jurisdictional responsibilities, institutional structures, their capabilities in areas such as resources, training and exposure, and the interconnectedness between the different agencies overlooking specific domains and their abilities to share information.

There have been gaps in India’s maritime-related legislative frameworks that have affected its capacity to effectively deal with Blue Security issues. For example, India’s MZI Act 1976 lacked focus on the High Seas, and that ties the country’s hands when it comes to India’s maritime governance on issues beyond national jurisdictions, i.e. EEZ. However, jurisdictional gaps are being recognised and rectified gradually. The issue of piracy within the EEZ was considered and rectified by the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act 2023.²⁴ The Act became the first domestic legislation making the act of piracy and related crimes punishable within the jurisdictional waters for both Indian and foreign nationals. The Act provides a template to follow for other nations facing the issue.

Operationally, the Indian Navy is focussing on more infrastructure and capabilities to become truly a *Blue Water Navy* and to support the country’s *Blue Economy* objectives. India aims to become a 170–180 ship navy by the year 2028 from 140 ships currently.²⁵ Apart from being responsible for a wide range of Blue Security tasks, India is tasked with safeguarding maritime borders, controlling marine pollution, environmental preservation as well providing SAR to distressed mariners. Besides, with more budget for naval assets and shipbuilding capabilities, the Indian maritime strategy needs to develop a strong industrial base to support maritime trade and naval power.²⁶

Marine Police has been referred to as the ‘weakest link’ in Indian coastal security.²⁷ Since its inception, there has been a lack of focus towards marine policing in the country and therefore a policy or doctrine providing legislative and jurisdictional powers has yet to appear. Marine Police remains short of resources, training and other capacities to carry out the responsibility of inland and coastal marine policing, which forces the Coast Guard to deliver these duties in addition to their duties to safeguard the waters of the EEZ. The resource and training of

maritime law enforcement officers is one area where India can cooperate with its like-minded Indo-Pacific partners to build international standards and interoperability capabilities.

India is taking cautious steps towards international cooperation in the maritime security and governance domain. Strengthening its footprint in the Western Indian Ocean, India joined the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in November 2023²⁸ after being an observer for a year since August 2022²⁹ and also became an observer of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). However, maritime cooperation in the Eastern part of the Indo-Pacific needs both military cooperation and maritime institutional/mechanism strengthening. India is a member of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, regularly participates in US-led MILAN exercises and undertakes regular maritime security exercises in the bilateral and multilateral format with its partners such as Australia, ASEAN and Japan. Nevertheless, the maritime challenges specific to each subregion require its template for defining, resolution and cooperation on issues. There is immense potential in working on issue-based cooperation in the maritime domain where India and its partners can work together. Institutions like IORA recognise the right pillars for cooperation but lack the political will and funding to make it effective. Additionally, there are several existing regional, and international mechanisms such as FAO's Port States Measures Act (PSMA), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Customs Organisation-Container Control Programme (UNODC WCO-CCP), Container Security Initiative (CSI), and others that New Delhi can work with to improve risk management and strengthen supply chain resilience. Cooperating with such initiatives can avoid duplication of efforts and gain cooperatively from both resources and training aspects for India and other countries.

Recommendations and conclusion

Firstly, producing a Maritime Policy/Strategy establishing its interests, threats, and challenges as well as highlighting an all-of-government approach towards India's maritime security and development vision could be a helpful start. This will help in recognising and delineating individual strengths and requirements, necessary for effective collaboration. Secondly, India can collaborate with its regional partners in pooling resources needed for coastal surveillance such as patrol boats, communication systems, training, and capacity building and capability enhancement. The interoperability and collective sharing of resources will also contribute to creating greater awareness in the maritime domain that is required for effective governances of the Indo-Pacific. Similarly, international business cooperation on technology and related investment in the shipbuilding industry and critical infrastructure can overcome individual domestic shortages. Thirdly, in addition to its international engagements, India should seek active participation in international maritime regulatory and governance institutions to build robust and efficient maritime frameworks and architectures. This includes in the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), seabed, and developing climate change resilient mechanisms for small islands and coastal states. Lastly, while maritime trade, scientific research and technology studies have

been receiving financial support, the academic pursuits in maritime history, security, law, and governance are still in the nascent phase. Therefore, a Indo-Pacific research funding pool to study and re-establish old historical and cultural connections and address emerging maritime challenges and solutions would be beneficial for building better narratives around the Indo-Pacific construct.

India's maritime vision is a holistic, sustainable approach towards economic growth, development and governance through transparency of oceans and cooperation between countries.³⁰ With that aim, there has been a gradual and integrated approach towards safeguarding the maritime domain that is consistent and aligns with an accepted rules-based order. Its larger goal seeks the inclusion of all Indo-Pacific nations in maritime mechanisms and processes and envisions the growth and security of all in the region. The Indo-Pacific holds immense promise as a region of sustainable development and equitable prosperity. A collective Blue Security approach would provide opportunities to shape the Indo-Pacific region for addressing the common challenges, building shared commitment to the sustainable use and protection of resources as well as managing competition and mitigating conflicts in the maritime domain peacefully.

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8 Indonesia

Dita Liliansa

Introduction

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelagic state comprising over 17,000 islands, faces unique challenges in ensuring maritime security within its vast archipelago. Its strategic geographic location and extensive maritime borders make it susceptible to a range of illicit activities. The consequences of these security threats extend beyond territorial integrity, as they directly impact the nation's economic stability and the fragile marine ecosystems. Indonesia's maritime interests and priorities revolve around safeguarding sovereignty and maritime resources. President Joko Widodo introduced the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) vision, which outlined several pillars, including maritime security and marine environmental protection. When he took office in 2014, Indonesia began to redirect its overall vision from a predominantly land-based policy to the attainment of a GMF. To defend these interests, Indonesia established several new institutions and engaged in bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation. However, there are gaps in Indonesia's approaches that need improvement. One area is the marginalisation of marine environmental issues within the broader maritime strategy. For example, Indonesia's response to sea-level rise has been minimal, despite its extensive coastline and vulnerable islands. While Indonesia has submitted recommendations and co-sponsored a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on climate change, there is a need to bridge the gap between rhetoric and practical implementation. The country's reluctance to utilise formal dispute settlement mechanisms, despite being a party to United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), also raises questions about its approach to conflict resolution. This chapter explores the multifaceted nature of Blue Security in Indonesia, shedding light on its significance in protecting Indonesia's national interests, promoting sustainable development, and preserving the marine environment.

Indonesia's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Indonesia's maritime interests and priorities are centred around safeguarding sovereignty and maritime resources. President Joko Widodo, who has been Indonesian President for two terms since 2014, began his presidency with a promise of

DOI: [10.4324/9781032692906-8](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032692906-8)

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Indonesia becoming a maritime force between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This vision, known as the GMF, encapsulates Indonesia's perspective on its maritime interests and priorities. Initially, there was a sense of optimism and a genuine commitment across different ministries to align with the vision, leading to a trend of connecting the GMF vision to various government policies and activities. While the prominence of maritime interests has diminished in President Widodo's second term,¹ with a shift in focus towards diplomatic power and the country's identity as the world's largest Muslim nation, the GMF vision has raised nationwide awareness of Indonesia's maritime identity and continues to serve as an overarching philosophy. Although some analysts suggest that the GMF primarily served as a campaign platform,² it has influenced the mindset of Indonesian policymakers, shaping their approach to maritime issues.³

During his inaugural speech, President Widodo proclaimed that the 'oceans, seas, straits and bays are the future of [Indonesia's] civilisation'.⁴ He invoked the Sanskrit phrase '*Jalesveva Jayamahe*', meaning 'in the ocean, we triumph'.⁵ He outlined five pillars of his GMF vision in his speech at the East Asia Summit (EAS) in November 2014. These pillars encompassed (1) the revival of Indonesia's maritime culture, (2) improved management of oceans and fisheries, (3) the development of Indonesia's maritime economy through infrastructure, shipping industry, and maritime tourism, (4) promotion of maritime diplomacy to address conflicts arising from illegal fishing, sovereignty breaches, territorial disputes, piracy, and environmental concerns like marine pollution, and (5) bolstering maritime defence to safeguard sovereignty, ensure navigation safety, and maintain maritime security.⁶

Three years later, President Widodo expanded the GMF vision through the Presidential Regulation Number 16 of 2017 on Ocean Policy, which introduced seven policy pillars. These pillars covered various aspects such as (1) marine and human resources development; (2) maritime security, law enforcement, and safety at sea; (3) ocean governance and institutions; (4) maritime economy development; (5) sea space management and marine environmental protection; (6) maritime culture; and (7) maritime diplomacy.⁷ The Indonesia's Ocean Policy defines the GMF as 'the vision of Indonesia to become a sovereign, advanced, independent, [and] strong maritime country that is able to provide positive contribution for peace and security of the region as well as to the world in accordance with its national interests'.⁸

The GMF, as outlined in the Indonesia's Ocean Policy, consists of the National Document on Indonesia's Ocean Policy, which provides a consistent explanatory narrative, and a time-bound Action Plan with various programmes and activities.⁹ The initial action plan for the period of 2016–2019 identified five priority clusters, addressing issues such as maritime boundaries, ocean space and maritime diplomacy, maritime industry and sea connectivity, services and industry of marine natural resources and marine environment management, maritime defence and security, and maritime culture.¹⁰ While primarily focused on domestic concerns, some programmes have external dimensions, although they lack significant geopolitical or outward aspirations.¹¹

The second action plan for Indonesia's Ocean Policy, released in 2022 through the Presidential Regulation No. 34 of 2022,¹² outlines seven strategic issues for the

period of 2021–2025. These include the management of ocean resources, ecosystem-based fisheries, and human resources development in coastal areas and small islands.¹³ The plan also focuses on defence, security, law enforcement, and safety at sea, particularly in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the North Natuna Sea.¹⁴

Although Indonesia does not lay territorial claims to any of the features in the South China Sea, its exclusive economic zones (EEZs) do overlap with China's nine-dashed line. Indonesia firmly rejects China's claims and refuses negotiations on maritime boundaries or rights.¹⁵ Moreover, Indonesia refutes China's argument of historic fishing rights within its EEZs and continental shelf.¹⁶ Indonesia also does not recognise any features in the Spratly Islands that could generate overlapping maritime entitlements with its EEZs or continental shelf.¹⁷ Indonesia perceives China's claims as a serious national security threat, and plans to develop the economy of the Natuna Islands, improve maritime and military infrastructure, and undertake a significant military build-up in the region.¹⁸

The second action plan for Indonesia's Ocean Policy also addresses several other critical areas, including ocean governance and institutions, the formation of international norms against fisheries crimes, and the harmonisation of laws and regulations related to contiguous zones, continental shelves, and Indonesia's participation in the international seabed area.¹⁹ Other areas of emphasis include the development of the marine economy and infrastructure,²⁰ integration of land and sea spaces for ocean spatial management and marine environmental protection,²¹ revival of Indonesia's maritime culture,²² and maritime diplomacy with a focus on non-alignment and the implementation of international law for regional stability.²³

Indonesia's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

Indonesia's pursuit of its GMF vision involves a decentralised leadership structure with shared objectives but varying approaches,²⁴ leading to different interpretations of the vision among government agencies and highlighting the need for coordination. The 2015 Defence White Paper primarily emphasises security and stability in the region,²⁵ providing limited insight into enhancing the Navy's role within the historically army-dominated military. Conversely, the 2019 White Book on Maritime Diplomacy recognises both traditional and non-traditional maritime threats,²⁶ signifying a shift towards a broader focus on maritime interests beyond territorial borders.²⁷

President Widodo introduced the first Indonesian Ocean Policy as a blueprint to actualise his GMF vision and established new institutions dedicated to maritime affairs. One of the key institutions created was the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs, which played a role in coordinating institutions such as the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Ministry of Tourism, and other relevant bodies.²⁸ In his second term, President Widodo expanded the ministry's powers to oversee investment matters, resulting in its renaming as the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment. This restructuring was seen by some analysts as an attempt

to align the GMF with President Widodo's economic and development priorities. Throughout his terms, Luhut Pandjaitan served as the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment.

During his first term, President Widodo established the Presidential Task Force to Combat Illegal Fishing (Task Force 115) to transform Indonesia's approach to combating illegal fishing, which often led to conflicts among different agencies and ministries. Task Force 115 served as a coordinating body, ensuring synchronised law enforcement activities across different agencies to address illegal and unreported fishing.²⁹ Susi Pudjiastuti, who served as the Fisheries Minister at the time, was appointed to lead the task force and gained popularity for her strong stance against illegal fishing, most notably through the implementation of the sink-the-vessel policy. This policy involved the practice of either burning or sinking foreign fishing vessels found to be engaged in illegal fishing activities within Indonesia's EEZ. Initially, this policy allowed patrol vessels to immediately destroy these illegal fishing vessels at sea when there was sufficient preliminary evidence of wrongdoing.³⁰ However, tensions arose within the government regarding the methods employed. Coordinating Minister Luhut Pandjaitan expressed reservations about the destruction of these vessels and the restrictions placed on foreign investments in capture fisheries.³¹ The main point of contention was whether to continue with the sink-the-vessel approach or to put the confiscated vessels up for auction.³² In Widodo's second term, Pudjiastuti was replaced by Edhy Prabowo, leading to the discontinuation of the sink-the-vessel policy and the dissolution of Task Force 115.³³

Despite President Widodo's decision to elevate the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) as Indonesia's coast guard in 2014, restructuring and streamlining of maritime governance remained a challenge. Multiple agencies and ministries continued to operate independently, hindering coordination efforts. Recognising the limitations of maritime law enforcement capabilities, efforts were made to strengthen the Indonesian Navy and Bakamla through the Omnibus Law on Maritime Security. This law sought to establish Bakamla as the sole agency responsible for maritime law enforcement activities.

The Omnibus Law on Maritime Security aims to establish an overarching framework for maritime security by consolidating at least 17 existing laws related to law enforcement at sea.³⁴ If approved, the law would transfer the current law enforcement powers held by the Indonesian naval forces, which currently have dual military and constabulary functions.³⁵ The urgency for this law intensified after the standoff between China and Indonesia in Natuna.³⁶ While some officials advocated for a robust response to China, others adopted a more cautious approach to avoid harming Chinese investments in Indonesia.³⁷ The coordinating minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, for instance, argued against deploying the Navy to address fishing skirmishes around Natuna, deeming it unnecessary and potentially escalating tensions between the two countries.³⁸

Indonesia recognises the significance of international engagement through bilateral, regional, and multilateral avenues. ASEAN remains central to Indonesia's strategy. Indonesia has assumed a leadership role in negotiating the Code of Conduct

in the South China Sea and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, showcasing its contributions and influence in the region.³⁹ During Indonesia's chairmanship, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Declaration on the Placement and Protection of Migrant Fishers, aiming to improve working conditions for Southeast Asian migrant fishers.⁴⁰ In November 2022, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi proposed the idea of an ASEAN Maritime Outlook during the 25th ASEAN Political and Security Council (APSC) meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.⁴¹ While few details have been revealed, a Concept Paper on the Development of an ASEAN Maritime Outlook was adopted in February 2023.⁴² Analysts suggest that the ASEAN Maritime Outlook will lay a foundation for ASEAN's maritime strategy, with subsequent chairs continuing the initiative.⁴³

Gaps in Indonesia's approach

The current approach to maritime issues in Indonesia reveals a significant emphasis on security concerns, often overshadowing other important aspects of the country's maritime interests. While this emphasis can be understood due to Indonesia's vast size, large population, and limited resources, it is essential for Indonesia to adopt a more holistic approach that addresses all dimensions of Indonesia's maritime interests.

One area where Indonesia's stance falls short is marine environmental issues, which have been marginalised within the country's broader maritime strategy. A notable example is Indonesia's limited prioritisation of negotiations on the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement, despite having direct access to two vast areas beyond national jurisdiction – the Indian and Pacific Oceans. After nearly two decades of negotiation, the BBNJ agreement was finally adopted in June 2023 and open for signature on 20 September 2023 and shall remain open for signature until 20 September 2025.⁴⁴ It is worth noting that the agreement will only enter into force 120 days after 60 ratifications.⁴⁵ This agreement aims to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, covering over two-thirds of the ocean.

Despite Indonesia's desire to participate in the management of high seas and deep seabed,⁴⁶ its interests in the BBNJ negotiations did not generate significant attention domestically. Nevertheless, Indonesia is among 67 states that have signed the BBNJ Agreement on the first day it became open for signature.⁴⁷ As a matter of international law, by signing the agreement, Indonesia is obliged to 'refrain from acts which would defeat the object and purpose' of the agreement.⁴⁸ As a matter of domestic practice, however, this agreement needs to be ratified and then transformed into Indonesian laws to bring it into effect.⁴⁹

In contrast to UNCLOS, which became a cornerstone of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy in the late 1960s to early 1980s, the BBNJ agreement did not receive an equal sense of priority. One might argue that BBNJ does not pose an immediate security threat to Indonesia's territorial integrity, hence receiving less attention from the administration. However, Indonesia's lacklustre maritime diplomacy is also evident in the context of climate change and sea-level rise, which present

clear threats to the country's hard-fought archipelagic status. Despite Indonesia's extensive coastline and numerous vulnerable islands, its response to the threat of sea-level rise has been minimal. While sea-level rise is often cited as a reason for the government's decision to relocate the capital from Jakarta to Kalimantan,⁵⁰ the government's attention to sea-level rise seems limited to using it as a narrative for the capital relocation rather than a genuine concern over the impact of sea-level rise on the country's territorial integrity. Although the sinking of Jakarta is concerning, it is equally critical to assess the status of Indonesia's outermost islands, which form the basis for the country's archipelagic baselines and are pivotal points for measuring Indonesia's maritime entitlements.

Rising sea levels not only pose a significant risk to Indonesia's archipelagic state status but also carry the potential for territorial loss, including associated maritime zones.⁵¹ According to projections from *Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional* (BRIN) or the National Research and Innovation Agency, around 115 of Indonesia's islands may be submerged by 2100 due to rising sea levels and land subsidence.⁵² However, it remains uncertain how many of these potentially submerged islands serve as archipelagic basepoints for delineating maritime zones. Furthermore, recent research indicates that 92 of Indonesia's outermost islands are at risk of sinking due to rising sea levels,⁵³ raising legal questions about whether sea-level rise may impact Indonesia's archipelagic state classification – a legal concept that Indonesia and other archipelagic states worked tirelessly to establish within UNCLOS after decades of diplomatic efforts.⁵⁴

The International Law Commission (ILC) has included the topic of 'Sea-Level Rise in relation to International Law' in its long-term programme of work, and in 2019 established an open-ended Study Group focusing on several issues, including sea-level rise in relation to the law of the sea. The First Issues Paper has highlighted submissions made by states as well as regional bodies.⁵⁵ Indonesia, however, did not submit any information despite being one of the most affected countries by sea-level rise. This absence speaks volume about the issue's importance to the country. Indonesia did, however, submit a written statement in June 2023 to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) regarding the request for an advisory opinion made by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS). Indonesia's stance is that there are no specific obligations for UNCLOS state parties to address marine pollution resulting from climate change's deleterious effects or to protect the marine environment from climate change impacts.⁵⁶

In his speech at the G7 Partner Working Session in 2023, President Widodo urged all nations to intensify their efforts in addressing climate change, emphasising the importance of implementing concrete measures commensurate with each country's capacities.⁵⁷ He highlighted Indonesia's actions in areas like deforestation reduction, mangrove forest rehabilitation, and the development of green industrial areas and electric vehicle ecosystems.⁵⁸ However, it is concerning that sea-level rise was notably absent from his address, indicating a limited focus on this critical issue beyond its relevance to the capital relocation. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Indonesia had submitted a recommendation to the 2020 UN Open-Ended

Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, underscoring the importance of comprehensive cooperation among archipelagic and island states to tackle the negative impacts of climate change and rising sea levels.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Indonesia co-sponsored a landmark UNGA Resolution on countries' obligation to address climate change, a proposal put forth by Vanuatu.⁶⁰

Indonesia's past experience of losing the Sipadan and Ligitan case against Malaysia appears to have influenced its approach to conflict resolution.⁶¹ Despite being a party to UNCLOS and subject to its compulsory dispute settlement mechanism, Indonesia has shown reluctance to utilise formal dispute settlement mechanisms when resolving disagreements with other countries, often relying on non-adversarial solutions instead. However, it is important to note that Indonesia has not submitted any optional declaration that would exclude certain disputes falling within an excepted category from any UNCLOS dispute settlement procedure. This means that Indonesia can still be brought before any UNCLOS dispute settlement mechanism by other parties. For instance, the Indonesian Ocean Policy has identified potential threats, such as accidents involving foreign nuclear submarine passing Indonesian waters and armed conflict at sea.⁶² Much attention has been drawn to Australia's plan to acquire nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS deal with the United Kingdom and United States. Some Indonesian government officials have even suggested closing Indonesia's archipelagic sea lanes to AUKUS submarines.⁶³ If Indonesia were to proceed with this suggestion, it is possible that the country could be brought to a dispute settlement mechanism under UNCLOS for restricting passage through archipelagic sea lanes.⁶⁴

Recommendations and conclusion

While security challenges cannot be ignored, it is crucial for Indonesia to adopt a more balanced approach to its maritime strategy that addresses all dimensions, including security concerns and critical issues like marine environment protection and sea-level rise. There remains a need to bridge the gap between rhetoric and practical implementation. For example, protecting Indonesia's archipelagic status from rising sea levels requires assessing the impact of sea-level rise on outermost islands, conducting further research on basepoint heights, and considering regional declarations to secure maritime entitlements are essential steps for protecting Indonesia's archipelagic status. Indonesia should actively engage with Pacific countries on climate change and sea-level rise, supporting their advisory opinion request and developing a comprehensive plan to address these threats. Improved relations between Indonesia and Vanuatu, for example, could facilitate greater engagement with Pacific countries on climate change and sea-level rise.⁶⁵

The passage of foreign warships through Indonesia's archipelagic sea lanes remains a priority. While concerns have been raised about an increase in nuclear submarines passing through Indonesian waters, the partial designation of Indonesia's archipelagic sea lanes may not be sufficient in the long run. Indonesia has so far designated three north-south lanes but left out the east-west route. It can be counterproductive to Indonesia's security objectives since it is practically difficult,

if not impossible, to monitor all vessels' traffic – most notably foreign warships and submarines – throughout the east-west route, especially when the navy was not in its best shape. Strengthening naval power and proposing an east-west lane for adoption by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) are crucial for Indonesia's security objectives, particularly considering the growing presence of nuclear-powered submarines in the region.

Indonesia's level of engagement on ocean matters has fluctuated since the conclusion of UNCLOS, and new challenges will test the country's commitment to international ocean affairs and its independent and active foreign policy. Within the broader concept of Blue Security, Indonesia tends to prioritise traditional security concerns, focusing heavily on conventional issues and some specific non-traditional ones. Adopting a Blue Security approach would enable Indonesian elites and stakeholders to holistically address ocean governance by recognising security challenges across diverse domains, reflecting the nuanced nature of security threats at sea and from sea.

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9 Japan

Kyoko Hatakeyama

Introduction

Consisting of over 6,000 islands, Japan's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) cover approximately 12 times its land area, making it the world's sixth largest maritime nation. It also has five international straits, such as the Soya and Osumi straits.

Japan has long depended on free and unconstrained passage through sea lines of communication (SLOC) that stretch from the Persian Gulf to Japan by way of the Straits of Malacca. The security of sea lanes is essential for the country's survival, due to its reliance on maritime routes for its trade, including imports of oil, various energy resources, and food. Japan's strong support for 'wide international waters, narrow territorial water' in negotiations over the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) showed that Japan has considered freedom of sea lanes and fishery interests to be one of the top priorities.¹ Yet Japan had long lacked a specific and consistent maritime policy.

However, the maritime environment surrounding Japan is becoming increasingly unstable and uncertain. China has repeatedly intruded into territorial and contiguous waters around what Japan refers to as the Senkaku Islands by claiming sovereignty over those islands. Coupled with China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, China's attempts to change the status quo concerned Japan, driving the country to launch a comprehensive maritime policy to defend its territory and sustain the current regional order.

This chapter provides a comprehensive picture of Japan's 'Blue Security' and examines Japan's approach to defending its maritime interests and the gaps that exist in this approach. The nature of security threats in the maritime domain adds a complex mix of interstate conflict, civil war, terrorism, piracy, and maritime disputes. To identify Japan's key maritime interests and priorities, the chapter first provides an overview of Japan's maritime interests and priorities in the following areas: security, trade, maritime crime, and environment. Secondly, it examines how Japan has tried to defend its maritime interests by investigating related official documents as well as the roles of the various actors concerned. In particular, the chapter examines Japan's strategy in the security area since these are most likely to affect Japan's national interests broadly. Thirdly, it examines existing gaps in

Japan's approach as well as between Japan and other states. It concludes by arguing that Japan's efforts to protect its interests have not yet borne sufficient fruit.

Japan's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

The Basic Plan on Ocean Policy Phase III (hereafter, the Third Basic Plan) adopted in 2018 states that Japan's national maritime interests are ensuring security in its territorial waters, promoting safety of sea lanes, and strengthening the international maritime order so as to ensure freedom of ocean use.² This statement reflects Japan's concerns that the region is becoming increasingly unstable and unpredictable. The reason for the concern lay in China's increasingly assertive behaviour in the maritime domain.

Since the 2000s, China has been gradually more assertive in the maritime domain in the East and South China Seas. In the East China Sea, China has actively conducted research activities in Japan's EEZ. It also claimed sovereign rights over the Senkaku Islands (what China calls Diaoyu), which have been administered by Japan since the United States returned the archipelago to Japan in 1972. China's intrusion by its militarised coastguards and fishing vessels into the territorial or contiguous waters around the islands has become particularly intense since 2012, when the Japanese Government nationalised the islands. From 2015 onwards, a Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) ship equipped with a machine gun has been observed in the waters around the Senkaku Islands; a 10,000-ton-class CCG vessel has also been spotted. Moreover, China has converted naval vessels to CCG ships,³ which demonstrates the growing militarisation of the CCG despite the CCG being a civilian institution. China's increasing assertiveness has raised concerns among the Japanese population.

However, the concern was not confined to a narrow issue of territorial rights over the Senkakus. Coupled with China's assertive behaviour in the South China Sea, such as strengthening its control over fishing and resource exploitation at the expense of other littoral states, Japan's concerns extended to the maintenance of public goods, including maritime order centred on UNCLOS, safe navigation, and the freedom of use of the oceans. Although China claims to guarantee freedom of passage,⁴ control of the entire South China Sea by one country could potentially weaken the stability of sea lanes and the freedom of use of the oceans. As Japan has depended entirely on maritime trade for survival since it opened itself in 1854 after a long isolation, Chinese claims and its attempts to change the status quo in the maritime domain seriously have concerned Japan.

Japan's maritime interests centring around promotion of regional trade and the safety of sea lanes extend to securing safe navigation and preventing various maritime crimes ranging from piracy, smuggling, illegal fishing (in particular on the Yamato Bank), and terrorism. Piracy, in particular, poses a significant challenge to Japan because it directly threatens the safe navigation of commercial ships and forces them to detour.

For instance, the Malacca Strait is the most efficient and shortest route for Japan for importing oil from the Middle East. However, the Malacca Strait is infamous

for piracy. Following the outbreak of the 1997 Asian economic crisis, piracy considerably increased in Asia due to the rise of impoverished people. In 1999, for the first time, a Japanese ship (the M/V Alondra Rainbow) was attacked in the Strait. With this incident as a trigger, the Japanese government came to pay more attention to preventing piracy. If the Malacca Strait is unsafe, ships are forced to make a 1,000 nautical mile detour through the Lombok Strait, increasing costs as well as sailing time.⁵

In addition, since 2008 following the Lehman banking crisis, the number of piracy and other incidents in and around the waters off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden had increased sharply. Piracy there came to account for more than half of all incidents worldwide, posing a threat to the safety of ship navigation.⁶ In particular, pirates operating off those waters were violent and armed, threatening the safety of crews. Although the piracy declined, as almost ten per cent of the whole ships passing through the area are Japanese or Japanese related ships, the safety of the sea lanes in the Middle East is of vital importance for Japan.⁷

The prevention of marine pollution, the conservation of ecosystems, rising sea levels due to climate change and its associated baseline impacts are also serious issue for Japan, and the international community more broadly. The Osaka Blue Ocean Vision at the G20 Summit in 2019 notes that microplastic pollution is causing serious worldwide environmental damage. According to the Microplastic Survey on Marine Litter conducted by the Ministry of the Environment in 2014, the amount of microplastic in the waters surrounding Japan is 16 times that of the North Pacific Ocean and 27 times that of the world's oceans. Microplastics in the ocean not only damages the marine environment but also negatively affects the health of citizens as they ingest microplastics contained in seafood without realising it.⁸ The intake of microplastics causes a health problem because they contain many chemical substances. Although Asian countries such as China, Indonesia, and the Philippines are the major sources of plastic waste flowing into the sea, Japan ranks second in the world after the United States in terms of the amount of plastic waste disposed of per person.

Japan's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

Surrounded by the sea and having benefited from it for a long time, Japan faces various issues and challenges ranging from the economy, resource exploitation, the environment, and security in the maritime domain. Nevertheless, maritime-related issues have tended to be addressed on an ad hoc basis by each ministry, which means that no specific or consistent maritime policy was in place.

It was China's activities that changed Japan's approach to maritime issues. China's research activities that started in 2000s in Japan's EEZ along with oil exploitation development in the East China Sea alarmed several Diet members in the government, leading them to explore a comprehensive maritime policy. In 2007, their efforts bore fruit including the adoption of the Basic Act of Ocean Policy and the launch of a Headquarters for Ocean Policy. Although a first Basic Plan on Ocean Policy was an epoch-making move in that Japan consolidated a divided

maritime policy and set up headquarters to deal with maritime issues in a comprehensive manner, the first plan specified no concrete policy or measures beyond somewhat ambiguous wordings.⁹

The third 2018 Basic Plan, which was adopted under increasingly unstable conditions, proposed a concept of ‘comprehensive maritime security’ in which the government recognised various issues, including environmental protection, maritime safety, fisheries management, counter-terrorism, and law enforcement, as maritime security threats.¹⁰ While the major issue of the Second Plan was about resource exploitation in the EEZ,¹¹ the focus of the Third Plan shifted to security.

The 2023 Fourth Plan followed a similar path and ranked national security as the top issue Japan needed to urgently address. Notably, it first stated the need to strengthen the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG)’s capability to defend its sovereignty. Secondly, it emphasised the need to assist regional states in the construction and improvement of ports, shipping facilities, and related infrastructure so as to enhance their law enforcement capability and connectivity. Since the JCG’s capabilities alone would not ensure the safety of the sea lanes and the freedom of use of the ocean, cooperation with littoral states in the region was considered essential. In particular, strengthening international cooperation with states with a littoral along the Sulu-Celebes Sea and its surrounding areas was considered important because these states are candidates for alternative shipping routes.¹² Thirdly, it emphasised maintaining a free and open maritime order.

Then, to realise these goals, the Japanese government launched Official Security Assistance (OSA), a new framework that contributes to strengthening the security capabilities and deterrence of partner countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Fiji through the provision of materiel and equipment to the military as well as infrastructure development.¹³ Since Japan’s aid policy had long prohibited providing military-related assistance, this new framework is notable.

However, it was not easy to establish a comprehensive and cohesive maritime policy. Since maritime policy covers various areas, multiple ministries and agencies are involved in dealing with maritime challenges. For instance, five ministries—Police, Law, Finance, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and Land, Infrastructure, Transportation, and Tourism (MLIT)—are involved in monitoring and controlling illegal fishing operations by foreign fishing vessels. With regard to preventing terrorism, four ministries—Police, Law, Finance, and MLIT are involved. To protect national security in its remote islands, five ministries—Finance, Environment, Police, and MLIT—have responsibilities.¹⁴ Thus, due to the multifaceted nature of maritime issues, multiple ministries and agencies are involved in administration.

In contrast, on the international security front, two actors, namely, the JCG and the Self Defense Force (SDF), play practical roles. For instance, the JCG has played a significant role in ensuring the safety of sea lanes through the prevention of piracy. Although the Nippon Foundation, a non-governmental organisation played the role to ensure the safety of sea lanes during the Cold War period, the JCG gradually took over this role after the Cold War due to growing piracy in the vicinity of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.¹⁵ In 2000, Japan initiated a multinational meeting in the wake of piracy incidents affecting Japan-registered

ships, and the JCG started joint training and exchanges of visits with ASEAN countries such as Malaysia to provide technical support to the safety of navigation. Responding to the establishment of coast guard institutions in regional states, the JCG in cooperation with Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA), dispatched experts to Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines (among others), to provide technical advice. Notably, these institutions are modelled after Japan's. In addition, the JCG took initiatives at multilateral level by holding a Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM) in 2004, in which 22 countries participated, to promote cooperation and share information among states.

Likewise, the SDF contributed to the prevention of piracy by conducting escort operations in the Indian Ocean. Thanks to international efforts such as patrolling the area and escorting ships, the number of piracy events off Somalia and the Gulf of Aden has dramatically decreased since 2015. Thus, the JCG and the SDF have played concrete roles in ensuring the safety of sea lanes.

Moreover, the SDF took up new roles in indirectly defending Japan's national interests by establishing defence relations with regional states. Although the SDF never played such a role during the Cold War due to its historical legacy, Japan's peace-oriented diplomacy gradually reassured these states, leading to more receptive attitudes on their part. China's growing assertiveness also pushed them to look to Japan as a reliable partner. As a gambit, the SDF made port visits to nurture a cooperative atmosphere. It then expanded its role by conducting joint training and exercises with regional countries, including Australia and various ASEAN states, and providing capacity building support to the littoral states.

Meanwhile, the Japanese government has embarked on intensive international engagement at multiple levels to uphold the current maritime order. Bilaterally, in the 2010s, the Japanese government strengthened defence relations with regional states in order to uphold the rule of law. For instance, Japan has conducted 43 programmes, ranging from unexploded ordnance disposal, cybersecurity, submarine medicine, to search and rescue operations, to improve Vietnam's capacity between 2012 and 2023.¹⁶ Japan also implemented the Vientiane vision in 2016 and upgraded it in 2019 to nurture defence ties with ASEAN states.¹⁷ As part of this initiative, Japan invited officers from all ASEAN states to tour the South China Sea aboard the destroyer *Izumo*.¹⁸ Although Japan took the opportunity of sailing through the South China Sea to participate in the Malabar exercise alongside the United States and India, this initiative was designed to enhance its ties with Southeast Asian countries.¹⁹ By strengthening its defence relationships with ASEAN states and emphasising the importance of the rule of law as part of the vision, Japan hoped to reinforce the normative structure of the rule of law and sustain free and open oceans.

In particular, Japan has deepened the security relationship with Australia, a relationship that had hitherto focussed mainly on trade and the economy. In 2019, for the first time, the Maritime SDF joined the biennial Talisman Sabre United States-Australia joint exercises. The subsequent conclusion of the Reciprocal Access Agreement and the announcement of the 2022 Joint Declaration on Security

Cooperation have turned the two countries' relations into a quasi-alliance even if they have no obligation to defend each other.

Japan has also put efforts in strengthening ties with like-minded states by creating a minilateral group. In 2017, the Abe government revived the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which consists of the United States, India, Australia, and Japan. A Quad 1.0 meeting was first held on Prime Minister Abe's initiative in 2007, but no second meeting was held due to a lack of enthusiasm among the partners. However, in the wake of China's expansionist policy, Quad 2.0 was revived and eventually upgraded to summit level and became a platform for promoting cooperation, though not over security issues. Notably, the meeting was followed by a Malabar exercise held jointly by these four states.

A rationale that underpinned these moves was the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) initiative, which was proposed by the Abe government. FOIP emphasised the importance of the rule of law, implying soft criticism of China's assertiveness, which allegedly ignores international law. By arguing for FOIP, Japan tried not only to protect its narrow national interests, such as the defence of its islands and the safety of sea lanes, but also to serve the maintenance of public goods.

Gaps in Japan's approach

Despite the measures taken by the Japanese government, gaps in the approaches sometimes hampered their effectiveness. These gaps exist in various areas, including capability, policy, and international cooperation among states.

In the security area, China has employed a grey zone strategy, which makes it difficult for Japan to cope with the situation effectively. CCG vessels are becoming increasingly larger and better armed. The number of Chinese vessels of 1,000 tons or more surpassed that of the JCG in 2016.²⁰ China has also employed paramilitary and militia units, making the situation more complex. In contrast, the size of JCG ships and arms is limited since it is a civilian institution whose mission is to enforce the law in the maritime domain. Moreover, its budget is small. Due to the disproportionate balance in the capabilities of Chinese and Japanese ships, the JCG may not be able to respond to a contingency effectively.

Noticing these capability gaps between the JCG and CCG, the Japanese Government adopted the Policy on Strengthening the Maritime Security System (hereafter, the Maritime Security System Policy) in December 2016 to strengthen the JCG's law enforcement capability by increasing the number of vessels and upgrading them.²¹ In 2022, the government upgraded the policy and decided to further increase the FY 2027 budget for the JCG by about 40 per cent.²² It also called on the JCG to promote joint exercises with the SDF, deepen cooperation with foreign coast guard institutions, and strengthen its surveillance capabilities by using unmanned aircraft.²³

Moreover, the strategy calls for closer cooperation between the military and the coast guard in any emergency over Taiwan or other possible conflicts. Coordination between the SDF and the JCG is not a new idea. The two forces had successfully taken coordinated operations in the past, for example, when conducting counter-piracy operations off Somalia since the SDF is not empowered to arrest criminals.

Such coordination was arranged as a division of labour. Yet, to cope with China's grey zone strategy in the East China Sea, the government considered it needed to promote synchronisation between the JCG and the SDF. China's adoption of a coast guard law, which allowed Chinese vessels to use force against foreign ships, further drove the Japanese government to strengthen its capability in preparation for a contingency. Notably, it allowed the Defence Ministry to control the JCG in case of contingency, implying the possibility of JCG involvement in fighting.

On the international front, the Japanese government attempted to disseminate the importance of the rule of law as a key principle in the regional maritime order. The aim was to reduce the gaps in views among the regional states. Emphasis on the rule of law amounted to soft criticism of China's attempts to change the status quo by force. However, while the United States, Australia, and other like-minded states support this view, there is no consensus in the region about what order the region should pursue. In 2019, ASEAN proposed the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, which, by emphasising the inclusiveness of the region, recalls the ASEAN Way.²⁴ While ASEAN is concerned with Chinese assertiveness in the security area, it does not wish to exclude China and create an anti-China bloc.²⁵ Similarly, India has called for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. While Japan's FOIP is somewhat antithetical to China, similar but different wordings of the regional order by these states illustrate slightly different views of the order of the region. Despite Japan's dissemination through communication and the provision of assistance, consolidation into a common view has not yet occurred.²⁶

Fully understanding the gaps between Japan and the regional states, the Japanese government tried to reduce them by promoting international cooperation in the maritime domain. The main aim of this cooperation was twofold. Firstly, it aimed to enhance ASEAN's law enforcement capability and reduce capability gaps between China and ASEAN states. Secondly, it aimed to disseminate the importance of the rule of law by employing the JCG and the SDF as messengers.

The JCG's support is tailor-made and modest. With piratical attacks on Japan-registered ships as a trigger, JCG patrol vessels started to call at ports in Southeast Asian countries and conduct joint exercises with counterpart agencies as part of anti-piracy measures for ensuring the safety of sea lanes. When conducting joint exercises, Japan leads by example in an unassuming manner by placing minimal demands on the more political aspects of these exercises, such as scenario design, geographic location, or command-and-control structure.²⁷ The JCG's mobile cooperation team also provides tailor-made capacity-building assistance to regional states such as the Philippines and Vietnam. The team provide technical assistance in improving their maritime law enforcement capability, search and rescue operations, oil spill responses and so on. Although it is a small team consisting of limited personnel, its support was appreciated because it responds to the needs of the recipient states.²⁸

Similarly, the SDF has expanded its role and cooperation with regional states. The deepening of security relationships with the United States and Australia and the launch of minilateral groupings operate to pressure China. Increasing SDF's joint training and exercise with them reassure the regional states by demonstrating

Japan's solid support. However, such efforts neither necessarily lead to the stability of the region nor fully reassure regional states. ASEAN states, as well as India, do not necessarily side with the United States in its competition with China. This hesitation was aptly illustrated by, for instance, India's reluctance to deepen security cooperation within the Quad. Although these states are concerned with Chinese assertiveness in the maritime domain, there is a gap in their understanding of a preferable regional order between Japan, the United States, Australia, and regional states. Japan's proactive support and engagement only serve to stop ASEAN states from leaning towards China.

Conclusion and recommendations

Japan's interests in maritime affairs are widely ranging, from security to the environment, with two top priorities: national security and the safety of sea lanes. Japan faces growing Chinese challenges in the East and South China Seas. In response, the Japanese government promoted FOIP to emphasise the rule of law. The JCG and the SDF now play a significant role in defending Japan's national interests by taking various measures at national and international levels. For instance, the JCG continuously patrols the Senkaku Islands by devoting a substantial part of its resources to the Okinawa district; it has successfully defended the islands. At the international level, it ensures the safety of sea lanes by promoting international cooperation and providing support to regional states to prevent piracy and armed robbery against ships. Similarly, the SDF plays a substantial role by contributing to the establishment of a solid tie with counterparts in regional states through joint training and exercises. Given the political importance of the military in a state, Japan has expected that defence diplomacy through the SDF would deepen security ties between Japan and regional states and convey the importance of the rule of law. However, such international activities by Japanese actors may not bring about a significant impact. Various gaps exist in capabilities, policy areas, and views between Japan and the regional states, thus obstructing the effectiveness of Japan's efforts.

What can Japan do to improve the situation? Firstly, it needs to reduce capability gaps between Japan and China. The government's decision to upgrade the JCG's capability and promote coordination between the JCG and the SDF is a positive move given China's grey zone strategy. Swift and smooth action is essential to blocking the escalation of a contingency. Strengthening the relationship with the United States to ensure 'seamless, robust, flexible, and effective bilateral responses'²⁹ will also deter China from taking bold action in the maritime domain. However, excessive coordination between the SDF and the JCG and the JCG's militarisation may raise concerns among regional states and intensify the tension between the CCG and the JCG over the Senkaku Islands. Similarly, while strengthening the SDF's military capability is necessary given growing instability, excessive emphasis on the increase in military capability may escalate tensions between Japan and China without deterring China from taking bold action. By bringing the safety of sea lanes to the fore as an area

of cooperation, Japan needs to find a common ground with China to coexist peacefully.

Secondly, the Japanese government needs to continue putting resources into promoting defence ties with regional as well as like-minded states because this underpins the regional order in two ways. Firstly, though not significantly changing the balance of power in the region, close defence relationships with like-minded states will check China's move. Secondly, Japan's capacity-building support to regional states will enhance the rule of law at sea by helping these states reinforce their law enforcement and defence capabilities. Round-the-clock patrolling by the JCG around the Senkaku Islands has successfully prevented China from grabbing the islands. Similarly, increasing ASEAN's defence capability will raise a hurdle for China to take control of the disputed area. These efforts will eventually bring about greater safety of the sea lanes as well as stable oceans in which no state changes the status quo by force.

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10 Malaysia

Ruhanas Harun

Introduction

Malaysia was officially declared as a maritime nation in 2019, although in practice, it had been so for most of its history. As a 'nation with continental roots linking the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea on one side, to the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean on the other, while also connected to the Eurasian continent by land',¹ Malaysia's strategic geographical position in Southeast Asia, a maritime crossroads anchored in histories of trade and empire, and its geopolitical, cultural and economic dependence on the sea, exhibits all the elements of a maritime nation. While the geostrategic environment of Southeast Asia has evolved since the end of the Cold War, Malaysia's position and interests as a maritime nation has remained strong. Peninsular Malaysia has always served as a strategic land bridge between continental Southeast Asia and its archipelagic parts. Malaysia's vision as the bridging linchpin between the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions connects the nation's past, present, and future, which was emphasised in its 2019 Defence White Paper.² Malaysia has a total coastline of 6,037 km and the sea area is more than twice the size of its landmasses. Its territorial claims in the South China Sea and assertion of its rights to its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 334,671 km² are influenced by strategic considerations as much as by economic ones.³

Together with Indonesia and Singapore, Malaysia shares control of and responsibility for the Straits of Malacca, which is one of the busiest waterways in the world. Today, modern Southeast Asia continues to be linked into the wider economic and trading systems of the contemporary period. All Southeast Asian countries, except Laos, are maritime states in the sense that they have coastlines, deep sea harbours, seafaring population, and economies that include fishing, maritime trade, sea transport, seabed exploration, and shipbuilding. The declaration of Malaysia as a maritime nation in 2019 increased public awareness of maritime interests and advantages both domestically and internationally, but also concerns about the vulnerabilities and challenges associated with being a maritime nation, especially when there are disputes and strategic competition playing out in Asia's maritime domains. To protect and secure its maritime interests, Malaysia has formulated and implemented various strategies and policies which have helped the country to overcome maritime threats. However, a lot remains to be done in this pursuit of its national maritime interests.

Malaysia's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Conceptually, maritime security as it applies to the Malaysian context comprises of military, economic and commercial aspects. Hence it can cover traditional threats such as naval operations, deterrence, territorial disputes, overlapping claims, and it can cover non-traditional security issues such as oil spills, mariner safety, fisheries management, marine environmental protection, and management of other resources.⁴ As a maritime nation, Malaysia identified several key interests that must be secured and protected. These interests are expressed in concentric areas which are divided into three layers comprising the core area, extended area, and forward area. The core area consists of the landmasses of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, the territorial waters, and airspace above them.⁵ Malaysia's sovereignty also extends to its territorial waters as it enjoys sovereign rights in its maritime zones in accordance with the relevant international law. Malaysia needs to protect and defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity from both internal and external threats.⁶

The sea plays an immensely important role in Malaysia's economy. It facilitates an estimated 95% of its international trade (by volume) and its ports act as gateways to its trade which is pivotal to its economic wellbeing.⁷ The offshore oil and gas industry is a main contributor to the nation's economy and to the Federal Government revenue. Malaysia's major energy source is still petroleum, almost all of which is located offshore. Any disruption to the production, storage, and distribution of those supplies can have a negative impact on the economy.⁸ A vast majority of food in Malaysia is either from the sea, or imported into the country via the sea. The marine industry in Malaysia is made up of transportation activities directly or indirectly related to the seas. The industry consists of a well-established regulatory framework overseen by the Ministry of Transport and its agencies; infrastructures such as ports and terminals plus supporting ones such as warehouses, free zones, logistics or distribution centres, ships carrying cargos, and providing marine services, organisations and human capital with various expertise and skills sets supporting the industry players.⁹ In Malaysia, this vast and dynamic marine industry has many ancillary services and subsectors, generates local, and foreign direct investments, as well as generating employment for its people. The sea serves as a conduit for economic development, and by most major accounts, Malaysia punches above its weight class in key sub sectors within the global maritime industry.¹⁰ Blessed with excellent maritime features and boasting maritime infrastructures and credentials, Malaysia is serious in promoting the development of maritime economic activities with the view to becoming a flourishing Blue Economy nation. Maritime economy in Malaysia also involves tourism activities. The country is endowed with many islands as tourist destinations both in Peninsular Malaysia and in Sabah and Sarawak. While the islands in Peninsular Malaysia are relatively safe, the islands off the coast of Sabah have experienced attacks from terrorist groups such as Abu Sayyaf group which specialised in kidnap for ransom. This dampened tourism in the area for a while, but today maritime tourism activities have returned to normal because of government's efforts to protect these areas.

Yet while the sea provides, it also divides. Malaysia is geographically divided into two areas of land-mass, the Malay Peninsular and the territories on the island of Borneo, comprising Sabah and Sarawak. They are separated by the vast waters of the South China Sea, currently the subject of disputes and counter claims by several countries, namely China, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Brunei. Malaysia, as a claimant nation and in the vicinity of the South China Sea, is naturally very concerned about the issue as it involves not only its security and territorial integrity, but it is also worried about the economic impact of open conflict in the South China Sea. Besides the South China Sea, Malaysia also must face security issues and challenges in the Straits of Malacca. Malaysia has important security and economic interests in the South China Sea. The South China Sea is becoming increasingly important not only in terms of defence strategy, but in terms of economic development as well. It is navigated by warships as well as merchant ships. It is also rich in natural resources such as oil and gas and fishery resources.¹¹ Malaysia's maritime domain features the busy shipping sea lines of communication (SLOCs) of the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean which act as gateways for the nation's trade. Malaysia is strategically positioned at the focal point on the map of maritime trade where 90% is via shipping. The airspace above these areas are strategic areas critical to the nation's defence and security.¹² At present there is an unsettled issue with Indonesia over the Ambalat area, near the Natuna island where Indonesia has developed an important security and defence base. Malaysia's main interests in the South China Sea comprise safeguarding its territorial claims in the area, maintaining good relations with China despite the South China Sea dispute, ensuring peace and stability, and adherence to international law and global norms.

One of the most important of these issues is the rise of irregular migration by sea. The economic development that has been taking place in Malaysia since the 1980s has attracted many foreigners to arrive in Malaysia looking for employment, mainly from neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. The Malaysian government is legitimately concerned about the large numbers of undocumented migrants arriving in the country and has taken various steps to manage the issue. The unregulated presence of many foreigners has reached a dangerously high level, and has had some negative impacts on the social stability and security of the country.¹³ A large majority came from Indonesia, facilitated by geographical proximity and socio-cultural affinities between the peoples of the two countries. By late 1980s, the government implemented measures to curb irregular immigrants through a policy of 'securitisation', involving several security related agencies such as the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN), immigration, police, and others. These measures helped to create awareness of the danger, but they did not necessarily eliminate the arrival of undocumented migrants because the basic reasons why they came and the loopholes in these measures were still there. Malaysia's geographical location, surrounded by sea, and in proximity with areas of conflict and political instability remains unchanged, therefore the challenges of undocumented migration will continue to persist.

Refugees have come to be perceived as a security concern in Malaysia. The country has for a long time attracted refugees from conflict areas in Southeast Asia. The increasing number of refugees, mostly arriving via the sea has political, socio-economic, and security implications for the country.¹⁴ It also adds to the responsibility of the RMN and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA). Today the main source of concern for Malaysia with regards to refugees are the Rohingyas who fled the political instability and insecurity in Myanmar. Malaysia received many refugees from Myanmar, totalling about 183,000, out of which 106,290 are Rohingya.¹⁵ Most of them came to this country via the sea. The status of 'refugee' does not exist in Malaysian law, and at least formally, a person holding a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee card does not attract any special rights in Malaysian law. As a recipient country, Malaysia has expressed concern about the impact of this massive outflow of refugees on its domestic socio-political and security situation. This human security issue links in with other issues of human rights at sea, including human trafficking and smuggling of weapons. Malaysia had to mobilise its limited resources to guard and patrol its shores, and if refugees manage to arrive on land, the government would have to provide humanitarian assistance to them.

The coasts of Sabah and the Straits of Malacca are vulnerable to threats emanating from the sea such as piracy, sea robbery, and smuggling. The Straits of Malacca is identified as 'core interest area' for Malaysia and a 'strategic sea-line of communication and air route' with its entrance and exits, including the Strait of Singapore, needing to be protected.¹⁶ The proximity of the Andaman Nicobar Islands to the northern entrance of the straits opens the sea area to the possibility of extra-regional players extending their influence in the region, making it vulnerable to both conventional and non-conventional threats.¹⁷ The Strait of Malacca is considered as one of the most dangerous waterways in the world because of pirate attacks. However, since 2019, piracy in the Strait has been reduced. Sea robbery is still a major security concern though, but mainly in the Singapore Strait. This is due to its proximity with Indonesian islands, which are relatively undeveloped and became a haven for sea robbers from Indonesia. The reduction of piracy in the Strait of Malacca can be attributed to the efficacy of the RMN, and the cooperation of the littoral states, namely Indonesia and Singapore. The three countries have joint operations to patrol and secure the Malacca Strait. It is in this context that the three countries have agreed to cooperate to safeguard the security of the straits. Malaysia and Indonesia have cooperated and coordinated in the patrolling of the Strait of Malacca.

Besides the South China Sea, Malaysia's maritime interests also extend to the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. The sea is of interest to the three countries around it, namely Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. They share the tri-border sea area which forms an alternative route to the Strait of Malacca as it is the only seaway capable of supporting submarines and super-tankers. But the area is also exposed to numerous non-traditional security threats such as irregular immigrants, trans-border criminal activities, piracy, armed robbery, terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal fishing. Another key interest for Malaysia lies in its geographical reality as the bridge between the East (South China Sea and Pacific Ocean) and the Indian ocean.

During the Cold War, there were concerns over the security of the area due to fears that transiting military vessels or aircrafts of rival countries could get involved in a confrontation in the waterway.¹⁸

Malaysia's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

Malaysia has formulated various strategies and taken various measures to promote and preserve its Blue Security interests. In fact, agencies dealing with Blue Security are not lacking in Malaysia, the real issue is to what extent are they effectively employed for the purpose. Government agencies such as the RMN, the MMEA, the Marine Police, Fishery Department, and several others have been given the task to resolve the problems discussed above. In terms of operational responsibilities and capabilities, the RMN and MMEA are regarded as the most important as they are lead agencies in pursuing Blue Security. The role of the RMN has long been established as the most essential, and is probably the most capable of all the security agencies tasked with safeguarding its long coastlines and thwarting external violations of Malaysian territorial waters. There is a growing mismatch in RMN's capabilities and its responsibilities due to ageing assets.¹⁹ To better respond to the geostrategic challenges of protecting Malaysia's sovereignty and maritime interests, the RMN, in 2018, has come out with a '15 To 5 Transformation Program', which serves as a principal document guiding Malaysia through the next 30 years.²⁰ As noted, the maritime sector is a very important component of the Malaysian economy. It is therefore imperative to strengthen RMN capabilities to carry out its tasks more effectively.

Today, maritime security threats for Malaysia are mainly focussed in the waters of Borneo, especially in Sabah waters. Sabah, with its long coastlines and proximity to southern Philippines, is particularly vulnerable to threats coming from the sea. In 2013, the so-called Royal Army of Sulu made an incursion into the eastern coast of Sabah and launched an attack on the area.²¹ In response to this threat, Malaysia established a security zone in the area, known as the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM). Controlling the eastern coast of Sabah is difficult due to its proximity to a politically unstable and unsafe area in South Philippines, and the close socio-cultural relations of the local population with the communities in South Philippines. Malaysia also faces numerous security threats in the South China Sea, such as cargo thefts from vessels transiting through its waters, illegal foreign fishing activities smuggling, illegal sand mining, and foreign warships incursions.²² Despite the attention and efforts given to eliminating the many security problems around Sabah waters, threats continue to persist because of geographical factors and the lack of assets for security agencies carrying out operations against threats.

Gaps in Malaysia's approaches

One of the most frequent complaints by security enforcement agencies are that they lack the assets to accomplish the tasks assigned to them. According to one analyst, the sea dictates the national defence strategy as it 'divides the country

physically into two continents'.²³ Obsolete assets and a constrained defence would not only affect the preparedness and capability of the Malaysian Navy, but could also indirectly risk the safety of Navy personnel in carrying out their duties.²⁴ To 'remake Malaysia into a strong maritime nation, it is recommended that the Royal Malaysian Navy be equipped with faster hulls and missiles, and that Malaysia must modernise its shipbuilding industry to reduce dependence on foreign powers'.²⁵ Protecting the nation's maritime interests also needs the cooperation of various relevant agencies to ensure law and order. Malaysia needs an effective intelligence reporting system plus strong enforcement and policing agencies to protect its industries at sea.²⁶ What seems to be a holistic plan has been devised in the form of 'whole of government and whole of society' approach to developing Malaysia's maritime potentials and addressing the Blue Security threats facing the country. This requires participation not only of government agencies and machinery, but also citizens' role in this. However, it must be said that while the strategy and its intentions are good, the awareness about the idea of Blue Security and issues around it remains limited to policymakers. How and to what extent society's involvement in maritime security matters remains to be spelt out.

Malaysia must continue to maintain meaningful cooperation with neighbouring countries in mitigating maritime threats. It has close cooperation with Singapore and Indonesia in the security and safety of the Straits of Malacca through programs such as 'Eye in the sky', Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP), and the Malaysia-Indonesia Coordinated Joint Patrols. This has resulted in a satisfactory level of security in the Malacca Straits. For Malaysia, the South China Sea dispute has created an awareness of the need to pay attention to the security problem in East Malaysia and has been justified as an impetus to improve the capabilities of the navy in order to carry out its tasks of protecting Malaysia's maritime interests in the core and extended areas.

Securing the Borneo waters has proven to be more difficult because of the complicated situation in the area. Insecurity around the waters of Sabah has become a big headache for Malaysian authorities as with a mixed bags of threats, some of which are politically sensitive and must be treated delicately to avoid suspicion and tension with immediate neighbours. The unpredictability of domestic politics in Sabah has posed obstacles to a more effective implementation and enforcement of measures to deal with national security problems. Moreover, the area to be patrolled and looked after is considerably much bigger than the Straits of Malacca. The RMN and MMEA lacks adequate assets to cover the long coastlines and the large maritime space. Besides the RMN and MMEA, other enforcement agencies formed to manage Malaysia's border security – including maritime borders – include the Marine Police Force, the Department of Fishery, Marine Department, the Immigration Department, Royal Malaysian Customs Department, and the National Security Council (NSC). Traditionally, the role of the NSC is to act as the coordinating body to oversee the implementation of policies with regards to national security. This is supposed to eliminate the lack of overlapping responsibilities and even rivalry among security agencies which have reduced the effectiveness of measures to manage Malaysia's Blue Security. In addition to the above-mentioned strategies

as documented in the National Security Policy, Malaysia's Defence White Paper, and the RMN #15 To 5 Transformation Program, various other policy decisions are also made from time to time in response to specific incidents or threats.

For Malaysia to forge ahead in its quest to become a fully developed maritime nation, it is also necessary to change the mindset of its people. The security policy and strategy of the country had for a very long time been based on land due to domestic security situation in the country, namely the long struggle with communist insurgency. In its past, Malaysia stood out as a maritime nation as seen in the kingdom of Malacca which flourished in the 15th century as a maritime trading centre. After the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in the 16th century, the nation has lost much of its maritime tradition. Resetting the attitude of policymakers and citizens alike towards making Malaysia a full maritime nation needs more than just a declaration of intention and policy formulation.

Recommendations and conclusion

The declaration of Malaysia as a maritime nation in 2019 rekindled a great interest in its past maritime traditions and created awareness of the extent of the country's economy at sea due to its geographical location connecting mainland Southeast Asia with island Southeast Asia, and as a bridge between two oceans. Efforts have been made to secure the advantages offered by such a position and to fulfil its aspiration of becoming a real maritime nation. It has managed to overcome several shortcomings and challenges to maritime security, but many obstacles remain. The changing and uncertain geopolitical and geostrategic environment created new challenges in addition to the existing ones. To safeguard its maritime interests and mitigate Blue Security threats, Malaysia has implemented measures, among them the strengthening of the capabilities of its security agencies. The RMN and the MMEA are two lead agencies in this endeavour, and they need to be strengthened to better police the long coastlines and the country's vast territorial waters. It is important for Malaysia to overcome these challenges sooner than later. In view of the existing competition among states in the region to secure and defend their respective maritime interests, it is important for Malaysia to maintain existing cooperative relationships with its immediate neighbours and major maritime powers in the region to defend its maritime interests and fulfil its aspiration to be a successful maritime nation. It needs to continue maintaining close relations with its traditional friends outside ASEAN, such as Australia and the United States. Above all, Malaysia needs stronger maritime capabilities in responding to the threats and secure its interests in an uncertain geopolitical and geostrategic environment of the region. In conclusion, to enhance maritime security for the nation and the subregion, Malaysia should continue working closely with its immediate neighbours, especially Indonesia and the Philippines, to streamline actions to combat maritime threats in order to achieve common aims of security and socio-economic development in the region. This is necessary as security and development are mutually reinforcing. The South China Sea dispute is expected to remain volatile, therefore Malaysia must continue to work closely with its neighbours and partners to seek

a peaceful solution to the problem and to protect the peace and security within its geographical proximity in particular, and that of Southeast Asia in general.

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11 New Zealand

David Capie

As an isolated trading nation with a small population, New Zealand has a strong interest in the strategic challenges and threats emerging in and from its vast maritime domain. These include the impacts of climate change, transnational crime (in particular seaborne drug trafficking), resource pressures, and, more recently, what are typically described as challenges to the ‘rules-based order’ in maritime East Asia and the South Pacific.

This growing interest in the maritime domain has been reflected in a number of policy statements and a new approach to coordinating maritime security across government. In 2020, New Zealand issued its first Maritime Security Strategy, which noted the existing approach was being stressed by growing challenges from climate change, technological developments, and what it called ‘a more complex geopolitical environment’. In 2023 it issued an inaugural National Security Strategy, which declared that ‘safeguarding our wider maritime region’ was one of New Zealand’s primary national interests.¹

The South Pacific – always important to New Zealand – has taken on an elevated significance in foreign and defence policy in the last five years. A feature of recent government statements is growing attention to ‘grey zone’ challenges, with the 2021 Defence Assessment and 2023 National Security Strategy referencing the potential for military or paramilitary backed resource exploitation in the Pacific. Yet, while there has been impressive work to ensure New Zealand’s response to a growing array of maritime security challenges is coordinated across government, a bigger problem is a lack of capacity. The New Zealand Defence Force is confronting the looming obsolescence of multiple naval platforms. The military and maritime security agencies are also having to deal with severe challenges recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce.

New Zealand’s view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Aotearoa New Zealand is by some measures a small state, but it is also a large maritime nation. Its land area is 264,537 km², but once its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and vast extended continental shelf are included, the country’s territory becomes some 20 times larger.² New Zealand’s EEZ is the world’s 5th largest and its 15,134 km coastline is the 9th longest in the world – longer than that of China,

DOI: [10.4324/9781032692906-11](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032692906-11)

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India, or Brazil. Nowhere in the country is more than 120 kilometres from the sea and New Zealand's closest neighbour is more than 1000 km away.

The sea is central to New Zealand's history, culture, and sense of self. Oceans brought seafaring people to Aotearoa from Polynesia, and later embedded colonial New Zealand in global networks of imperial commerce and politics. The sea is important to both te ao Māori (the Māori worldview) and settler cultures. It is vital for the country's national security, its economy, and indeed much of its way of life.³

New Zealand's maritime security interests and priorities grow out of its geography. As well as its own territory and EEZ, the country has constitutional responsibilities for the maritime domains of three Realm countries – the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau, the latter almost 4000 km from the mainland of New Zealand. New Zealand has interests in the Southern Ocean as well as parts of the wider maritime domain governed by regional or international organisations including the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). It also has responsibility for a vast Search and Rescue zone that stretches from the middle of the Tasman Sea to halfway to Chile, from the South Pole to the equator, covering 30 million km² or one-twelfth of the planet's surface.⁴

For much of the past three decades, this vast but remote geography has been assumed to provide a degree of protection from the worst security threats. In 2001, then Prime Minister Helen Clark could describe New Zealand as enjoying 'one of the most strategically secure environments in the world'.⁵ However, in the last five years there has been a clear sense from government that the challenges in New Zealand's maritime domain are growing. In 2018 the Labour-New Zealand First coalition government announced a 'Pacific Reset', which was in response to a sense that the South Pacific was becoming more contested, and fears that New Zealand was losing influence.⁶ Recent government statements have stressed two primary security concerns: strategic competition and growing pressure on the 'rules-based order', and climate change. Both are playing out in New Zealand's area of maritime interest.

In traditional security terms, greatest concern focuses on a more assertive People's Republic of China, in particular its actions in maritime East Asia and its apparent ambition to expand its security footprint in the South Pacific. The 2021 Defence Assessment noted that 'among the most threatening potential developments' to New Zealand's defence interests would be 'the establishment of a military base or dual-use facility in the Pacific by a state that does not share New Zealand's values and security interests'.⁷ Another threat it identified was 'extra-regional military-backed resource exploitation', in particular the risk of military or paramilitary backed exploitation of fisheries or undersea oil and gas. The 2023 Defence Policy and Strategy Statement was more specific, warning that growing strategic interest in the Pacific could lead to 'challenges to New Zealand's sovereign authority over our maritime domain; reductions to our freedom of movement and action in the Pacific and Southern Ocean; and increasing threats to our physical, electronic, and space-based connections to the world'.⁸ While China's influence in the South Pacific has been a focus of public attention, there is also growing concern

in New Zealand that the Southern Ocean and Antarctica is ‘not immune to pressure from growing strategic competition’.⁹

A second key security challenge is the impact of climate change. The Boe Declaration, issued by Pacific Islands Forum leaders (including New Zealand) in 2018 identified climate change as the most serious security threat confronting the region. New Zealand’s defence planners have devoted considerable attention to climate issues, including a policy statement on its defence implications in the Pacific published in 2019. Its approach connected broader climate change impacts such as intensifying weather events, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, and shifting fish stocks with more traditional security concerns. The costs of climate adaptation are expected to accelerate a series of economic and social pressures, further stressing limited Pacific government budgets. These in turn create security risks, including an increased demand for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief that would provide rising powers with an opportunity to develop a larger, potentially military, presence in the Pacific.¹⁰

New Zealand has a significant environment interest in its oceans beyond strategic competition as the marine environment not only contributes to its prosperity, but is also essential in regulating the climate, absorbing pollutants, and supporting biodiversity. Climate change has seen waters warm and sea-levels rise with dramatic consequences for marine life and the human environment in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. A 2019 report by the Ministry of the Environment noted three other broad challenges affecting New Zealand’s marine environment: threats to marine species and habitats, activities on the land that are affecting the marine environment, and the impact of activities at sea (including fishing, dredging, and the exploration of minerals).¹¹ Thirty per cent of New Zealand’s biodiversity is in the sea, and many marine mammals, seabirds, and shorebirds are threatened with or at risk of extinction.¹²

Successive New Zealand governments have sought to protect New Zealand’s maritime domain. In 2015, then Prime Minister John Key announced that some 620,000 km² of EEZ around the Kermadec Islands would become an ocean sanctuary. This would have protected the area from fishing, seabed prospecting, and mining. Soon after it was announced however, opposition came from a range of groups, including those who argued the sanctuary would cut across settlements that had returned fishing rights to Māori groups (iwi) as part of a 1992 Treaty of Waitangi settlement. Negotiations with iwi and the Māori Fishing Authority continued from 2017, but in June 2023 the government announced it had not been able to reach agreement.¹³ New Zealand has also pressed for the protection of waters to its south. For example, New Zealand and the United States proposed the Ross Sea Marine Protected Area (MPA) to better conserve biodiversity and fish stocks in the Southern Ocean in 2012, which after some modification, came into force in 2017.

New Zealand’s approach to national security has always had a strongly economic dimension. As an isolated nation with an export profile heavily weighted towards commodity goods, open, and secure sea-lanes are a vitally important national interest. Over 99% of New Zealand’s exports by volume (or 82% of value) are exported by sea.¹⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in

Ukraine have created a growing awareness of the vulnerabilities that arise from extended maritime supply chains. During the pandemic international shipping companies changed their schedules, increased prices, and some stopped sailing to New Zealand altogether. This brought home New Zealand's dependence on imports of a range of critical goods, including some medical equipment and fuel.

The so-called blue economy is also an increasingly central part of New Zealand's economic life. A 2023 estimate by Maritime New Zealand claimed the 'marine economy' is worth \$8.2 billion in direct and indirect benefits, employing some 40,000 people.¹⁵ Seafood exports alone were expected to grow by about 8% to June 2023, for a total of NZ\$2.1 billion. Aquaculture is a rapidly growing sector, and the government's Aquaculture Strategy aims to grow it to more than \$3 billion by 2035.¹⁶ Unsurprisingly then, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is a growing concern. An August 2023 report by a Parliamentary Select Committee called for more to be done to hold IUU fishing offenders to account and argued for funding to support regional action across the Pacific.¹⁷

Criminal groups seeking to exploit New Zealand's maritime borders are the dark side of the blue economy. Along with IUU fishing, drug trafficking has long been a concern for the New Zealand authorities, and there are fears the transshipment of narcotics through the Pacific is on the rise, although data is scarce. Media reports suggest the comparatively lucrative Australian and New Zealand markets have been attractive for Latin American drug cartels. One massive haul of 3.5 tonnes of cocaine was seized in the Pacific Ocean in 2023 following work involving Police, the New Zealand Customs Service and the Defence Force. In another operation, 500 kg of methamphetamine was seized in 2016, apparently after having been brought ashore from a trawler off the Northland coast.¹⁸

Another law enforcement concern has been the possibility of a mass arrival of irregular migrants by sea. While the country's remote geography would seem to make a successful voyage unlikely, the government has stated New Zealand is a 'target' state for people smugglers.¹⁹ In 2023 Immigration Minister Michael Wood released a list of alleged attempts, including the case of a 90-foot trawler that left Sri Lanka in January 2019 with 248 people on board. It was apparently bound for Australia or New Zealand, before disappearing without a trace.²⁰ Drivers of the risk of trafficking include conflict and economic crises in South and Southeast Asia as well as the growing pressures posed by climate change.

New Zealand has limited ability to process refugee and asylum seeker claims, leading to legislation in 2013 that defined a 'mass arrival' (more than 30 people) and permitted authorities to detain those in arriving in such circumstances for 6 months. This, the government argued, would allow for asylum claims to be processed and would prevent the immigration and court systems from being overwhelmed. In 2023, the Labour government introduced legislation to further restrict the visas for which people involved in a 'mass arrival' could apply, prompting criticism from, among others, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.²¹

New Zealand's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

New Zealand has until recently released relatively few public strategies setting out how it plans to defend its maritime interests. Between 1998 and 2023, the country published just two Defence White Papers. This aversion to strategy documents has however changed dramatically in the last three years, with the launch of a dedicated Maritime Security Strategy in late 2020, a Defence Assessment in 2021, and then the country's first National Security Strategy, a Defence Strategic Policy Statement, and an MFAT Foreign Policy Strategic Assessment all released in mid-2023.

A careful read of these documents shows that while New Zealand's maritime environment has always been central to its national security, it has steadily increased in importance in the last decade. The 2016 Defence White Paper paid particular attention to maritime security challenges, highlighting New Zealand's security interests in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica.²² The 2018 Strategic Defence Policy Statement, released by the Labour-New Zealand First coalition government, elevated the importance of defence interests in the South Pacific to the same level as New Zealand's territory and EEZ. A 2019 statement 'Responding to the Climate Crisis', warned of greater demands on the Defence Force across New Zealand's area of maritime interest, including the need to be able to respond concurrently to increasingly frequent severe weather events in the Pacific and growing pressure on regional fisheries.

But the adoption of an inaugural Maritime Security Strategy in late 2020 broke new ground. The strategy, which seeks to build an 'efficient and effective maritime security system based on a common approach', was the result of years of consultation across government. It is based on four overlapping pillars: understand, engage, prevent, and respond. These pillars are supported by two broader principles: a need for a comprehensive multi-agency approach and the concept of *Kaitiakitanga* (a Māori concept for stewardship or guardianship).

The first pillar – understand – highlights the importance of knowing what is going on in New Zealand's vast maritime domain. According to the Strategy, it is vital to be 'able to detect and monitor relevant maritime activity, coordinate, assess, analyse, and fuse relevant information and intelligence streams, and provide nationally focussed maritime security assessment'.²³

The engage pillar stresses that maritime security risk management operations must be conducted in accordance with international law and with the support of international and domestic actors, including other states, law enforcement agencies, interested community groups and Māori groups (*iwi*). It assigns different agencies particular responsibility for advancing parts of this engagement work. It also reinforces a long-standing New Zealand interest in multilateralism and support for key regional groups in the South Pacific, including the Pacific Island Forum (PIF), the FFA and the Pacific Quadrilateral Arrangements (with Australia, France, and the United States).

The third pillar – prevent – stresses the need to tackle the ‘root causes’ of maritime security threats. It notes the need for New Zealand to harden its critical maritime systems, and to protect ports and ships from malicious actions. This includes the electronic systems that have become vital as the various parts of the marine economy have increased their reliance on cyber and space-based systems. This pillar also talks about the need to deter threats, through a ‘visible and sustained maritime patrol effort covering its EEZ and High Seas (with a particular focus on the South Pacific)’.²⁴

The fourth pillar – respond – reflects on the need for maritime security agencies to ‘be prepared to take action to mitigate threats, incidents and emerging issues, efficiently, effectively and flexibly with the right tools across diverse maritime zones with sufficient authority to act’. It discusses the need to have available and flexible surface and aerial assets, while noting that often the best way to respond to a maritime security threat will be through diplomatic or regulatory action, not ‘direct-on-the-water action’. Critically it also discusses the importance of fit for purpose legislative and regulatory frameworks to enable enforcement action.

Across all four pillars the strategy stresses the need for New Zealand to work in collaboration with key partners, including its only formal ally Australia, Pacific Island states, France, and fellow Five Eyes countries. This is through activities such as maritime patrols, port visits, training and security exercises, and coastal and shore-based surveillance, intelligence cooperation, as well as engaging in broad community outreach at home.

Responsibility for implementing the strategy falls to a complex ecosystem of agencies. The ‘core’ agencies include Maritime New Zealand, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Transport, the Customs Service and the Police. They are brought together in the Maritime Security Oversight Committee (MSOC), which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Secretary for Transport. The MSOC is responsible for developing ‘a shared awareness and understanding of New Zealand’s maritime interests and any activity that impacts upon them’. It coordinates ‘planning, investment and operational activity amongst agencies’ and aligns the maritime parts of the various agencies’ strategies.²⁵

The MSOC is in turn supported by the Joint Maritime Advisory Group (JMAG) a group of senior officials tasked to develop and deliver joint policy, planning and assessment products. They are supported by four cross-government working groups focussed on (i) technology, (ii) legal and policy issues, (iii) the Pacific, and (iv) maritime domain awareness. These small groups are designed to be ‘low drag’. They meet infrequently but sustain a virtual network across the year ‘to avoid duplication and maximise resources’.²⁶

At the operational level, the National Maritime Coordination Centre (NMCC) coordinates a programme of patrols for civilian agencies utilising military assets. The NMCC is hosted by the New Zealand Customs Service and co-located with the NZDF’s Joint Force Headquarters.²⁷

Gaps in New Zealand's approach

Although New Zealand has given considerable attention to the development of maritime security policy and strategy in recent years, this has not been matched by adequate investment in relevant people and platforms. Given the vast size of New Zealand's area of maritime interest, its defence force is small. The Royal New Zealand Navy operates nine ships: two ANZAC-class frigates *Te Mana* and *Te Kaha*, a replenishment vessel *Aotearoa*, a hydrographic survey ship *Manawanui*, a Multi-Role Vessel *Canterbury*, two Offshore Patrol Vessels (*Wellington* and *Otago*) and two inshore patrol vessels *Taupo* and *Hawea* (two other Inshore Patrol Vessels were sold to Ireland in 2022).²⁸ While small in number of hulls, the fleet faces a significant maintenance and training challenge resulting from operating six different types of craft.²⁹ The 2019 Defence Capability Plan concluded that 'The Navy's existing patrol capabilities are not able to meet the changing requirements of New Zealand's maritime domain. The inshore and offshore patrol vessels have provided significant value during their service lives, but are increasingly operationally limited as the ships age and regulations evolve'.³⁰

The New Zealand Customs Service and Police operate three of their own vessels, but in practice, the NZDF carries out a wide range of non-defence activities, including support for the Department of Conservation, search and rescue, and responding to civil defence and disasters in New Zealand and the South Pacific. This reduces the availability of defence assets for exercises and cooperation with partners.

Defence spending of around 1% of GDP has also seen the life of key platforms extended and replacement purchases delayed. The country's two ANZAC frigates, originally slated for replacement in the late 2020s, will continue to operate into the mid-2030s. Plans for the purchase of a third ice-strengthened Offshore Patrol Vessel were 'deferred' in 2022.³¹ That means every ship in the current fleet except HMNZS *Aotearoa* will reach the end of its projected service life between 2032 and 2035.³² Aerial platforms have also been impacted. New Zealand recently acquired four P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft to replace the fleet of six P-3K2 Orions. However, because of staff shortages and cost pressures, the Orions had to be retired early, leaving a gap that was covered with C-130 aircraft and help from partners.³³ The NZDF fleet of Seasprite helicopters has also reached the end of its life.³⁴

But if New Zealand confronts the looming obsolescence of a number of expensive platforms, a more immediate problem has been retaining the skilled people needed to make the maritime security system work. Morale problems during the COVID-19 lockdown and a hot labour market has seen the New Zealand Defence Force shed personnel in unprecedented numbers. Nearly 30% of NZDF staff left between 2021 and 2023. The loss of skilled tradespeople had a particular effect on the navy. A critical shortage of senior maritime engineers has meant three of the navy's vessels have been tied up at its Devonport base for months.³⁵

The resourcing of the Maritime Security Strategy (endorsed by Cabinet in 2019) has also been slower than anticipated. Because of a deteriorating fiscal position after the covid pandemic, a first tranche of new investment to hire staff for the MSOC and Maritime National Coordinating Centre did not arrive until 2023. A bid

to fund a Data Fusion Centre at the NMCC is currently scheduled for Budget 2024 and a further round of investment set down for Budget 2025. A June 2023 briefing to the minister in charge of maritime security noted the risks this presents, saying, ‘without its own Data Fusion Centre, agencies depend on an NZDF system which temporarily failed in May 2023, leading to a loss of awareness of maritime activities off the coast of New Zealand’.³⁶

Recommendations and conclusion

The holistic nature of the Blue Security concept fits well with New Zealand’s approach to its maritime interests and its preferred strategy. But strategy without resources is simply wishful thinking. There is an urgent need to invest in the people and platforms required to implement the strategies that New Zealand has adopted in the last few years. One opportunity should be the use of uncrewed systems, which offer particular advantages for a small country with a vast maritime domain. Unfortunately, New Zealand has been slow in investing in these technologies. Autonomous systems, including those that can run on solar energy and fly high in the stratosphere for weeks at a time, have the potential to make a major contribution to improved maritime domain awareness. They would also free up expensive Defence Force assets for defence activities.

Secondly, the New Zealand maritime security system has a clear demarcation of responsibilities and seems relatively well ‘joined up’, partly as a result of smallness. However, there are some voices missing from existing coordination arrangements, most notably industry. If hardening New Zealand’s ports, shipping and other maritime infrastructure against a range of threats, including cyber threats, is a priority, then it will be vital to work closely with commercial interests. MSOC should be expanded to include a representative of industry.

Thirdly, the sheer number of small craft in New Zealand’s waters presents an enormous challenge. These vessels represent the vast proportion of search and rescue call outs and are an important vector for drug importation. At present, however, there is no requirement for small New Zealand vessels to have an Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponder. A 1999 Court of Appeal decision ruled that ‘a port state has no general power to unilaterally impose its own requirements on foreign ships relating to their construction, their safety and other equipment and their crewing if the requirements are to have an effect on the high seas. Any requirements cannot go beyond those generally accepted, especially in the maritime conventions and regulations’.³⁷ Yet in the more than 20 years that have passed since the decision, AIS technologies have become much smaller and cheaper. What might have seemed an onerous burden in 1998 no longer seems the case in 2023. Indeed, in its report on the loss of the charter vessel *Enchanter*, the Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) recommended the Director of Maritime New Zealand ‘mandate the installation of AIS on certain categories of vessels, with a focus on those that present a higher risk – those that carry passengers outside inshore limits’.³⁸ This would have immediate benefits for search and rescue authorities and would also contribute to improved maritime domain awareness more generally.

Notes

- 1 *New Zealand's National Security Strategy 2023–2028: Secure Together* (Wellington: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, August 2023), p. 9.
- 2 The northern part of the extended continental shelf is subject to delimitation with Fiji, Tonga, and potentially France (New Caledonia).
- 3 For a range of excellent essays on these themes, see Frances Steel (ed.). *New Zealand and the Sea: Historical Perspectives* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2018).
- 4 Strangely there is a degree of inconsistency in government documents about some of these measures. The EEZ is frequently claimed as the fourth or fifth largest, but sometimes as low as the ninth. The SAR zone is sometimes referred to as 1/11th (not 1/12th) of the planet's surface. We can confidently say they are both very large.
- 5 Helen Clark. Speech to the United Nations Asia Pacific Regional Disarmament Conference, Wellington, New Zealand, 27 March 2001. Available at: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/un-asia-pacific-regional-disarmament-conference-wellington>.
- 6 Winston Peters. 'Shifting the dial: Eyes wide open, Pacific re-set' speech to the Lowy Institute, Sydney, 1 March 2018.
- 7 *Defence Assessment 2021: He Moana Pukepuke e Ekengia Te Waka* (Wellington: Ministry of Defence, 2021), p. 23.
- 8 *2023 Defence Policy and Strategy Statement* (Wellington: Ministry of Defence, 2023), para 17.
- 9 *2023 Defence Policy and Strategy Statement* (Wellington: Ministry of Defence, 2023), para 18.
- 10 *2023 Defence Policy and Strategy Statement* (Wellington: Ministry of Defence, 2023), p. 16.
- 11 *Our Marine Environment 2019* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment and Stats New Zealand, 2019).
- 12 *Our Marine Environment 2019* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment and Stats New Zealand, 2019), p. 5.
- 13 Hon. David Parker. "Kermadec Sanctuary decision a setback for NZ marine protection." 13 June 2023.
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- 21 Sam Sachdeva. "UN Refugee Agency criticizes mass arrivals crackdown." *Newsroom*, 15 May 2023.
- 22 *Defence White Paper 2016* (Wellington: Ministry of Defence, 2016).
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- 24 *Maritime Security Strategy*, para 82.
- 25 "Maritime Security Oversight Committee: terms of reference" (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, June 2016), p. 2.
- 26 Interview with New Zealand Government Official, 19 September 2021.
- 27 Germana Nicklin. "Securing the maritime border: US and New Zealand in a bordered pacific." *National Security Journal*, 3, no. 2 (2022): 13.

- 28 Norbert Neumann. "New Zealand sells two retired vessels to Ireland." *Naval Technology*, 15 March 2022.
- 29 Peter Greener. "Building New Zealand's future navy: beyond 'like for like'." *Line of Defence* (Spring 2021).
- 30 Ministry of Defence. *Defence Capability Plan 2019* (Wellington), p. 32.
- 31 Thomas Manch. "Ministry of Defence 'defers' purchase of Southern Ocean patrol vessel due to Covid-19 pressures." *Stuff*, 22 March 2022.
- 32 Andrew Watts. "Designing the next fleet." *Professional Journal of the Royal New Zealand Navy*, 1, no. 1 (December 2020): 25.
- 33 Lucy Craymer. "New Zealand Defence Force retires P-3 aircraft early, leaves capability gap," *Reuters*, 13 December 2022.
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- 35 Lucy Craymer. "Early signs New Zealand Defence Forces attrition slowing, Chiefs say." *Reuters*, 8 June 2023.
- 36 Ministry of Transport. "Briefing to the incoming minister." June 2023, p. 50.
- 37 Sellers v Maritime Safety Inspector, [1999] 2 *New Zealand Law Reports*, p. 57.
- 38 Transport Accident Investigation Commission. "Final report MO-2022-201 charter vessel enchanter Capsize Northland, North Cape, New Zealand, 20 March 2021." (August 2023). Available at: <https://www.taic.org.nz/sites/default/files/inquiry/documents/09%20FRV2%20MO-2022-201%20Final.pdf>

12 The Philippines

Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby

Introduction

In 1995, China effectively took possession of Mischief Reef, a low-tide elevation in the Spratly Islands of the South China Sea. China's occupation was based on its historical claims within the nine-dash line, but the feature is well within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). As such, China's move prompted the Philippines to lodge diplomatic protests that led to negotiations that paved the way for the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) under the auspices of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2002. Armed with the DOC, Philippine President Gloria Arroyo at the time fostered friendly economic ties with China to socialise it into the norms of the prevailing international system. Under her administration, the Philippines signed a Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) with China in 2004 and Vietnam in 2005. Since then, the Supreme Court of the Philippines has deemed the JMSU void and unconstitutional as it allowed wholly owned foreign corporations to explore the country's natural resources.¹ Prior to the Supreme Court decision, Arroyo's deal with China turned sour as the undertaking became increasingly seen as a deal mired in corruption at the expense of Philippine interests.² The context of Mischief Reef and corruption deals that shaped the subsequent administration of Benigno S. Aquino, Jr.'s foreign policy in the South China Sea.

By 2012, China occupied Scarborough Shoal and prevented Philippine ships from approaching. The standoff resulted in the downward spiral of the Philippine-China bilateral relationship. It did not help that China deployed its fishing fleet in the Philippines' EEZ and increased the number of its law enforcement ships in Philippine outposts in the Kalayaan Islands. The Aquino administration's foreign policy on the South China Sea was anchored in a 'rules-based approach respecting international law ... to help build an international system that will be just and fair to all states, regardless of economic size or power'.³ The Philippines turned to ASEAN for support, but the summit in Cambodia that year ended in a deadlock when the regional organisation failed to issue a joint statement. The only viable course of action at that point was the legal approach. In January 2013, the Philippines initiated arbitration proceedings. The awards were handed down in

July 2016 in favour of the Philippines when Rodrigo Duterte came to power and shifted the country's foreign policy towards China.

Even with the Philippines' victory in the arbitration case, its experience in the South China Sea indicates the perils of an inconsistent foreign policy. Arguably, the three pillars of Philippine foreign policy, i.e., the preservation and enhancement of national security, the promotion and attainment of economic security, and the protection of the rights and the promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas, remain the same regardless of administration changes. However, how various administrations prioritise and configure these areas results in the rather clumsy pursuit of the so-called independent foreign policy, especially in the maritime domain. What explains these shifts in the Philippines' maritime policy? Against this backdrop, I argue that the inconsistencies in foreign policy are a function of an uncoordinated domestic structure in the maritime domain. As a result of the lack of coordination, the country neglects the broader archipelagic concerns relating to food security, energy security, and environmental security. In this context, the Philippines is an archipelagic and a maritime nation, and yet, its policies are unable to capture this distinction. Maritime domain awareness remains largely insufficient, resulting in overlapping mandates and areas of maritime law enforcement agencies. The policy landscape is murky and implemented clumsily. It is no wonder that the Philippines suffers from chronic insecurity in the maritime domain, which spills over to neglecting the broader concerns on archipelagic security. Indeed, if the concept of Blue Security refers to the strategic challenges and the combination of hard, sharp, and soft power in and from the seas, then the Philippines illustrates its opposite – blue *in*security – despite having in its arsenal international law and norms in managing maritime conflicts.

The Philippines' view of its key maritime interests and priorities

The Philippines is both an archipelagic and a maritime nation. As an archipelagic state, it subscribes to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) definition that the interrelatedness of the islands, waters, and natural features necessitate the state's commitment to protecting its marine resources and the environment, not to mention the security of its waters from external threats. As a maritime nation, on the other hand, the Philippines sees itself as a major player in the maritime industry and the international maritime economy. This distinction is crucial in understanding the Philippines' constraints in the maritime domain.⁴

In the first place, the Philippines is the world's largest provider of seafarers, with an estimated 300,000 shipping crew members in domestic and foreign-flagged shipping vessels.⁵ It is in the context of the seafarers that the Philippines sees itself more as a 'maritime' than an 'archipelagic' nation. However, articulations of foreign policy conflate the 'maritime' with the 'archipelagic', thereby exacerbating the country's blue insecurity. Secondly, the line that demarcates 'archipelagic' from 'maritime' makes the incompleteness of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) modernisation process, which is essential in upholding the country's sovereign and territorial integrity from external threats, even more glaring. The fact

that the AFP's focus on internal security dragged on from the martial law years prompted the emergence of numerous maritime law enforcement agencies in response to increasing external security threats in the South China Sea.

The following analysis is framed against these contextual variables. It posits that the lack of an overarching strategic policy framework on maritime security warranted the creation of maritime law enforcement agencies to address transnational crimes and to prevent the further depletion of marine resources. These agencies' fragmented and uncoordinated nature translates to overlapping mandates and duplicating activities.

The Philippines' strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

To argue that there is a lack of an overarching strategic policy framework on maritime security is not to discount the contributions of three principal documents and several national laws that pertain to the Philippines' national security interests in general and to maritime security in particular. The first is the National Marine Policy (NMP) of 1994, which focused on four key areas: politics and jurisdiction, regulation and enforcement, development and conservation, and security. In terms of politics and jurisdiction, the NMP defined the country's territorial seas based on regime establishment policies and maritime boundary negotiations policies. Likewise, it subscribed to international treaty limits as indicated in the 1898 Treaty of Paris, the 1900 Treaty of Washington, the 1930 Convention between the United States and the United Kingdom, and UNCLOS.

The NMP also exercised efforts to build interagency collaboration and convergence in marine regulation and enforcement. For example, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the National Anti-Poverty Commission partnered in fish landing centres for fisherfolk at the municipal level to provide technical support and develop community plans to manage resources. Likewise, the Philippine National Police-Maritime Group (PNP-MG) works with non-governmental organisations and the Philippine Navy to manage marine protected areas. Meanwhile, the NMP's pillar on marine development and conservation stressed the need to balance demands for marine resource utilisation on the one hand and conservation on the other. The 1994 policy emphasised the need for national and international cooperation, the polluters-pay principle, education, and research to address solid waste and pollution that create imbalances in the marine ecosystem.

In the pillar on marine security, the NMP identified territorial integrity, ecological balance, socio-political strategy, economic solidarity, cultural cohesiveness, moral-spiritual consensus, and external peace as the basis for a national development policy. There is, however, a lack of progress in clarifying the country's territorial limits and boundaries due to the insufficient implementation of the economic and security aspects of the NMP.⁶ In short, the NMP needed another legal instrument that could identify the extent of the country's territorial limits out in the sea. In this regard, the Philippines aims to pass the Maritime Zones Act by the end of 2023.⁷

Aside from the NMP, another policy document that defines the Philippines' national security interests is the National Security Policy (NSP), which expressly acknowledges the Philippines as an archipelagic state and recognises the need for cooperative security arrangements to safeguard the country's territorial and sovereign integrity. In fact, the NSP identified maritime and airspace security as one of the 12-point agenda items for 2017–2022. Complementing the NMP and the NSP is the National Security Strategy (NSS) with a comprehensive definition of national security, i.e., where the state's integrity and its institutions and the people's well-being, core values, and way of life are 'protected and enhanced'. Like the NSP, the NSS includes maritime and airspace security as its goals. In view of such, the NSS commits to integrated management plans and operations of air and maritime domains, acquisition of equipment to provide round-the-clock maritime domain awareness, harmonisation of agency plans and requirements, the establishment of comprehensive databases for planning and decision-making, and promotion of maritime domain awareness.

In terms of foreign policy, alliances, bandwagoning, and hedging are strategies for small powers to navigate great power competition. The Philippines went through all three of these strategies at different points in time. The Arroyo years (2001–2010) were the so-called golden years of the Philippines' bilateral relationship with China because the administration operated on the assumption that economic development and prosperity would socialise China into the prevailing international system.⁸ The Arroyo presidency also compartmentalised the bilateral relationship, arguing that the maritime and territorial disputes were only a small fraction of the overall ties that encompass the political, economic, and cultural realms. The brief period of close ties ended when it became known that the celebrated historic landmark that was the signing of the 2004 JMSU was steeped in corruption deals that compromised Philippine interests in exchange for personal gains from Chinese development aid. In short, the Arroyo years clearly placed the Philippines under the banner of bandwagoning. When Aquino came to power from 2010 to 2016, the South China Sea issue heated up, which then pushed the administration to file the arbitration case after failing to get the necessary support from regional and international partners. During this time, one can argue that the Philippines was left to stand on its own. Neither alliances, hedging, nor bandwagoning could explain the country's stance sufficiently. Things changed, however, during Duterte's time (2016–2022) because it was a total shift to bandwagoning with China again. Meanwhile, the current Marcos administration seems to be swinging back towards an alliance with the United States. This inconsistent and oscillating foreign policy challenges the Philippines' role as a credible and trustworthy member of the international community of nations.

Gaps in the Philippines' approach

Despite the above policies, not to mention other relevant national laws pertaining to rights and jurisdiction over the EEZ and the continental shelf, the Philippines lacks an overarching strategic policy framework that outlines the Philippines'

maritime interests, the measures needed to protect those interests, and the authorised agencies to carry out those measures. Absent such a framework, the Philippines relies heavily on maritime law enforcement agencies with their respective mandates and activities. The National Security Council (NSC) is the government's lead agency for coordinating the formulation of security policies. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is another crucial agency, as is the National Coast Watch Council (NCWC). At the level of enforcement, the lead agencies are the Philippine Navy, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the PNP-MG, and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. There are also ad-hoc arrangements like the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS). In addition, local government units have the authority to perform maritime law enforcement tasks, such as enforcing administrative fisheries policies, marine resource productivity, and marine environment conservation within municipal waters. These agencies' mandates notwithstanding, oftentimes these mandates and jurisdictions overlap, and responsibilities are duplicated, resulting in operational challenges like miscommunication, turfing, and the inefficient use of resources. Ultimately, maritime law enforcement is uncoordinated, which is ironic, considering that this is what the Philippines relies on to protect its maritime interests in the absence of a broad strategic framework.

The somewhat clumsy way of carrying out maritime law enforcement is even more pronounced in the face of security threats ranging from transnational crimes to actions contributing to the depletion of marine resources. Terrorism, piracy, smuggling, and human trafficking are examples of transnational maritime crimes, while illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing falls under the depletion of marine resources. The Sulu-Celebes Sea in Mindanao is a hotspot for maritime terrorism in the Philippines. In this tri-border area between the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) conducted kidnap-for-ransom activities that targeted civilians, fisherfolk, seafarers, and tourists.⁹ The area is also a critical transit zone for weapons and explosives and as such is a 'principal logistical corridor' for terrorist groups.¹⁰ Maritime terrorism seriously affects individuals, private firms, and public-sector institutions. Various government agencies have been created to deal with terrorism in general. For example, RA11479 of 2020 created the Anti-Terrorism Council, which the Executive Secretary chairs along with the National Security Adviser and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA). For particular cases of maritime terrorism, the Department of Transportation leads measures for ships and ports through the Philippine Ports Authority, the Office for Transportation Security, the Maritime Industry Authority, and the PCG. The AFP and PNP-MG are also involved in addressing terrorism.

Meanwhile, incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea increased in 2017. In the middle of the year, reports indicated that 23 actual or attempted incidents occurred, with 59 crew members abducted, 30 of whom have already been released, 9 rescued, 2 killed, and the rest remained captive.¹¹ Regional authorities identified local pirate syndicates and the ASG as the perpetrators. Apart from the direct financial losses associated with piracy (for example, increased cost of insurance premiums for shipping companies and theft of valuable cargo), the indirect effects can be felt long-term, which is to say that the higher the incidents of piracy at sea,

the sharper the drop in investments, tourism, and employment opportunities.¹² In combating piracy, the agencies involved are the Philippine Navy, the PNP-MG, and the PCG.

Smuggling is another transnational crime that is proliferating despite the numerous measures in place. It can take the form of illegally transporting goods like weapons, substances, human organs, wildlife species, cigarettes, and money. The problem in the Philippines is compounded by about 1,200 private ports without the necessary facilities for the documentation of passengers and cargo, making it easier to smuggle drugs, wildlife, and engage in human trafficking.¹³ Agricultural smuggling likewise remains a problem, involving contraband poultry, pork, and seafood products. The Bureau of Customs' latest operation yielded goods worth US\$ 2.2 million.¹⁴ Onion and sugar smuggling have also been flagged.¹⁵ Human trafficking syndicates take advantage of the same smuggling routes, especially the 'southern backdoor', referring to Mindanao as an exit point and onwards to Malaysia before proceeding to their final destinations. The agencies involved in combatting smuggling and trafficking are the Bureau of Customs, the Philippine Ports Authority, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Justice's Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking, alongside the DFA, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Various law enforcement agencies lend their support through the PNP, the Bureau of Immigration, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Interior and Local Government, the PCG, and the Philippine Center on Transnational Crime.

In addition to transnational crimes, activities leading to the depletion of natural resources continue around the maritime areas of the Philippines. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing threatens the sustainability of marine ecosystems and fisheries by undermining conservation and management efforts and depleting fish stocks. It is a direct food security threat, particularly to developing coastal and island nations. Apart from that, it also contributes to marine litter and pollution. The Philippines loses around US\$ 1.2 billion annually to illegal fishing, which is equivalent to about 516,000–716,000 metric tons of fish caught per year.¹⁶ Moreover, fishing with fine mesh nets was reported in 74 per cent of the assessed local government units, while fishing without registration is the most significant contributor to illegal catch.¹⁷ Unreported fishing, meanwhile, accounts for between 274,000 and 422,000 metric tons per year, although these figures are mere estimates compared to the numbers of illegal fishing. However, there is no available data on unregulated fishing, given its highly clandestine nature. Reports show that 70 per cent of the Philippines' fishing grounds have been overfished since 2010, resulting in a steep decline in production.¹⁸ In fact, by the middle of June 2022, the Philippines ranked 20 out of 152 coastal countries in the 2021 Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Index.¹⁹

Considering the scope of the issue, maritime law enforcement agencies like the PCG, PNP-MG, and the Philippine Navy handle tasks related to the arrest and turnover of fishing violators to the relevant authorities. The same agencies, plus the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, share tasks related to patrolling and monitoring Philippine waters. The PCG and the PNP-MG solely handle tasks

related to investigating and prosecuting cases. Clearly, there are overlaps and duplications in addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. The fact that local government units are also involved results in turfing competitions, placing coastal communities and affected actors at risk, not to mention that the core problem persists.

In sum, despite relevant national laws, the Philippines lacks an overarching strategic policy framework on maritime security. Absent such a measure, the country relies heavily on maritime law enforcement agencies to combat security. The problem is compounded because the maritime law enforcement agencies' mandates and operations overlap, resulting in duplicating tasks and turfing competitions. More policies and maritime law enforcement agencies do not necessarily translate to improved security. At the end of the day, the Philippines' maritime security is still on the verge of insecurity.

Recommendations and conclusion

From an academic or conceptual standpoint, Blue Security is a burgeoning field. International Relations, regrettably, has a penchant for sea blindness, where the waters are perceived as mere extensions of land-based security. The Philippines is an excellent example of a country that sees its surrounding waters as a way to boost its statehood. In effect, the Philippines flexes its proverbial muscle by ensuring its strength extends to its international law-based EEZ. Suppose the discipline were to treat the sea as maritime orders with their own political dimensions, i.e., that are different from land-based orders. In that case, the parameters of Blue Security can be pushed further.

From an empirical standpoint, the Philippines can ensure the coherence of its maritime policy by developing a broad strategic policy framework on maritime security. Such a framework can serve as a guideline for addressing security threats ranging from transnational crimes to activities that destroy the marine environment. The framework also serves to identify the authorised agencies to avoid overlapping mandates and duplicating tasks. The Philippines can also ensure community involvement by investing in capacity building and coastal development and management programs.

A whole-of-government approach requires more than a spate of fragmented policies and guidelines. Instead, a comprehensive maritime security strategy is needed to encapsulate the Philippines' role as a maritime *and* an archipelagic nation. The country positions itself as a maritime nation, but ironically, most of its frameworks are geared towards issues arising from being an archipelagic nation. This is not to say that there are no policies as regards seafarers. There are, but even then, the structures in place are highly fragmented and uncoordinated, resulting in a less-than-optimal ability to mitigate maritime conflicts, particularly in the West Philippine Sea. Improving that ability requires an overarching policy framework that is complemented by a bottom-up approach of empowering communities via skills training, coastal management programs, coral reef restoration and propagation, marine litter and cleanup activities, and fisheries management, all of which must incorporate cross-cutting issues on gender, disability, and social inclusion.

With a coordinated approach of bringing together a top-down and a bottom-up approach, the Philippines improves its capacity as a maritime and archipelagic nation. It likewise ensures it is better positioned to uphold its sovereign and territorial rights internationally.

At the very least, the Philippines must also be consistent in its foreign policy to break down and better position the country in addressing grey zone threats. First, transparency plays a crucial role in drawing attention to coercive activities as they happen. Doing so increases the cost for China and other actors to initiate intimidating behaviors. Likewise, this can reduce the likelihood of repetition. Effective transparency measures can include the publication of reports and studies. Second, deterrence capabilities must be improved. Of course, this dovetails neatly into the need to complete the modernisation of the armed forces. Still, it also necessitates diversifying the Philippines' international relations and deepening its partnerships with like-minded countries. Third, a whole-of-government approach cannot be emphasised enough, one that posits a clear and consistent messaging of the Philippines' national interest. At the end of the day, it is indeed how a small power like the Philippines crafts its own narrative.

As a small power, the Philippines has a limited role in mitigating maritime conflicts in the South China Sea. Despite this, the argument developed in this chapter is that the country can improve its role by making the necessary upgrades in its domestic policy frameworks and if it manages to keep its foreign policy consistent. Assuming that the Philippines can do this, Taiwan is a looming issue on the strategic horizon. Caught between the alliance with the United States and the one China principle, the Philippines must tread this very carefully and very deliberately. In this scenario, ensuring the coherence of its maritime and foreign policies will put the Philippines in a better position to defend its national interests.

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13 Papua New Guinea

Bernard Yegiora

Introduction

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an archipelagic state.¹ That means since 1975, after its independence from Australia, political leaders, bureaucrats, civil society groups, indigenous people groups, and citizens in general have talked about security issues relating to the maritime domain in different contexts. Political leaders have discussed the use of seas for smuggling activities,² bureaucrats have formulated policies to manage the use of marine resources,³ civil society groups have protested the pollution of the seas by mining activities,⁴ indigenous people groups in maritime border areas have talked about hunting and fishing rights,⁵ and citizens in Maritime Provinces have complained about dwindling fish stocks.⁶

Academics and diplomats have highlighted that there is no universal definition of maritime security and it mainly depends on the perspective of political leaders, policymakers, and academics with expertise in national security.⁷ The conceptualisation of Blue Security as a security issue that is different from other national security issues is new in PNG. The Government and different stakeholders will need to see national security issues relating to the maritime domain from this new Blue Security perspective because of an increase in blue crimes like drug smuggling, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.⁸

Since 2013, the Government has put in place the necessary legislation to help govern and manage the maritime domain.⁹ The creation and amendment of various legislation related to addressing marine pollution¹⁰ and management of fisheries,¹¹ including the safety of ships,¹² shows the effectiveness of the legislature and its progressive thinking about Blue Security.

The trend has continued with the formulation and updating of policies and plans related to national security and management of the oceans.¹³ This shows the determination of some bureaucratic organisations and the executive arm to systematically prioritise and pursue the country's Blue Security interests. The different bureaucratic organisations and the executive arm will now use the policies and plans to help with the governance and management of the maritime domain.¹⁴

Most importantly, these changes highlight the gradual shift in thinking about Blue Security. The country has now realised the complex nature of Blue Security issues, especially its ability to rapidly evolve over time due to the ongoing advances

in technology. It does not have the capability and capacity to address Blue Security issues.¹⁵ As such, it needs to seek further assistance from bilateral or multilateral partners in the form of defence cooperation programs, intelligence training workshops, technology transfer arrangements, infrastructure projects, academic exchanges, and secondment programmes.

The first part of the chapter maps out the Blue Security interests of the country and lists them in order of priority in reference to various national legislation, policies, and plans. The second part identifies the various strategies adopted by the country to achieve its interests via different national legislation, policies, and plans. The third part identifies gaps in the strategies and discusses what the country needs to do to improve. The final part is the conclusion with some recommendations for consideration by the government and other stakeholders.

Papua New Guinea's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

The country has a list of recently created and amended legislation that provides the framework for governing its maritime domain.¹⁶ The most important legislation that highlights Blue Security interests and priorities is the Maritime Zones Act (MZA). It incorporated provisions of the United Nations Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) and was passed by Parliament in 2015. Other supporting legislation are the:

- Marine Pollution (Ships and Installations) Act 2013.
- Merchant Shipping (Maritime Security) Regulation 2013.
- Papua New Guinea Customs Service Act 2014.
- Marine Pollution (Sea Dumping) (Amendment) Act 2015.
- Marine Pollution (Preparedness and Response) (Amendment) Act 2015.
- Fisheries Management (Amendment) Act 2015.

In addition, the most important policy that highlights Blue Security interests and priorities is the National Security Policy (NSP), formulated in 2013. The policy outlines ten national security priority areas in a logical sequence:

- Law and order.
- Graft and corruption and good governance.
- Human rights abuses and gender-based violence.
- Lack of border control.
- Natural disasters and climate change.
- Small arms and light weapons trafficking and proliferation.
- Illegal poaching of resources.
- Drug, alcohol, and substance abuse.
- Microbial attacks on plants, animals, and human lives.
- Medical emergencies, including HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria.

The four notable national security priority areas are: lack of border control, natural disasters and climate change, small arms and light weapons trafficking and

proliferation, and illegal poaching of resources. Lack of border control is ranked fourth and is the most important Blue Security interest.

Other policies or plans that discuss specific Blue Security interests and priorities generally are the:

- Defence White Paper 2013.
- National Marine Pollution Contingency Plan 2017.
- National Oceans Policy 2020–2030.
- Fisheries Strategic Plan 2021–2030.
- Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Corporate Plan 2021–2030.
- Medium Term Development Plan IV 2023–2027.

For the first Blue Security interest of a ‘safe and secure PNG’, the key objective is protecting the country’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ).¹⁷ The country’s EEZ contains many resources and is of strategic value;¹⁸ it covers an area of 3.12 million square kilometres of ocean that borders Indonesia, Australia, the Solomon Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.¹⁹ The Budi Budi Island case in 2019, where a person found eleven black duffel bags filled with cocaine hidden in the sea, compared to other cases that have happened in successive years, indicates the frequency at which drug syndicates are using PNG’s territorial waters and EEZ to smuggle cocaine into Australia and New Zealand.²⁰

The second key objective is enhancing the country’s maritime domain awareness to enable it to govern its maritime jurisdiction.²¹ PNG needs to know what is happening in its territorial seas and EEZ on a daily basis via aerial surveillance, intelligence gathering, and information-sharing systems. PNG does not have effective maritime domain awareness capabilities to monitor and respond accordingly.²² This is evident in the Budi Budi Island case. The local police and other security agencies had no knowledge of the illicit drug trade that was happening in that part of the country. The drugs were not discovered because of satellite surveillance or intelligence operations but by chance through the effort of a lone fisherman.²³

The third key objective is strengthening the country’s maritime law enforcement.²⁴ PNG needs to develop its maritime law enforcement capacity to help conduct regular patrols or operations in its territorial seas and EEZ based on information provided by surveillance or intelligence operations.²⁵ The report about the Budi Budi Island case said there was no Royal PNG Constabulary (RPNGC) officer on the island. The nearest police base was at the provincial capital of Aotau, which was about 370 km. During that period, the base had about 40 officers to cover 600 atolls. Furthermore, it depicted the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) Maritime Element’s inability to patrol and safeguard the country’s maritime domain.²⁶

For the Blue Security interest of being a ‘good maritime neighbour’, the first key objective is safeguarding maritime borders. The borders between neighbouring countries need to be monitored closely and managed. PNG needs to monitor and manage maritime traffic and prevent illegal border crossings.²⁷ Budi Budi Island is near the border with the Solomon Islands. The fact that law enforcement

or security agencies on both sides knew nothing about the illicit drug trade that happened showed that both countries were not monitoring their respective maritime borders.

The second key objective is promoting regional cooperation. PNG cannot address all the Blue Security issues alone, and it needs the assistance of other countries. Each country has its comparative advantage, engaging in multilateral agreements, partnerships, and information-sharing mechanisms will improve PNG's capability and capacity.²⁸ The Budi Budi Island case showed that PNG and the Solomon Islands did not work effectively with Australia or New Zealand to help monitor their maritime borders. Australia as a middle power in the region has the capacity to collect intelligence and the resources at its disposal to support both countries. If they did work with Australia then the lone fisherman would not have accidentally discovered the drugs.²⁹

For the Blue Security interest of 'a caring and healthy maritime nation', the only key objective is addressing environmental and humanitarian concerns. Prioritising the environmental challenges of marine pollution,³⁰ climate change impacts,³¹ and marine conservation is important for future generations.³² Humanitarian concerns related to maritime safety and security like search and rescue operations, disaster response, and ensuring the welfare of seafarers is a priority.³³ The report said the boat used by the gang involved in the attempted recovery of the eleven black duffel bags was difficult to tow and the boat was filled with petrol. The police took the six men into custody but were not able to find the boat when they went back with a tugboat. The boat was discovered a month later washed up on a reef on an island off Morobe province. Once again, the boat was heavy to pull so they left it on the island where the oil and petrol polluted the marine life.³⁴

Papua New Guinea's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

The NSP is the whole-of-nation approach to national security that supersedes all other sectoral policies. It outlines the ten national security priority areas for the Government to focus on, defined further by the nine policy goals with proposed implementation strategies.³⁵

The first notable proposed implementation strategy under goal one is to allocate three per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product to defence. The second notable proposed implementation strategy is to invest in the Department of Defence (DOD) and the PNGDF to help boost its capability and capacity. The third notable proposed implementation strategy is to harness the effectiveness of civil defence institutions.³⁶ All three strategies were adopted to defend the first Blue Security interest of a 'safe and secure PNG', to be specific the key objective of protecting the country's EEZ.

The effectiveness of the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) as a civil defence institution is vital in the management and regulation of PNG's fisheries resources. It has been at the forefront of the battle against the threat of IUU fishing due to its

sectoral policies, its financial capability to fund joint operations with the PNGDF Maritime Element to check fishing vessels, and its ability to work with regional partners.³⁷

Additionally, the Agreement Concerning Counter Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity Operations with the United States (US) has boosted the capability and capacity of the PNGDF, NFA, Department of Transport's Maritime Security Division, and PNG Customs Services (PNGCS) to combat IUU fishing. In the first patrol, there were six contact and observation reports of fishing vessels made within the country's EEZ. There was a vessel monitoring system violation where immediate action from the NFA who fined the vessel company for failing to operate their vessel monitoring system in line with PNG requirements.³⁸

The second key objective to enhance maritime domain awareness is connected to the three notable proposed implementation strategies of strengthening the security and intelligence services, information sharing with its neighbours, and detecting and preventing organised transnational criminal activity that could undermine its stability.³⁹ PNG does not have the capability and the capacity to manage regular surveillance or information-gathering operations to help monitor its maritime domain. Australia has helped with PAC-750XL aircraft to conduct aerial surveillance over its territorial seas and EEZ via the Flights of Excellence Program.⁴⁰ This recent bilateral assistance will now help the PNGDF Air Element, the PNGDF Maritime Element, and the RPNGC Maritime Division to detect and prevent the threats of IUU fishing and illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

Three notable proposed implementation strategies come under the third key objective of strengthening maritime law enforcement. Firstly, coordinate and strengthen security and its law enforcement agencies. Secondly, strengthen and adequately fund PNGDF and PNGCS capabilities to robustly address smuggling of small arms and light weapons and other contraband goods. Thirdly, build the capacity of the Immigration and Citizenship Services to help effectively deal with irregular and illegal immigration.⁴¹

The strong working relationship between the RPNGC Maritime Division, PNGDF Maritime Element, and the Australian Federal Police (AFP) have contributed towards strengthening maritime law enforcement. The organisations shared intelligence helped intercept a foreign vessel in the Morgado Square north of Kavieng. The nine-crew members faced charges under the different migration and fisheries acts.⁴²

This incident happened a year after the Budi Budi Island case. As such, it is evident that the partnership or working relationship between the three organisations changed. This is a positive outcome because it has helped address the threat of IUU fishing and illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, including the illegal trading of firearms.⁴³

Safeguarding maritime borders is the first key objective of the Blue Security interest of being a 'good maritime neighbour'. The three notable proposed implementation strategies connected to it are protection and management of land and maritime borders, building PNGDF's land, maritime, and air defence systems in

order to secure its sovereign borders, and ensuring appropriate border security and management strategy.⁴⁴

The PNGDF Maritime Element stationed at Lombrum base on Manus Island is responsible for ensuring the protection of its maritime borders. The Maritime Element teams conduct regular sovereign sea patrols annually. The sovereign sea patrols are aimed at making sure foreign vessels do not cross borders illegally. The patrols have helped to address the threats of serious blue crimes.⁴⁵

For the second key objective of promoting regional cooperation, there are three notable proposed implementation strategies. The first one is to promote, maintain, strengthen, and harness bilateral and multilateral relations that served PNG's national interest. The second one is to harness and ensure strategic roles in the maintenance of regional and global peace and security. The third one is to promote trade, economic and security relations with other nations through the expansion of diplomatic and trade missions.⁴⁶

PNG is working with Australia through its Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSM) to protect its EEZ via the use of Guardian-class patrol boats.⁴⁷ The deepening security partnership with the US has changed the regional security outlook.⁴⁸ The country is now working with two of the most advanced countries in the Indo-Pacific region to make sure it is a good maritime neighbour.⁴⁹

The key objective of the Blue Security interest of 'a caring and healthy maritime nation' is addressing environmental and humanitarian concerns. The notable proposed implementation strategies are maintain vigilance to deal with hazardous materials in its territory and dangerous substances introduced into its waters, contribute to global efforts to deal with climate change adaptation, and strengthen interagency communication, information sharing and public awareness initiatives to support disaster risk reduction efforts.⁵⁰

PNG has different legislation, policies, and plans to help take a comprehensive and integrated approach to governing and managing its ocean and coastal resources. The National Marine Spill Contingency Plan mentioned the NMSA's use of the PNGDF aircraft or the four patrol vessels to help in responding to a pollution case. For spraying operations, the NMSA does not have the capability; the memorandum of understanding with Australian Maritime Safety Authority to activate the fixed-wing aerial dispersant capability is the recommended course of action.⁵¹

Gaps in Papua New Guinea's approach

Policy goal nine talks about effective national security coordination and implementation through a whole-of-nation approach led by the National Security Agency (NSA). The notable implementation strategy was to transform the Office of Security Coordination and Assessment in the Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council (DPMNEC) into the NSA. Then position representatives from all key security sector agencies in the NSA to coordinate and implement the NSP. This significant change has not occurred since 2013, resulting in an uncoordinated approach to managing national security.

There is no whole-of-nation approach to help address the ten national security priority areas of the Government. Different security sector agencies have formulated their own sectoral legislation, policies, and plans to help them address the different national security issues that are related to their mandated functions. Their respective sectoral legislation, policies, and plans are not directly aligned to the ten national security priority areas and its nine policy goals.

In the segment on national policy context, the policymakers talk about the National Oceans Policy (NOP), which was formulated to manage ocean resources and its connection to the Vision 2050 Strategic Plan including other legislation, policies, and plans.⁵² The NSP is not mentioned explicitly as the overarching policy that will help ensure PNG addresses national security issues that are connected to the use of the oceans.

Some parts of the MZA and the NOP, which talks about the protection of marine life, are indirectly connected to the four national security priority areas and the three identified Blue Security interests of the country. The MZA and the NOP are vital documents that will provide a coherent strategic planning and management framework to address complex Blue Security issues if it is aligned well with other legislation, policies, and plans.⁵³

On the other hand, the Defence White Paper (DWP) is the only policy specifically formulated to manage the affairs of the PNGDF in alignment with the NSP, as both were developed concurrently. There was close liaison between the working groups and both policies were approved during the same year. Some of the areas mentioned in the DWP were addressed, but many others were not. As a result, the anticipated personnel growth and the buying of new integrated capabilities did not occur as intended. The main reasons mentioned are due to lack of adequate funding and organisational inertia.⁵⁴

Most importantly, the updated and forthcoming DWP is aligned to the Vision 2050 strategic plan as a Government priority but not the NSP. The five lines of effort do not mention how the PNGDF will work with the yet to be established NSA, under the NSP framework, to take a whole-of-nation approach to protect the country. In particular, line of effort three on operational proficiency, only talks about strengthening the relationship with the DOD at all levels.⁵⁵

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) does not have a Foreign Service Act and an updated Foreign Policy White Paper (FPWP).⁵⁶ The last FPWP titled 'Active and Selective Engagement' was approved by Parliament in 1981;⁵⁷ there has been no major foreign policy review since then leading to the formulation of an updated FPWP.⁵⁸ That means PNG is currently pursuing its security relations without a clear written foreign policy framework that serves its national interest.⁵⁹

A FPWP will have a crosscutting effect on other sectoral legislation, policies, and plans because as a small developing country PNG needs the support of other states or non-state actors to address certain areas related to capacity building, intelligence-gathering, and collective action. It will have a whole-of-government effect because it will determine the type of legislation, policies, and plans formulated by departments and agencies in all other security and non-security sectors.

The DFA is currently working on its FPWP.⁶⁰ The policymakers will need to align the FPWP with policy goal four on maintaining cordial and friendly relations with the global community. Both policies will then give strategic direction to policymakers in the National Oceans Office (NOO) located in the Department of Justice and Attorney General to pursue objective one of the NOP on strengthening the implementation of the UNCLOS and the MZA through cooperation and collaboration with international, regional, and domestic partners and stakeholders.⁶¹ This change will also give strategic direction to the PNGDF to address line of effort three of the forthcoming DWP on operational proficiency. Overall, it will guide the security sector departments and agencies to determine which countries they should negotiate with to pursue security partnerships to build operational capacity, or which multilateral forum they should join to talk about collective action in managing the maritime domain.⁶²

The Australian FPWP, published in 2017, states explicitly that Australia will help PNG tackle illegal fishing, transnational crime, and people smuggling.⁶³ There is also another segment on maritime security, which talks about IUU fishing and other Blue Security issues, which shows PNG's strategic importance to Australia.⁶⁴ The involvement of Australian government organisations like the Royal Australian Navy or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with PNG's security sector departments and agencies follow a written policy framework. Conversely, PNG is working with Australia and the US to address its Blue Security interests without a written foreign policy framework. That could be one reason why the PMSP has not been successful in addressing the serious threat of IUU fishing over the years because the DFA lacks strategic direction.⁶⁵

The Medium Term Development Plan IV does refer to the NSP. The implementation strategies for national defence, biosecurity, and national intelligence are aligned with the NSP.⁶⁶ Policy goal five talks about maintaining the integrity of the country's sovereign space by building land, air, and maritime defence systems. This is similar to the national defence implementation strategy of building and developing land, air, and sea capabilities.

A critical review of all sectoral policies and plans is needed to help strategically align all of them to the NSP.⁶⁷ The DPMNEC as the lead department needs to facilitate policy workshops for all other departments and agencies to help them determine how they can synchronise their operations so they implement the strategies in the NSP and the development plans that are related to Blue Security.

Recommendations and conclusion

PNG has three key Blue Security interests. The first is ensuring a 'safe and secure PNG'. It is driven by three key objectives: protecting its EEZ, strengthening maritime law enforcement, and enhancing maritime domain awareness. The second is being a 'good maritime neighbour'. It is driven by two key objectives: safeguarding maritime borders, and promoting regional cooperation. The third is being 'a caring and healthy maritime nation'. It is driven by the key objective of addressing environmental and humanitarian concerns.

The NSP is a whole-of-nation security policy framework formulated in 2013. It outlines the ten national security priority areas and its nine policy goals with their proposed implementation strategies. PNG has implemented some of the proposed strategies that are connected to the six key objectives to help defend its three Blue Security interests listed in order of priority.

The absence of the NSA, the designated lead agency tasked with coordinating efforts among all security sector agencies to tackle the ten national security priority areas, has hindered the full implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and updating of the NSP. Legislative measures to establish both the NSA and formalise the NSP are yet to be enacted by the Government, despite the explicit mention of such actions in policy goal nine of the NSP. It is imperative for the Government to prioritise the enactment of legislation to establish the NSA and formalise the NSP, aligning with the outlined objectives within the policy framework.⁶⁸

PNG lacks a FPWP to guide security sector agencies in collaborating with other states and non-state actors to fulfil their objective for bilateral or multilateral cooperation. The FPWP, along with the NSP, serve as overarching policies that provide strategic direction for legislation, policies, and plans within security sector agencies. Urgent prioritisation and acceleration of policy and regulatory reforms, particularly by the DFA, is essential. Furthermore, all security sector agencies should conduct thorough reviews of their legislation, policies, and plans to ensure alignment with the FPWP once approved, as well as with the NSP.

The Government's failure to implement legislation, policies, and plans, compounded by the private sector and civil society's limited ability to apply pressure, presents a worrisome scenario. Given these challenges, the notion of introducing a distinct Blue Security policy presently appears unnecessary, as it may encounter similar hurdles to effective implementation as the existing NSP.⁶⁹ Hence, a more pragmatic approach suggests incorporating detailed discussions on Blue Security interests and priorities within a dedicated chapter of the updated NSP. This integration ensures a cohesive and comprehensive strategy for addressing Blue Security concerns within the existing policy framework.

Despite numerous recommendations aimed at improving the governance of the country's maritime domain, it is essential for both the Government and stakeholders to prioritise the development of academic expertise and research capability in Blue Security. Given PNG's strategic location amidst ongoing geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific region, there is a pressing need for evidence-based research to inform legislators and policymakers.

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14 Singapore

Chulanee Attanayake

Introduction

Singapore's prosperity and security is inextricably linked to the sea. Its strategic geographical location as a key global hub situated at the crossroads of the world's busiest sea lines of communication is both a blessing and a challenge to this city state.

Singapore's founding leaders identified its significant geographic advantages and the role Singapore could play in the maritime arena when they built its first container terminal in 1969. When the containerisation wave began in early 1970, Singapore's was the first container terminal in Southeast Asia, giving it an advantage in developing its international identity as a maritime transport hub. According to Singapore's founding father Lee Kwan Yew, 'Maritime Singapore is a hub, port and much more'.¹ Living up to its reputation, over the years, Singapore has cultivated a diverse and integrated ecosystem providing a range of maritime services, including ship financing, insurance, legal services, and maritime arbitration. It is also a maritime finance and insurance hub providing various supports for ship financing, insurance, and other related activities. As such, despite being a small nation, Singapore plays a vital role in the region in international trade and commerce.

As much as the sea is part of Singapore's prosperity and development, it is also a major challenge for national security. Its vulnerability stems from its dependence on seaborne commerce and trade, and its geographic position overlooking the strategic straits of Malacca and Singapore. Protecting the country's territorial waters, ports, and coastline from external threats, including piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing, is essential, making maritime security critical to its overall national security.

Despite this significance, Singapore has no publicly available official definition of maritime security. However, there is some consensus within Singapore government on what maritime security entails. As such, Singapore perceives maritime security to include both traditional and non-traditional maritime threats.

In order to safeguard Singapore's sovereignty and protect the island from numerous maritime security challenges, Singapore has a whole-of-government approach to dealing with maritime security threats and challenges. It has established various institutions and task forces, including the Maritime Security Command established in 2009, and has effective inter-agency coordinating mechanisms in response to maritime threats.

Amidst this backdrop, this chapter attempts to place Singapore within the Blue Security concept in the Indo-Pacific. It seeks to provide a broader understanding of the small island state's normative commitment to shaping a peaceful, stable, and equitable order through its approach to maritime security. To this end, the chapter seeks to explain Singapore's view of its maritime interests and priorities and the implemented strategies for safeguarding those interests. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section examines Singapore's maritime interests and priorities looking at aspects such as trade and commerce, security, maritime crimes, and environment. The chapter then explains existing strategies and approaches looking at official strategic documents, existing actors, and agencies involved. It also looks at international engagement. Next, the chapter will identify the existing gaps in Singapore's approach. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with recommendations for Singapore to improve its strategies and approaches.

Singapore's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Singapore views its maritime priorities through a multifaceted lens, considering various factors that are crucial for the nation's economic prosperity, security, and global standing. As a small city-state, it is highly dependent on maritime trade to maintain its export-driven economy and hub status in the transshipment and oil refining industries. Its position as a natural gateway between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean contributes to its focus on maritime trade facilitation.

Being one of the busiest in the world, Singapore port handles not only Southeast Asian traffic, but also facilitates the cargo transshipments linking over 600 ports in more than 120 countries across Europe, East Asia, Australasia, and Indian sub-continent. Singapore's port is a maritime powerhouse with around 1,000 vessels present at any given time, handling over 37.3 million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) in 2022.² The nation's flag fleet constitutes over 6% of the world fleet, boasting a registry of 90,000 fleets. Home to 5,000 maritime entities, the sector contributes 7% to the country's GDP, employing over 170,000 people.³

Given the importance of the port industry, Singapore places high priority on maintaining the competitiveness of its ports by investment in port infrastructure, technology, and efficiency to sustain its status as a leading global transshipment hub. It is also investing in digitisation, smart port technologies, and automation to ensure growth in the maritime industry by enhancing efficiency and reducing cost.⁴

Singapore underscores the critical importance of maritime security due to its economic significance and strategic location, with Senior Minister of State for Defence Heng Chee How highlighting intensifying challenges in the South China Sea, the Straits of Malacca, and Singapore during the eighth International Maritime Security Conference in 2023.⁵ Singapore considers threats such as maritime terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking as serious challenges, and that a rule-based order, trust and practical cooperation at sea are important for responding to these challenges.

Maritime terrorism is a significant concern for Singapore due to the vulnerability of the Singapore Strait and its port, which serves as an ideal location for perpetrators to carry out maritime crimes. The Phillips Channel, in particular, poses a

major risk as it is the narrowest point in the area, spanning only 1.5 miles in width. An incident in 2001 shed light on the severity of the issue when Singapore discovered a planned attack on United States personnel and naval vessels near Changi and Pulau Tekong. This event was part of a series of bomb plots in Singapore following the 9/11 terrorist attack.⁶ Singapore port also is vulnerable as terrorists could potentially smuggle chemical, biological, and radiological explosive materials ashore via cargo containers to carry out attacks.⁷ As a result, Singapore's maritime security measures are designed to protect critical infrastructure including ports, shipping lanes, and vessels from maritime activities.

Singapore prioritises addressing piracy and drug smuggling as key elements of its maritime security, recognising that piracy not only poses national security concerns but also inflicts severe economic repercussions due to increased costs for risk assessment and insurance premiums, adversely affecting the city-state's business operations. Proximity to the Golden Triangle, converging the borders of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar, historically known for opium production, makes both Singapore vulnerable for transportation of drugs. According to the Central Narcotic Bureau of Singapore, methamphetamine has been the most commonly abused drug in Singapore since 2015. Methamphetamine seizures in East and Southeast Asia accounted for 43% of the global quantity seized from 2015 to 2019, and seizure amounts from this region have been increasing. Preliminary data indicates that at least 169 tons of methamphetamine were seized in 2020 alone.⁸

Singapore also views its maritime priorities through the lens of international collaborations and diplomacy, perceiving the external powers' role, engagement with regional and global initiatives, active participation in regional and global maritime, collaboration on security initiatives, and the negotiation of maritime agreements as essential elements to fostering positive relationship and for its maritime survival. Recognising the importance of external powers in shaping the security environment, it maintains strong relationships with key maritime partners, including the United States, China, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to promote stability and cooperation through multilateral forums.

Singapore is increasingly prioritising sustainability in its maritime policies, emphasising green shipping practices and sustainable development to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility, exemplified by the Maritime Singapore Green initiative launched in 2011 and extended till December 2024, focussing on decarbonisation of ports and shipping through four key programmes.⁹ It includes four programmes: the Green Ship Programme, the Green Port Programme, the Green Energy and Technology Programme, and the Green Awareness Programme. Further, it also has implemented Emissions Control Areas (ECA) in its port waters, mandating the use of cleaner fuels with lower sulphur content with the aim of reducing air pollution from shipping activities. Singapore also offers financial incentives and grants such as subsidies for the adoption of cleaner fuels, the installation of energy-efficient technologies, and the development of eco-friendly vessel designs to encourage ship-owners and operators to invest in sustainable shipping technologies.¹⁰ In addition, Singapore has positioned itself as a leading liquefied natural gas (LNG) bunkering hub, promoting the use of LNG as a cleaner marine fuel.¹¹

Singapore's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

Singapore's maritime security strategy is deeply linked to the country's economic development, national security, and environmental sustainability. It is an integral part of the country's total defence strategy,¹² and the country recognises the importance of the international and regional order in maintaining its security.¹³ Given that maritime security is integral to the international and regional order, Singapore wishes to maintain 'the current laws', rules, norms, and practices governing the maritime domain in Asia and beyond.¹⁴

Despite lacking an official document outlining its perspective on maritime security, Singapore acknowledges both traditional and non-traditional threats, aligning with a 'Blue Security' conceptualisation, emphasising the need for 'multifaceted approaches, including legal frameworks, maritime law enforcement capabilities, and international cooperation to ensure water security'. As a result, it has adopted 'an active globalist approach which leverages its economic and technological edge'.¹⁵

It has also adopted a 'whole-of-government' approach in line with a 'Blue Security' approach, in which various Singapore maritime security agencies are integrated to promote inter-agency collaboration.¹⁶ At present, the multi-agency National Maritime Security Task Force (MSTF) works closely with law enforcement and maritime agencies to guard Singapore's waters. Established in 2009 to implement its maritime security strategy, the MSTF is led by the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and works closely with law enforcement and maritime agencies, such as the Police Coast Guard (PCG), Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA), Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), and Singapore Customs (SC), to guard Singapore's waters through daily patrols, boarding, and escort operations in the Singapore Strait.¹⁷ The MSTF is organised into two operations groups, the Sea Security Group (SSG) and the Force Protection Group (FPG). It also has adopted a National Maritime Security System (NMSS), which includes securing sea lines of communication and guarding against maritime terrorism.¹⁸ In February 2020, Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen announced ongoing plans to restructure the MSTF to deal with a range of challenges.¹⁹

In Singapore's integrated command and control system for maritime security, data from diverse sources, including radars and satellites, is consolidated, and substantial investments in Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capabilities, featuring coastal radars, surveillance systems, and Automatic Identification System (AIS), facilitate monitoring vessel movements. This system enhances information sharing and coordination among various agencies responsible for maritime security, including the Singapore Navy, Coast Guard, and MPA.

Singapore emphasises enhancing maritime defence capabilities through modernisation, self-reliance in arms production, and collaboration with foreign companies, evident in its increased defence budget of \$12.3 billion for 2022, representing a 7.4% rise.²⁰ With approximately 130 vessels and 5 aircraft, Singapore efficiently patrols 343 square kilometres of sea space,²¹ making significant investments in uncrewed maritime systems and submarines, and challenging the perception of submarines being unsuitable for shallow waters in the maritime Indo-Pacific region.

As part of its efforts to enhance its submarine capabilities, Singapore has ordered four customised invincible-class (Type 218SG) submarines from ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems. These submarines, with a total value of about SGD\$ 2.4 billion, represent a significant investment in Singapore's maritime security. The first submarine was launched in 2019, and the next two were launched in December 2022.²²

Singapore, in its pursuit of arms self-reliance,²³ collaborates with foreign companies, exemplified by a successful joint venture with Israel Aerospace Industries for the Blue Spear missile. Engaging in a Submarine Affiliation Programme with Germany, participating in exercises like Exercise Highcrest, and supported by government agencies like Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) and Defence Science Organisation (DSO), Singapore prioritises military innovation, evident in the creation of the Meredith 400 AUV. ST Engineering, a state-owned company, holds a global arms industry ranking of 61, and it includes notable foreign subsidiaries like Raytheon Technologies and Thales Singapore.

Singapore actively collaborates regionally and globally to enhance MDA. It engages in joint patrols and information sharing with Southeast Asian neighbours, fostering intelligence exchange and coordinated responses to maritime threats. As an ASEAN member, Singapore hosts initiatives like the Maritime Security and Counterterrorism Field Training Exercise under the ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) in 2016. The ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025 prioritises maritime security, addressing issues like illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.²⁴ Singapore is a partner in combatting piracy through the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) and leads the Information Fusion Centre, which is situated at the Changi Command and Control Centre and hosted by Singapore's Navy. Despite not being an Arctic country, Singapore, an Arctic Council observer since 2013, contributes expertise in areas like environmental conservation and sustainable energy.²⁵ It has also initiated annual trilateral Singapore-India-Thailand Maritime Exercise (SITMEX) in 2019, fostering closer ties among the three nations. Singapore has multiple agreements with like-minded nations such as the Implementing Agreement on Submarine Rescue Support and Cooperation signed in January 2021, a Singapore-Japan enhanced MOU signed in June 2022²⁶ and the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) alongside the United Kingdom, Australia, Malaysia, and New Zealand, which is now more than 50 years old.

Singapore reinforces maritime security and sovereignty by adhering to international laws and norms, ratifying treaties like the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), and actively participating in the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Utilising the International Court of Justice, Singapore resolved a territorial issue with Malaysia over Pedra Branca.²⁷ These efforts align with a commitment to international cooperation, with Singapore playing a leading role in developing and implementing frameworks for maritime issues through various treaties and institutions.

Additionally, it also maintains robust strategic partnerships with major and middle powers such as Australia, Japan, India, and the European Union, to expand the range of its strategic partnerships, with a goal to strengthen maritime security and autonomy. It employs soft balancing techniques to navigate between the United States and China. Singapore Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Balakrishnan has mentioned that ‘for Singapore and our foreign policy, the existential imperative that Mr Lee Kuan Yew has always emphasised to us is relevance’ – that is, relevance for helping US security projection, and relevance for helping China’s economic modernisation – but in which ‘we will be useful, but we will not be made used of’.²⁸ Singapore and the United States share robust security ties, with Singapore recognised as a key security partner.²⁹

Singapore supports US naval and military operations in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf through a naval logistics facility, engaging in mutual security assistance programmes and actively participating in anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden. In addition to leading multinational initiatives like Exercise Pacific Griffin and Combined Task Force 151, Singapore allows the deployment of US P-8A Poseidon aircraft in the region, potentially in response to increased Chinese capabilities in the South China Sea.³⁰ Amidst strong security cooperation, Singapore also prioritises deepening economic engagement with the United States, exemplified by initiatives like the International Partnership for Expanding Opportunities for Clean Energy.

In its relationship with China, Singapore actively supports Chinese engagement in Southeast Asia and plays a coordinating role in the ASEAN-China Dialogue. While supporting and participating in China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and serving as a financing hub, Singapore carefully avoids being labelled as a ‘third China’ due to its majority Chinese population, leading to occasional tensions with Beijing. For instance, in 2016, Beijing impounded Singapore-owned armoured vehicles in Hong Kong, and in 2017, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was not invited to the BRI Summit, despite continued cooperation through the joint council for bilateral cooperation.³¹

Gaps in Singapore’s approach

As a small state, Singapore has a robust approach to the maritime sector with capacity building for defence, coast guard, and MDA. Its organisations are integrated to work well together. It has on-going cooperation with international organisations and institutions and the states and agencies work well with other state-based agencies.

While Singapore has committed to ambitious environmental sustainability goals, including a 40% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, challenges remain. The Maritime Singapore Green Initiative and a blueprint for a long-term sustainable strategy reflect this commitment.³² To support these efforts, the MPA has allocated SGD\$100 million in incentives through 2024³³ and is collaborating with partners to establish a supply chain for zero-carbon fuels, emphasising the need to address gaps and challenges in achieving environmental sustainability.

Nevertheless, addressing decarbonisation in the maritime sector remains a challenge. Even though Singapore contributes only 0.11% of global emissions, it sells about one-fifth of the world's marine fuel. In 2019, Singapore sold 35 million tons of marine residual fuels to large cargo ships generating a significant amount of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) that was primarily emitted on key shipping lanes.³⁴ Furthermore, the discharge of scrubber wash water associated with residual fuel sales in Singapore led to pollution in Singapore's Exclusive Economic Zone. It also affected the waters of neighbouring countries and even ports in Europe. In addition, even with strict implementation of IMO's guidelines on carbon intensity standards, there has been a mild increase in overall carbon emission from marine traffic in Singapore.³⁵ Even though Singapore has commenced developing regulations to address environmental concerns, and has been providing incentives to vessels to decarbonise, there appear to be gaps in the regulatory framework specifically focussed on decarbonisation.

While there is growing recognition in Singapore of the need for innovations in environmental technology, there is also room for improvement focussing on the marine sector. Currently, Singapore is encouraging technological advancement and investment in areas such as water treatment, waste management infrastructure, energy, and clean air management. It is also looking at fuelling innovation in developing technologies to improve operational efficiency and sustainability.³⁶ However, there is a need for greater emphasis in research and development in emission reduction and marine waste management.

In response to the increasing digitisation of the maritime industry, scholars, and practitioners alike recognises the critical need for Singapore to heightened cybersecurity measures to counter cyber threats. KPMG Singapore's report highlights global cybercrime costs of approximately S\$600 million, and the World Economic Forum, identifies cyber-attacks on maritime infrastructure as the 5th top risk in 2020.³⁷

In order to enhance its cyber security measures through cybersecurity awareness, preparedness, and response mechanisms within the maritime sector, Singapore has taken certain initiatives to respond to the regulations and support the risk management of critical information infrastructure in the maritime sector under the 2018 Singapore Cybersecurity Act. In 2019, Singapore launched a Maritime Cybersecurity Operation Centre and established Port Authorities CIO Cybersecurity Network (PACC-Net) involving 11 global port authorities to collaborate on maritime cybersecurity and facilitate early sharing of cyber threat information.³⁸ While progress has been made, there's a call for further improvement in enhancing cyber resilience for onshore information systems, vessel, and offshore operational technologies. Collaboration among industry players and researchers, skill development, and talent retention are crucial for effectively responding to evolving cybersecurity threats in the maritime sector.

Recommendations and conclusion

Singapore, a small island state vulnerable to maritime threats, employs a robust 'whole-of-government' approach, led by the MSTF, despite lacking an official document on maritime policy. Aligned with a 'Blue Security' concept, Singapore

emphasises a normative commitment to shaping a peaceful, stable, and equitable maritime order by integrating legal frameworks, law enforcement, and global collaboration to leverage economic and technological advantages. It recognises the interrelated nature of contemporary security challenges in the maritime domain and advocates for an integrated approach to maritime security that encompasses various dimensions such as strategic, legal, civil, economic, and environmental aspects. By further integrating legal frameworks, law enforcement capabilities, and international cooperation efforts, Singapore can enhance its ability to address both traditional and non-traditional maritime threats comprehensively. The nation already actively collaborates globally, adheres to international laws, and forges strategic partnerships with major powers for enhanced maritime security and autonomy. Prioritising economic prosperity and global connectivity, Singapore focuses on defence, coast guard, and MDA to combat threats like terrorism and piracy. It already actively collaborates regionally and globally to enhance MDA and address maritime threats. Emphasising further cooperation with neighbouring countries, regional organisations like ASEAN, and international bodies like the IMO would strengthen collective efforts to maintain maritime order and security.

The Maritime Singapore Green Initiative reflects its commitment to sustainability, promoting eco-friendly shipping practices, and investing in green technologies. However, challenges arise in environmental sustainability, particularly in decarbonisation efforts and addressing regulatory gaps and pollution concerns from marine fuel sales. Closing regulatory gaps and investing in research and development for emission reduction and marine waste management would contribute to addressing environmental concerns in the maritime sector. Clearer guidelines and incentives are recommended for shipowners to invest in low-carbon technologies, alongside increased research and development collaboration. Strengthening existing incentives, financial perks, and regulatory frameworks for alternative fuels aligns with Singapore's goal of becoming a global leader in green ports.

In the context of digitisation, cybersecurity measures are crucial, necessitating training programmes for maritime professionals, industry-wide standards, and collaborative efforts with government agencies and experts. The evolving cybersecurity threat in the maritime industry adds complexity, requiring coordinated efforts from the government, industry, and the public to address these gaps. Recognising this evolving threat in the maritime industry, Singapore should continue to enhance its cybersecurity measures. Strengthening cybersecurity awareness, preparedness, and response mechanisms within the maritime sector, as well as fostering collaboration among industry players and researchers, would bolster Singapore's resilience against cyber threats in the maritime domain. Singapore, equipped with knowledge and capabilities, can lead in regional resilience through expertise exchange, joint exercises, and capacity-building initiatives. Regular policy reviews, heightened public awareness, and targeted capacity-building initiatives are essential for Singapore to bolster its position as a leader in sustainable and resilient maritime practices, contributing to global environmental efforts. Implementing these strategies not only reinforces Singapore's role in the global maritime sector but also elevates its contribution to addressing environmental challenges.

Notes

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15 South Korea

*Sanghoon Kim*¹

Introduction

The ‘Indo-Pacific’ has become widely accepted as a term used to describe a ‘maritime region that spans the Indian Ocean to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east’.² The ideational foundation of the concept can be found in Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s ‘Confluence of the Two Seas’ speech in 2007, but Australia was the first to name its region the ‘Indo-Pacific’ in its Defence White Paper in 2013.³ Today, other U.S. partners have also actively endorsed the concept in their strategic papers.⁴ However, competitors such as China view it as a ‘cloak for U.S.-led confrontation and containment’.⁵ To note is that the Indo-Pacific is predominantly maritime. The burgeoning great power competition centres around the seas and the main actors involved are maritime nations that rely on a stable maritime order.⁶ Moreover, non-traditional security challenges also require wide-ranging cooperation among states and non-state actors. To this end, the holistic approach to maritime security – Blue Security – is a useful analytical framework to address the common challenges in the Indo-Pacific.⁷

As Scott Snyder once eloquently stated, ‘the Korean Peninsula has historically been a victim of the tragedy of great-power politics, given its geographic location at the vortex of great-power rivalry in Northeast Asia’.⁸ For this reason, Korea has been described as the ‘shrimp among whales’.⁹ Even today, the rivalry between China and the United States is intensifying the strategic dilemma of South Korea.¹⁰ While President Yoon Suk-yeol introduced an Indo-Pacific strategy in 2022, South Korea has historically been reluctant to explicitly adopt the Indo-Pacific concept, despite being a major actor in the region. That is partly due to the fact that traditional security threats continue to deprive South Korea’s attention and resources. This chapter aims at taking stock of the maritime security environment surrounding the Korean Peninsula. The following sections examine various maritime issues, the challenges associated with them, and provide policy recommendations for achieving Blue Security in South Korea.

South Korea’s view of its key maritime interests and priorities

South Korea is undoubtedly a maritime nation to which its national interests are defined by maritime interests.¹¹ It is one of the top trading nations in the world and

the protection of its sea lines of communication (SLOC) has been at the top of its security agenda. In particular, South Korea is heavily reliant on the import of natural resources that constitutes one-quarter of its gross imports.¹² For this reason, the SLOC connecting the Korean peninsula and the Middle East has been vital to the Korean economy. Reflecting the importance of the SLOC, the South Korean Navy has been dispatching the *Cheonghae* Unit to the Gulf of Aden as part of the international Combined Task Force (CTF)-151 to protect shipments from piracy.¹³ What adds to South Korea's reliance on the SLOC is the disconnect from the Eurasian continent. As Geoffrey Till mentioned, 'the ROK is an island, for all its peninsular character, because of the physical blockage of its access northwards by an implacable North Korea'.¹⁴ In accordance with rapid economic development and increased reliance on seaborne trade, South Korean interests expanded globally, but bilateral maritime security issues with North Korea, Japan, and China continue to absorb South Korea's attention and resources. The main reason why this is the case stems from the omnipresence of geopolitical competition in the region.

The conflict of interest at sea between North and South Korea centres mainly around the Northern Limit Line (NLL).¹⁵ Unlike the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on land, the NLL was left ambiguous in the armistice treaty (July 1953) because North Korea and the United Nations Command (UNC) had insisted on disparate principles of territorial waters.¹⁶ Since UNC Commander Mark Clark's promulgation of the NLL in August 1953, North Korea adopted variegated means to challenge the status quo through diplomatic protestation and the use of force. The most recent and significant event was the sinking of the *Cheonan* in 2010. Although military provocations at sea have receded somewhat since then, the threat remains real with enhanced North Korean submarine capabilities. In addition, North Korea is trying to overcome its relative weakness by relying on grey zone tactics such as the militarisation of unmanned islands.¹⁷

Japan is an important security partner to South Korea that shares common security concerns. However, grievances over historical issues and related maritime claims have impeded effective cooperation. The most critical issue regards the sovereignty of Dokdo.¹⁸ South Korea and Japan both maintain that Dokdo/Takeshima is an 'inherent territory [of Korea/Japan] in light of historical facts and international law'. The origins of the dispute can be traced far back into history, but in essence, Korea argues that Dokdo had been returned after World War II; while Japan insists on bringing the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a final settlement. Currently, Korea effectively controls the island with staffed personnel in residence. The recent incident between a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft and a Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) naval vessel is one indication of the inflammatory nature of the issue.¹⁹

China's impressive naval modernisation in recent years have largely gone unfelt in the West Sea due to the focus on the Taiwan Strait and the East/South China Sea. However, the presence of the Chinese Northern Theater Navy in Qingdao and numerous shipbuilding ports located in the coasts of the Bohai Sea signifies the strategic importance of the West (Yellow) Sea to China. Furthermore, the proximity between China and South Korea has been a source of conflict stemming from the

overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), South Korea maintains the median line principle (Article 15) that calls for drawing the boundary equidistant from the coastal baselines; but China asserts that the EEZ demarcation line should take into consideration the differences in population size and the length of the coastline.²⁰ Relatedly, the prevalent Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing by China in the West Sea is another important issue. As Chinese demand for fisheries products and fishermen increased, the West Sea and the waters around the NLL have become lucrative ground for Chinese fishermen. Approximately 200–300 IUU fishing has been reported annually. With the absence of a median line demarcating the EEZs, South Korea and China eventually came to a *modus vivendi* fisheries agreement in August 2000.²¹

Accordingly, interstate maritime disputes continue to be prioritised. But the emergence of non-traditional threats have received renewed attention. In fact, the negative effects of climate change and the increase in sea temperature have begun to manifest in direct material costs. The recent example is the typhoon ‘Hinnamnor’ (September 2022) that cost Korea approximately \$190 million.²² Other concerns include marine waste and the sustainability of the marine ecosystem. For instance, the increased use of fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases has resulted in the acidification of the sea that disturbs the marine ecosystem. Recently, the release of contaminated water in Japan has raised international concerns over marine pollution and domestic concerns over the imports of Japanese fisheries products.²³ International NGOs, environmentalists, and neighbouring states including South Korea are worried that radioactive materials cannot be fully treated, hence the concern over the negative impact on the marine ecosystem and the safety of fisheries products.²⁴

South Korea’s strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

At the highest level, the importance of the sea has been reflected in major policy initiatives. For example, the ‘New Southern Policy (NSP)’ contrived by the Moon Jae-in administration was a strategic initiative to increase cooperation with Southeast Asian countries. The policy was first announced during President Moon’s visit to Indonesia in 2017 and the ‘New Southern Policy Plus (NSP+)’ that broadened the scope of the initiative included more than 90 projects. Many of the projects were maritime-related such as the creation of the ‘Korea-Indonesia Offshore Research Center (KIORCC)’. The subsequent Yoon Suk-yeol administration published the ‘Indo-Pacific Strategy’ in December 2022 that emphasised cooperation not only with Southeast Asia but also with the Indo-Pacific region as a whole. Among the major initiatives, the Yoon administration explicitly highlighted the importance of sea lanes and pledged to ‘deepen maritime security cooperation in the region’.²⁵

When it comes to specific maritime security issues, there have been some divergences across administrations. On the NLL issue, successive administrations

have constantly reaffirmed the position that the NLL continues to serve as a legitimate demarcation line that effectively separated the militaries of the two countries. However, inconsistencies in terms of the general approach towards North Korea – liberal administrations favouring engagement while conservative administrations favouring coercion – contributed to the show of weak resolve. The signing of the 2018 Comprehensive Military Agreement (CMA)²⁶ that established a maritime buffer zone by the Moon administration and the elaboration of the ‘Kill Chain’ concept that opened the possibility of a pre-emptive strike against North Korea by the Yoon administration exemplifies the dependence of South Korean policy on the whims of North Korea.

The Dokdo issue is a more complicated matter that is intertwined with historical issues. As mentioned in the previous section, the basic position of South Korea is that it ‘does not view its sovereignty [of Dokdo] to be in dispute’ because Dokdo had long been part of South Korea. It is also constantly refusing to bring the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) because the issue is fundamentally ‘not in dispute,’ and because ‘the Koreans view the Japanese claim [to bring the matter to the ICJ] as a continuing example of its colonial arrogance’.²⁷ Relatedly, the dispute over Dokdo contributed to the failure of establishing a EEZ demarcation line in the East Sea. The provisional solution was to negotiate a new fisheries agreement in 1998 to create provisional ‘intermediate waters’ after the ratification of UNCLOS in 1996.

Similarly, the West Sea is absent of an EEZ demarcation line between South Korea and China. Instead, the two countries signed a fisheries agreement in August 2000 that established the intermediate fishing zone. Unlike the presence of a disputed island that prevents an agreement between Korea and Japan; the problem in the West Sea derives from differing interpretations over the principle of demarcation. The Chinese IUU fishing is another issue in the West Sea. In response to the Chinese fishing boat ramming and sinking a South Korean Coast Guard (ROKCG) patrol boat in 2016, the ROKCG established a Special Security Unit in 2016 and the ‘NWI’s Guard Unit’ in 2017 that focussed on cracking down illegal fishing boats in the West Sea. In addition, the ROKCG revised the ‘Maritime Security Law’ to allow pre-emptive measures against illegal fishermen. For instance, the revised law enabled ROKCG to use firearms pre-emptively when fishermen ‘tried’ to attack a ROKCG ship or personnel. Before the amendment, the use of firearms was limited to instances after the fishermen had attacked the ROKCG.²⁸ Furthermore, the ROKCG, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) have established regular diplomatic channels with Chinese agencies to resolve the IUU issue in the West Sea. Moreover, the Chinese have shown effort to reduce IUU fishing by increasing the fishing resting period. As a result, the number of IUU violations have been reduced from 225 in 2016 to 151 in 2017, and down to 129 in 2018.

With regards to the marine environment, more than 200 cases of marine contamination were reported annually. One major source of contamination is oil spills caused by accidents at sea. In order to cope with this issue, the National Contingency Plan (NCP) was revised to clarify responsibilities among 20+

relevant agencies and to specify a standard operation procedure. Moreover, the Chief of the ROKCG would lead the Countermeasure Headquarters (CHQ) in accordance with the NCP to cope with water contamination emergencies.²⁹ Another major source of contamination is the plastic waste flowing into the sea. According to one estimate in 2018, approximately 145,000 tons of waste occurred annually, and this has translated not only into environmental costs but also material costs such as ‘ghost fishing’ and screw entanglements.³⁰ In order to cope with the problem, the South Korean government established the ‘Marine Waste Management Center’ in 2011 and began to distribute bio-degradable fishing gears and eco-friendly buoys.³¹ As examined above, climate change, rise in sea temperature, and the emission of carbon dioxide are fundamental causes of marine environment degradation. As a way to mitigate the impact of climate change, South Korea set the 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% from the 2018 levels by 2030. In order to accomplish the goal, the role of blue carbon has become important, and various efforts in collaboration with the civil society, academia, and NGOs are being pursued.³²

Gaps in South Korea’s approach

South Korea’s approach to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges is not without some limitations. In response to North Korean threats, the gap in South Korea’s maritime policy is not a lack of naval capabilities, but in internal dissonance. South Korea overwhelms North Korean naval capabilities both quantitatively and qualitatively, which has been verified in the last naval skirmish – the 2009 Battle of *Daecheong*.³³ Rather, the problem lies in domestic polarisation over the NLL and policy on North Korea in general. Moreover, internal dissonance is not limited to domestic politics within South Korea but also within the United States-Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance. For example, when North Korea sank the *Cheonan*, South Korea was planning on a massive retaliation. However, as Robert Gates, the US Secretary of Defence during that time recalled in his memoir, ‘South Korea’s original plans for retaliation were, we thought, disproportionately aggressive, ... We were worried the exchanges could escalate dangerously. The president, Clinton, Mullen, and I were all on the phone often with our South Korean counterparts over a period of days, ...’³⁴ Eventually, South Korea proportionately returned artillery on the location of origin and there were significant debates over the credibility of U.S. commitment to South Korea.

The only potential remedy for resolving issues of significant national interests such as those of demarcating the EEZs and sovereignty claims over an island is international law. However, international law such as UNCLOS has had limited influence on dispute resolution. It is paradoxical that while North Korea has not ratified UNCLOS, it has been appealing to international law in its border disputes, such as the principles of the equidistant line, equity and natural extension.³⁵

On the other hand, South Korea, a party to the UNCLOS regime, has been emphasising the idiosyncrasies of issues related to sovereignty and the need to take into consideration the long history that dates before the ratification of 1982 UNCLOS. Therefore, international law has not served as a panacea for bilateral issues that states consider a matter of sovereignty. Rather, the issues have been dealt in a case-by-case matter, and states have found tentative measures such as fisheries agreements and provisional zones to provide minimal order.³⁶ This chapter does not argue that South Korea defies international law while revisionist states such as North Korea abide by international regimes. Instead, the point of conflict is on adhering to international norms, principles, and values. The Indo-Pacific community shares a commitment towards values such as non-aggression, respect for sovereignty, and the use of peaceful conflict resolution measures. In this sense, the challenge of South Korea is to further embrace Blue Security and to participate in minilateral arrangements to gain international support and to prevent violence.

With respect to marine environment protection, South Korea has taken on a leading role. Under the NSP+ framework, South Korea has enhanced cooperation with Southeast Asian countries by sharing knowledge and information and providing marine waste cleaning ships. In 2021, South Korea hosted the P4G Seoul Summit and launched the 'Asian Seas Initiative on Clean Oceans' that aims at establishing a cooperative network on marine environment protection. In order to solve the problem of marine waste, the South Korean government, in cooperation with the civil society, has launched numerous campaigns to collect plastic waste from the sea.³⁷ Moreover, the government entrusted the task of collecting marine waste to the Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation (KOEM) to increase efficiency. However, additional effort must be made to fundamentally prevent the generation and inflow of waste into the seas. In addition, less attention has been given to the disposal stage that follows waste collection. As previously mentioned, 'blue carbon' activities refer to a 'suite of sustainable management activities in coastal ecosystems through conservation, resulting in avoided emissions from conversion and degradation'.³⁸ There is a gap, however, in that only tidal marshes, mangroves, and seagrass meadows are acknowledged as sources of blue carbon. South Korea has a large mass of mud flat that is known to absorb more than 490,000 tons of carbon dioxide, but mud flats have not been acknowledged by the international community.

Recommendations and conclusion

South Korea is no longer considered a weak 'shrimp' whereby the fate of the country is entirely determined by its larger neighbouring powers. South Korea is an economic powerhouse and an autonomous middle power that is starting to take on greater international responsibilities. This chapter concludes with four policy recommendations that would enable Korea to take a comprehensive approach and achieve Blue Security.

The first policy recommendation is South Korea's open endorsement of the commitment towards the Indo-Pacific vision. The vision is shared by members of the international community that are 'committed to uphold international law and norms, from human rights to freedom of navigation'.³⁹ The democratic values are not limited to the geographical scope of the Indo-Pacific as the European Union (EU) also endorsed the concept through the publication of the 'EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific'. The vision is not solely the U.S. strategy for containment of revisionist powers nor a regional framework limited to those in the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. It is truly a global framework for engagement based on democratic norms and principles aimed at resolving inter-state disputes and human security issues. Of course, South Korea has long been captivated by the geopolitical trap and narrow national security interests. As a result, South Korea has been 'hedging' between great powers – holding 'a delicate middle ground between all-out balancing and bandwagoning'.⁴⁰ However, the stance of 'strategic ambiguity' has often produced a backlash. Although understandable, the best way to ensure national security is to provide a clear commitment towards the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

The second policy recommendation is to invest in multidimensional sea power. The coexistence of traditional and transnational threats surrounding South Korea requires a comprehensive approach towards sea power. In the conventional sense, sea power has been associated with the 'command of the seas' that emphasised 'sea control' and 'power projection' functions of naval forces.⁴¹ However, South Korea must be aware of its capacity and its role as a middle power that can balance its efforts at maintaining relative supremacy against its security adversary such as North Korea and contributing to the maintenance of the global commons. Therefore, South Korea has to tailor investments in sea power by possessing cost-effective capabilities to deter North Korea and to contribute to the provision of the public good. Lastly, Mahan reminds us that 'national character' is a key condition affecting sea power. It is the 'general proclivity to make sufficient standing investment in maritime strength' by the general public.⁴² In sum, sea power is aggregate power that includes not only the government, ROKN, and ROKCG but also the support of the population. Continued efforts must be made to make aware of the importance of the sea and the necessity of Blue Security.

The third policy recommendation is the systematisation of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). In its broadest sense, MDA is defined as 'the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain'.⁴³ The systematisation of the MDA, therefore, refers to the achievement of increased awareness of the maritime domain through persistent monitoring of all kinds of activities at sea; maintaining data on ships, facilities, and infrastructure such as ports; and actively sharing information among relevant domestic and international actors. MDA serves as a basis for timely and effective decision-making. The size of South Korean jurisdictional waters is measured at 430,000 km², which is 4 times the size of the land mass. South Korea also has 3,382 islands and the length

of the coastline stretches 15,281 km.⁴⁴ Although South Korean law enforcement vessels cover smaller areas per unit when compared to China or Japan, South Korea has greater demand for persistent monitoring in all three waters.⁴⁵ Currently, South Korea maintains a regular system of surveillance through coherent cooperation and division of labour between naval and law enforcement vessels. Civilian fishermen are also advised to report anomalous activities to officials. However, there always are blind spots through physical surveillance and increased investments must be made to implement unmanned intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) mechanisms. With regards to the protection of marine environment, government initiatives such as the ‘K-Ocean Watch’ must be further pursued. Moreover, South Korea must actively participate in international efforts such as the Quad’s ‘Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)’.⁴⁶

The final policy recommendation that enables Blue Security is integration. As examined above, the maritime environment surrounding the Korean peninsula is multidimensional with variegated actors involved ranging from governmental agencies to civil society groups. Although the recent administrations have emphasised the importance of the maritime domain, a coherent grand strategy of maritime security has been absent.⁴⁷ The maritime domain is unique in that maritime issues are interconnected, liminal, and cross-jurisdictional.⁴⁸ What this means is that an integrative effort for division of labour, ready communication and information sharing across actors, and a clear guideline is needed.

To conclude, South Korea is a country that depends heavily on the seas for security and prosperity. At the same time, however, South Korea is vulnerable to complex and multidimensional challenges arising from the seas. Therefore, Blue Security is a concept that can be used to understand the opportunities and challenges that South Korea faces in the Indo-Pacific, but also to devise a comprehensive strategy that reaffirms its commitment towards the maintenance of a peaceful maritime order.

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16 Sri Lanka

*Nilanthi Samaranyake*¹

Introduction

Over the past 15 years, Sri Lanka has actively embraced its maritime identity and interests. While geopolitics has attracted much attention in the Indian Ocean region during this period, Sri Lanka's interest goes deeper than navigating strategic competition between major powers. After the country's 26-year civil war ended in 2009, the Sri Lankan leadership sought to develop maritime infrastructure as a means of rebuilding and expanding ties to regional and global trading networks. This approach has historical roots. Since ancient times and early kingdoms, rulers have understood the value of Sri Lanka's island location along the Indian Ocean sealanes that facilitate maritime connections near and far away.² In the modern era, Sri Lanka has seen another small state in Asia, Singapore, as its natural competitor for attracting sealane traffic and worked to build Colombo Port. Although Colombo Port has grown to become the top transshipment port in South Asia,³ Sri Lanka's development has been impeded by the long civil war and more recently fiscal mismanagement, which resulted in economic and political crises in 2022.⁴ In keeping with this edited volume's focus on Blue Security and challenges emanating from the seas, this chapter will examine the case of Sri Lanka as a smaller island state in the Indian Ocean as it faces a long path of economic recovery while managing a complex maritime environment.

The first section examines how Sri Lanka views its key maritime interests and priorities, including in the realms of security, trade, crime, and environment. The second section considers the strategy and approaches that Sri Lanka has adopted to defend its maritime security interests, including key official state documents; actors and agencies; levels of international engagement; and the role of non-state actors in maritime security. The third section analyses the gaps in the strategy and approaches of Sri Lanka and suggests areas for Colombo's extra attention such as maritime security capacity and capability, policy, jointness and integration, and international cooperation. The conclusion will offer a few recommendations for Sri Lankan leaders to consider as they pursue national development goals in the context of their maritime location and interests.

Sri Lanka's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

Sri Lanka's island territory and location along the main east-west sealanes in the central Indian Ocean has informed its identity throughout its history as well as policy interests in the contemporary era.⁵ Half the world's container traffic, a third of bulk cargo traffic, and roughly two-thirds of hydrocarbon shipments transit the Indian Ocean.⁶ Not surprisingly, Sri Lanka wishes to leverage its strategic location to benefit from this nearby activity. Over the years, Sri Lanka has developed a strategic culture that is rooted in these maritime interests based on its location and an outlook that is open to visitors and sees engagement with them as beneficial to domestic interests.⁷ This can be seen in the prominence of the country's port investments most recently dating back to the 1970s. Such a focus is consistent with small states in international affairs that look to offer logistics or transportation services based on their unique traits.⁸

As a lower middle-income country, Sri Lanka has several priority issues to address in the maritime domain: trade; tourism; transnational crime such as irregular migration, trafficking, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and environmental pollution. Recognising its location at the centre of the Indian Ocean and maritime strategic culture, Sri Lanka views its role in facilitating trade and protecting this trade as critical to meeting its national development goals and, more broadly, its fate as a nation. Related to the importance of trade for the country is ensuring Sri Lanka remains an attractive and safe island destination for tourism, which represents the third-largest source of foreign currency earnings for Sri Lanka.⁹ This means ensuring the beaches are secure from terrorist threats and keeping the sea waters and seafood catch free from marine pollution. Given its well-known debt problems, Sri Lanka relies heavily upon on foreign currency earnings for its balance of payments. In light of such requirements, officials often speak about the need for the Sri Lanka Navy and Coast Guard to secure the country's 1340-kilometre coastline; 510,000-square kilometre exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which is about seven times the size of Sri Lanka's land area; and its search-and-rescue area, which is roughly 25 times the size of its land area.¹⁰

In recent years, Sri Lanka has expanded its concerns in the maritime domain beyond solely the importance of trade to the economy as well as the need to secure the spaces for trade and tourism. The rise in transnational crime and damage to the marine environment have revealed additional threats for the country's maritime priorities. Regarding criminal activity, narcotics trafficking has persisted in the Indian Ocean along the so-called Southern Route. Drugs mainly from Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are shipped to East Africa, South Asia, and Australasia amid inadequate law enforcement. In recognition of the menace of this non-traditional security threat, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Maritime Crime Programme set up an office in Colombo to devote attention to the region.¹¹

Beyond threats from the region, Sri Lanka also faces migration challenges from within its borders. Following Sri Lanka's first-time default on its debt in 2022 and effects on food prices and fuel access, cases of irregular migration and human trafficking rose with citizens seeking to flee the country. The Sri Lanka Navy conducted

several operations for counter-illegal migration and search and rescue for ships in distress, with Sri Lankan migrants onboard as suspected victims of human trafficking.¹² Indeed, irregular migration, human smuggling, and narcotics trafficking are seen by experts as the top issues facing Sri Lanka in the maritime domain in 2023.¹³ Lastly, IUU fishing has persisted as a high-priority issue for the Sri Lanka Navy and Coast Guard following the end of Colombo's war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) insurgency in 2009.

Sri Lanka's experiences with shipping accidents in 2020–2021 revealed increasingly existential environmental threats to the country's maritime interests and priorities. The crude carrier *MT New Diamond* caught fire in September 2020, with diesel fuel oil leaking into the sea over an area of 25 miles. None of the crude oil cargo leaked or caught fire, but the maritime services were aware of the potential human-made disaster that could have taken place off Sri Lanka's eastern coast.¹⁴ Less than a year later, Sri Lanka faced its worst maritime ecological disaster when the *X-Press Pearl* container ship caught fire off Colombo, sank while being towed, and spilled pellets into the seabed and beaches off western Sri Lanka. An analysis a year after the incident considers it to be 'the worst plastic marine pollution event in the world'.¹⁵ In fact, the full impact of the damage to the country's coastline and marine life will likely not be understood for years until further scientific investigation can be conducted.

Overall, Sri Lanka's location and inherent dependence on the maritime domain requires securing sealanes for profitable trade and shipping activity, as well as ensuring a safe marine ecology for sustainable fish stocks, fishers' livelihoods, and tourism.

Sri Lanka's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

Sri Lanka does not have a publicly available, cabinet-level, national maritime security strategy document. Nevertheless, there are several military service actors such as the Navy and Coast Guard, as well as civilian actors such as the Ports Authority, that carry out the country's maritime objectives and contribute to its thinking on maritime priorities.

As the country's leading sea service, the Sri Lanka Navy began the process of developing strategic thought and documentation roughly a decade ago to speak to the country's maritime interests.¹⁶ In 2020, the Sri Lanka Navy released the *Maritime Doctrine of Sri Lanka (MDSL)*, which outlines how the service advances the country's national interests.¹⁷ It was reported to be the country's first maritime doctrine and the first doctrine by any of Sri Lanka's military services.¹⁸ This document was informed by earlier, unofficial work. For example, in 2016, the service drafted a brief 'Sri Lanka Navy Maritime Strategy 2025' document in which a target was envisioned for a 20-ship fleet by the year 2025.¹⁹ This document was discussed in the public domain; however, it was not formally published as an authorised service strategy.²⁰

There are several civilian and military actors that are critical to carrying out Sri Lanka's maritime security interests. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken a

greater interest in speaking to Sri Lanka's maritime ambitions, in recognition of the country's geographic attributes to leverage its location astride the main east-west sealanes. Its officials have spoken about Sri Lanka as a 'hub of the Indian Ocean':

We are repositioning Sri Lanka to maximise our relationships with both our historic and new trading partners to leverage our geo-strategic position to make us a hub of the Indian Ocean as well as a transshipment port for the Bay of Bengal trade.²¹

While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is an obvious actor for advancing the country's maritime interests, there are other important civilian actors who contribute to this mission.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Aviation operates on the cabinet within the Government of Sri Lanka. Given the importance of the maritime domain and location astride the main east-west shipping lanes, this ministry is very important for the country's national development goals. Related, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority is also important for operations of its six ports around the country, including the biggest in Colombo. In 2009, the present-day version of the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) was established and falls under the State Ministry of Coast Conservation and Low-Lying Lands Development. MEPA seeks to strengthen law enforcement authority to address marine environment pollution. This key actor was involved in Sri Lanka's response to an oil tanker fire in 2020 in which fuel oil leaked into the ocean.²²

Sri Lanka's military services represent another set of key actors that advance the country's maritime interests. As discussed above for its role in leading maritime doctrine, the Sri Lanka Navy is an obvious stakeholder on maritime security in the country. But many other parts of the government have equities on the subject. Falling under the Ministry of Defence like the Navy, the Sri Lanka Coast Guard is a younger sea service, having been reestablished in its present form in 2009 through the Coast Guard Act. Of note, at the top of the service's duties is to prevent illegal fishing,²³ which became the top maritime security threat facing the country after the end of the war against the LTTE in 2009. Its future growth should see the service conduct missions that are more traditional for a coast guard, thereby freeing up the Sri Lanka Navy of many of the constabulary duties it has conducted. The Sri Lanka Marine Corps was established in 2016 as a third maritime-focused service, including with significant support from the United States. Furthermore, the Sri Lanka Air Force is assuming a greater role for providing maritime security by providing surveillance at sea.

Sri Lanka has a considerable amount of international engagement at varying levels—bilateral, multilateral, and minilateral—to advance the country's maritime interests. Bilaterally, Sri Lanka relies on India to conduct a significant amount of capacity-building activities and education for its military officers, as well as missions for disaster and marine pollution response. After an oil tanker caught fire in 2020, sailors from both Sri Lanka and India worked to put out the fire and contained the leak of fuel oil.²⁴ As a comparatively young service, the Sri Lanka Coast

Guard has sought to develop international relationships as the Navy has succeeded in doing so. It coordinates with regional coast guards on training and exercises such as India's and Maldives' Coast Guards, as well as the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency.²⁵ In 2018, Japan built two new fast-patrol vessels for the Sri Lanka Coast Guard to augment its fleet, in addition to a retired offshore patrol vessel that India transferred to the service in the previous year. Both countries also provide the Sri Lanka Coast Guard with capacity-building training. Lastly, Australia has provided the Sri Lanka Coast Guard with three Stabicraft vessels.

In multilateral terms, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime established an office in Colombo and conducts training sessions with hundreds of participants with maritime equities including Sri Lanka's Marine Police, Customs, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Coast Guard, Police, Navy, and Attorney General's Department.²⁶ Sri Lanka also seconded a coast guard officer to the Information Sharing Centre at the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in Singapore, for the purpose of developing relationships with counterparts on maritime security.

In minilateral terms, Sri Lanka began working with India and Maldives in 2011 to develop a trilateral maritime security grouping at the level of National Security Advisor (NSA) and operational level. This minilateral has expanded in recent years to become the Colombo Security Conclave, with representation from six countries. Mauritius has become its fourth member, and Bangladesh and Seychelles are observers. In March 2023, the Colombo Security Conclave held its fourth tabletop exercise for developing standard operating procedures for response to maritime threats.²⁷

Threats at sea have informed Sri Lanka's national prioritisation of maritime goals particularly due to the role of non-state actors in maritime security. Colombo's 26-year war against the LTTE insurgency saw operations not only on land, but at sea as the Sea Tigers wing of the LTTE needed to secure its lines of communication in this domain.²⁸ After the end of the war in 2009, Sri Lanka entered into the maritime security trilateral with India and Maldives partly in recognition of the need to preserve stability at sea, prevent the resurgence of threats by non-state actors, and enable a postwar environment of economic development. Most Sri Lankan officials and experts have viewed Colombo's long war against the LTTE as having impeded the country's national development ambitions. In fact, a decade of stability was interrupted by the Easter Sunday Bombings in 2019, which killed nearly 300 people and injured more than 500. This suggests that the need to monitor threats from non-state actors continues to be a requirement in upholding Sri Lanka's maritime security, which advances its economic development goals through activities such as trade and tourism.

Gaps in Sri Lanka's approaches

Identifying gaps in Sri Lanka's maritime approaches—capacity and capability, policy, jointness and interagency coordination, and international cooperation—is difficult due to the level of available literature and represents a lacuna in

English-language scholarship. Nevertheless, there is growing attention to this topic, increasingly by Sri Lankan maritime officials studying in partner nations' educational institutions, so the literature available to an international audience appears likely to expand in the coming years.

Given the size of Sri Lanka's large EEZ and search-and-rescue area, its navy and coast guard do not have sufficient capacity or capability to monitor their waters as effectively as desired. The Sri Lanka Navy is building out its new Information Fusion Centre²⁹ to enhance maritime domain awareness and information sharing capability, in addition to participating in regular capacity-building activities. However, the economic and political convulsions of the past year are contributing to a paradigm shift. The crisis and International Monetary Fund bailout package have clarified the amount of austerity measures the country will need to implement. This will necessitate reducing the size of the military,³⁰ including maritime services like the Sri Lanka Marine Corps. There is a recognition at the highest levels of government that the country's priorities centre on the maritime domain. Yet, it remains to be seen how Colombo will downsize its maritime military services in the context of pressures to cut budget costs. For example, Ranga Jayasuriya, journalist for the *Daily Mirror*, has criticised the number of personnel in the Sri Lanka Navy by comparing the lower number in the UK's Royal Navy.³¹

Another gap appears to be the development and release of national security strategy and policy, especially in which the country's maritime interests are outlined. Sri Lankan officials working in the maritime sector have noted the challenge for defence components to be responsive given the lack of clear priorities from the country's civilian leadership.³² There is discussion at present about the need to develop these documents, with some evidence of previous work on the topic. However, it is not clear because these documents or unclassified summaries of them are not accessible in the public domain. Asanga Abeyagoonasekera, the former founding Director General of the Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka, has shared publicly that Sri Lanka's Cabinet approved the 'National Defence Policy in Sri Lanka' on November 11, 2019. He encouraged the public release of this document.³³

Interagency jointness is important for any government and its agencies to work well together, including on maritime equities. The biggest gap in jointness to date is for Sri Lanka's sea services to gain greater support from within the Ministry of Defence, given the dominance of the Sri Lanka Army. In fact, Sri Lanka's official organisations with maritime equities have demonstrated an ability to work together on high-profile missions. For example, after the container ship *X-Press Pearl* sank to the ocean floor in 2021, three organisations—Sri Lanka Navy, MEPA, and National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency—conducted an investigation to document evidence of the debris that spilled from the ship.³⁴ Regarding the persistent challenge of IUU fishing, the Sri Lanka Navy, Police and Intelligence agencies coordinated on a raid on a multi-day fishing vessel in April 2023.³⁵ It is not clear whether the Sri Lanka Coast Guard was involved, but it is worth noting media reporting on the operation did not mention the sea service

which should have had a role and more prominent attention to its role in responding to IUU fishing activity.

Generally, the Sri Lanka Coast Guard works closely with the Sri Lanka Navy to include its Directors General, who have previously worked in the Navy. Going forward, the Sri Lanka Coast Guard will need greater capacity to be equipped for response to maritime law enforcement missions. If greater capacity materialises, the Sri Lanka Navy would then need to accept a lesser role in this mission to increase coordination with, and support of, the Sri Lanka Coast Guard, especially as the Navy turns its attention to requirements beyond territorial waters. Beyond the Navy, the Sri Lanka Coast Guard will seek to strengthen its working relationship with the Sri Lanka Air Force given its role in conducting maritime air operations, and deepen coordination with the Sri Lanka Police, MEPA, the Department of Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management, and the Department of Wildlife Conservation.³⁶

In terms of international cooperation, Sri Lanka has long recognised the need for assistance to address its defence and maritime security needs. As a result, the country does very well with coordinating with international actors and agencies as discussed earlier through training, education, and exercises with foreign navies and coast guards among other counterparts. A recent, significant addition to the Sri Lanka Navy's fleet is a retired US Coast Guard cutter *Douglas Munro*, which was commissioned in November 2022 as the Sri Lanka Navy ship *Vijayabahu*. This, plus two other retired US cutters, represent the largest platforms in the Sri Lanka Navy. The country's willingness to seek and accept capacity-building and security assistance may have some historical basis dating to the time of independence, when Colombo experienced threat perceptions from India due to the asymmetry of power in their relationship.³⁷ Nevertheless, Sri Lanka's outreach to international partners remains the smallest of gaps in its approach to the maritime domain.

Recommendations and conclusion

This chapter has examined how Sri Lanka views its key maritime interests and priorities; the strategy and approaches that Sri Lanka has adopted to defend its maritime security interests; and gaps in its strategy and approaches. Clearly, the maritime domain is a priority for Sri Lankan policymakers, and there is recognition of the need for greater capacity-building and capability to monitor and respond to threats in Sri Lanka's vast maritime areas of responsibility. To situate Sri Lanka into the book's Blue Security concept, the country is fully onboard with a normative commitment to a peaceful maritime order. However, its efforts to bolster maritime security are not fully integrated as envisioned by a Blue Security approach when analyzing gaps earlier. An overarching challenge is the climate only two years after the collapse of the country's economy and political leadership. For example, Sri Lankan citizens will face the pressures of stringent austerity measures in the coming years, while elected leaders will face the pressures of being responsive to public demands in the context of upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections. How policymakers

will balance Sri Lanka's imperatives for national economic recovery with the country's maritime domain interests and needs remains unclear.

Based on some of the gaps identified earlier in Sri Lanka's maritime approaches, the recommendations below are developed to consider for ways to advance the country's capacity and regional security in the maritime domain.

- Bolster the Sri Lanka Coast Guard's operational authority and capacity. This service has grown over the past 15 years, but still could improve by solidifying its identity and autonomy when compared with the Sri Lanka Navy.
- Develop and release publicly national strategy documents on the country's maritime interests and objectives to secure those interests. There is discussion at present about the importance of developing these documents; yet, there is confusion over what strategies have existed previously and their contents. These documents can be written at a broad-enough, appropriate level of detail that is suited for conveying Sri Lanka's maritime interests and goals and will contribute to the development of strategic thought within Sri Lanka in the coming years.
- Examine the requirements of the military services to contribute to the country's national security in maritime missions, given the requirement to cut spending. Judicious budget choices that take into account Sri Lanka's considerable maritime security needs will contribute to long-term economic recovery and development.
- Expand international maritime cooperation in not only recipient but also provider roles with benefit to the wider region. Sri Lanka continues to augment its maritime capacity such as bilaterally with Australia in countering irregular migration in the Indian Ocean. Multilaterally, Sri Lanka continues to receive training from the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme, but has also begun providing training in collaboration with UNODC. In August 2023, the Sri Lanka Navy delivered an Inshore Patrol Craft Handling course to Malaysian and Indonesian partners at its Naval and Maritime Academy in Trincomalee.³⁸ Sri Lanka has also established a Secretariat for the Colombo Security Conclave. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka became Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in October 2023 after having served as Vice Chair for the previous two years. Through these relationships and leadership opportunities, Sri Lanka can fulfil its own national-level maritime needs while also contributing to Indian Ocean regional security.

Notes

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17 Thailand

Kitti Prasirtsuk

Introduction

Thailand, as a coastal nation with a strategic location in Southeast Asia, has enormous interests in ‘Blue Security’. Sandwiched by the Indian Ocean and the seas adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, Thailand has a long coastal line of 3,100 km. Based on the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Thailand has the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of no less than 170,000 square km, which is approximately one third of the country’s land area.¹ The attention on maritime security appeared in the 1990s and has accelerated over the past decade. Since the end of the Cold War, Thailand came to be interested in marine and coastal resources more than before, owing to their economic value, particularly in terms of natural gas, fisheries, and tourism. Growing globalisation has made seaborne shipping even more important for an export-oriented country like Thailand. In the meantime, a variety of non-traditional security and human security issues have also emerged, including smuggling, human trafficking, and natural disaster. Moreover, as maritime and territorial disputes in the South China Sea came to be an issue in the region, and as piracy and armed robbery grew after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, maritime security has increasingly gained much currency in Thailand.²

Yet, Thailand did not have a specific plan dedicated to maritime security until 2015, when the first National Maritime Security Plan (NMSP) was issued covering the year 2015–2022. Until then, maritime security was only a part of the national security plan. The year 2015 thus represents the watershed in Thailand’s maritime security.³ There were two impetuses in this regard. The 2014 U.S. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report downgraded Thailand to Tier 3 status, which created momentum for developing a plan to deal with maritime trafficking and subsequent implementation. Another catalyst was the issue of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, as the European Union imposed the ‘yellow card’, a warning measure prior to sanctions, on Thailand in 2015. IUU fishing practices include the use of unauthorised fishing vessels and destructive fishing methods that undermine sustainability and deplete fish stocks. Some fishermen crews may also be victims of either forced labour or human trafficking. Given the high economic value of Thailand’s fishing and processing sector as the world’s third largest seafood exporter,⁴ the EU actions prompted Thailand to overhaul its entire fishing industry to meet

international standards. Accordingly, Thailand has implemented a comprehensive National Plan to Combat IUU Fishing, which includes strengthening regulatory frameworks, improving monitoring and control measures, enhancing vessel tracking systems, and conducting inspections and enforcement activities. In 2019, the EU formally announced the lifting of a yellow card in recognition of the substantive progress Thailand has made in tackling IUU fishing.

A further turning point was the year 2019 when the Maritime Interests Protection Act was enacted, under which the Thai Maritime Enforcement Command Center (Thai-MECC) was subsequently established in the same year.

Several characteristics and challenges are outstanding for Thailand's maritime security. This chapter thus explores Thailand interests and priorities, its strategy and approaches, organisations in charge and their coordination, as well as international cooperation. It analyses characteristics and capacity as well as several challenges ahead, particularly in terms of the gap between policy and practices. The last section will offer policy recommendations both domestically and internationally.

Thailand's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

There are three levels of official documents concerning maritime security. The first layer is the 20-year National Strategy (2017–2036) which pertains to security, economy, and society⁵; the second is the 5-year National Security Policy and Plan (NSPP, 2023–2027) focusing on overall security, and the third is the 5-year NMSP (2023–2027), which is a derivative of the NSPP and more specific on the maritime domain.⁶ These documents, particularly the NMSP, identify national maritime interests, lay down visions, plans, and guidelines towards achieving maritime security.

According to the NSPP, maritime security is ranked seventh in Thailand's 28 security issues, after preservation of national sovereignty, institutions, peace, and order.⁷ The NMSP addresses maritime issues ranging from national sovereignty and sea routes, maritime piracy and terrorism, smuggling and human trafficking, fisheries, natural disaster, as well as environment and maritime ecology. Such issues are quite common for most Southeast Asian countries. Yet, the priority in practices depend on specific challenges and opportunities Thailand is facing.

As Thailand is non-claimant country in the South China Sea, there is no clear and present traditional threats in this domain. The 20-year Naval Strategy assesses that Thailand is more likely to face with non-traditional threats rather than traditional threats from other states.⁸ Although some maritime boundaries remain unresolved with Cambodia and Myanmar, there has been virtually no tensions, partially thanks to their common ASEAN membership. Maritime encroachment in fisheries has, however, occasionally been an issue with Indonesia and Vietnam. Instead, there are a great number of non-traditional threats facing Thailand, including smuggling, human trafficking, piracy, terrorism, and natural disaster. In the twenty-first century, non-traditional threats have become more complicated. Natural disasters occur more frequently due to climate change.

Environmental degradation and sea debris came to gain much attention. Human trafficking, meanwhile, may involve irregular migration. Smuggling includes narcotic drug and chemicals used for weapon of mass destruction. Piracy and terrorism can also be linked.⁹ When the COVID-19 pandemic compelled states to close borders, traffickers came to shift volume away from land crossing to maritime routes.¹⁰ More recently, cyber security on navigation came to be an issue of high concern.¹¹

There are different levels of urgency among non-traditional threats. Fisheries and environment, for instance, seem to top the agenda for the Thai government in the past several years, while piracy is not so much an issue. The IUU problem mentioned above, coastal erosion, marine environment degradation, oil leakages, and sea debris have become more pressing issues for Thailand according to their declaratory policy. There are many reasons that Thailand should take non-traditional security as their priority.

Yet, sovereignty and traditional security always come first in national security strategy. The NMSP is indicative of this and reflects Thailand's maritime interests and priorities. It starts with the vision of 'enhancing the capability to protect national maritime interests efficiently in the aspects of security, prosperity, and sustainability, as well as playing an important and acceptable role in international maritime issues'.¹² Such vision signifies the emphasis on not only security, but also economy and environment as well. The plan stipulates seven guidelines which reflect the hierarchy of interests as follows: (1) protecting sovereignty and state security, (2) preventing maritime crimes, (3) preserving and utilising maritime environment and resources, (4) relieving natural disaster, (5) developing maritime economy, (6) promoting international cooperation, and (7) strengthening integrated administration and legal arrangements.¹³

Nested in the master plan of the 20-year National Strategy, which also prioritises the country's economic competitiveness, Thai maritime interests are largely pronounced in terms of export and tourism. The former is relevant to the security and safety of commercial fleet, while the latter is much related to environment protection and restoration. Environmental issues, in fact, have gained much priority in recent years, as Thailand is eager to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including SDG 14 Life Below Water pertaining to marine sustainability. Environmental scholars have also been highly involved in policy process.¹⁴ When chairing ASEAN in 2019, Thailand proposed an initiative that led to Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region.¹⁵

In sum, Thailand's maritime interests and priority are quite comprehensive, covering (traditional) security, trade, crime, and environment in a balanced way at least in terms of policy and strategy. Issues of the day and urgency, however, tend to be non-traditional security. Rather than being preventive and plan-oriented, the operation has had to cope with immediate problem-solving, such as those associated with IUU fishing, and other issues such as oil leakages which occur from time to time.

Thailand's strategy and approaches to defend maritime interests

Corresponding to its strategy and pressing issues, the current NMSP (2023–2027) stipulates four key programs: (1) stepping up Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), (2) preventing and solving illegal fishing, (3) accelerating domestic maritime spatial demarcation and management, and (4) establishing an organisation in charge of maritime knowledge management.¹⁶ It is notable that the IUU fishing remains crucial, while technology and cyber security are increasingly critical. The plan also gives priority to environment, referring to four agenda: (1) the maritime economy in terms of fisheries, tourism, shipping, resource exploration, that must be friendly to environment, (2) promotion of legal fisheries and aquaculture, (3) prevention of coastal erosion, and (4) involvement of all stakeholders and local communities.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the navy which is the major maritime actor, issued the strategy of 'Two oceans and three areas', emphasising the importance of the Andaman Sea adjacent to the Indian Ocean. Naval bases and facilities have traditionally been concentrated on the Gulf of Thailand.¹⁸ It is thus necessary to develop substantial ones on the Andaman side for three reasons: first, the Andaman Sea is at risk for non-traditional security issues, such as smuggling, trafficking, and irregular migration. Second, given the importance of tourism there, the country should be ready to ensure safety, disaster relief, and environment protection. Third, the Thai military in general has subscribed to the narrative that the blockade of the Gulf of Thailand can happen, citing the case of the French gunboat policy in the late nineteenth century. Given the tensions which may escalate in the South China Sea, adjacent to the Gulf of Thailand, the military views the Andaman Sea as an alternative route for seaborne trade. The government thus aims to develop seaports and transportation routes to connect both sides of the seas.

Proposals have been floated from the Thai Canal to a land bridge. Dating back to the seventeenth century, the Thai Canal has been a controversial idea that has resurfaced from time to time. Also known as Kra Canal or Kra Isthmus Canal, the Thai Canal refers to proposals to build a canal that cuts across the country that would connect the Gulf of Thailand with the Andaman Sea. This provides an alternative to sea route to the Straits of Malacca and potentially shorten transit by 1,200 km, reducing travel times through the existing heavily navigated trade routes. As part of its twenty-first century maritime Silk Road concept, China has pushed for the canal since 2014, which generated significant debate in Thailand. After a few rounds of studies, Thailand decided not to go ahead, citing environmental and security costs as well as uncertain economic gains. Considering the unrest in three Muslim-dominated Southern provinces, the concern for national security is considerable if the country is divided into two parts by the canal.

In any case, given the increasing geopolitical tensions, Thailand's leaders have been tempted to develop some connecting routes between the two seas, but not via a canal. The land bridge project that proposed ports and railways to transfer cargo from ship to ship seems to have gained currency recently. Accordingly, it would be reasonable to develop naval capability to protect maritime interests in the Andaman Sea.

For defensive deterrence, the Thai government decided to purchase from China three Yuan-class submarines and a frigate, the largest ever, for Thailand. The latter was delivered in April 2023, while the former is problematic because Germany refused to supply its MTU 396 diesel engine to China as it is designated a military/defence item.¹⁹ The navy also emphasises international dialogues and exercises as a way to advance and protect its maritime security interests. Adherent to the concept of comprehensive security, the navy is eager to cooperate internationally, being aware that maritime threats are mostly transnational in nature. Aiming at information sharing and naval diplomacy, the navy participates in Navy-to-Navy Talks, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, and the Eminent Working Group (EWG) in the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting (ADMM).

The main mechanism for implementing maritime security is the Thai-MECC. The evolution of the Thai-MECC reflects the gradual approach to maritime security. The Thai-MECC was originally established in 1993 as a coordinating centre. It lacked the authority to provide unity of command. Instead, the Thai-MECC served as an information exchange platform for units operating under their respective agencies and laws. In 2019, the Thai-MECC was eventually upgraded to become the overarching national maritime security authority. Under the leadership of the navy, Thai-MECC consists of seven agencies, namely the Navy, Marine Police Division, Marine Department (the Ministry of Transport), Department of Fisheries, (Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives), Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment), Customs Department (Ministry of Finance), and Department of Labour Welfare and Protection (DLWP in the Ministry of Labour). DLWP was included because of migrant labour and the IUU problem. The Thai-MECC identifies nine major tasks on piracy, IUU fishing, terrorism, illegal immigration, search and rescue, disaster, trafficking, smuggling, and environment.

As a command centre, the Thai-MECC now has the authority to command all the seven agencies for operations. These agencies conduct patrols, inspections, and surveillance operations to deter and detect illegal activities, including piracy, smuggling, drug trafficking, and IUU fishing. Yet, it should be noted that the seven agencies remain committed to their respective ministries first. The Thai-MECC secretary general is a navy commander by position, while the vice chair is served by a vice navy commander, who really runs the organisation. The Thai-MECC is expanding to recruit more personnel at the planned full capacity of 1,277, but about half of which is secondment from the navy, while the other six agencies have supplied 45 persons each.²⁰

The Thai-MECC also functions as a coast guard. For practical reasons, it is trying to acquire its own equipment such as rescue helicopters, and high-speed vessels. Maritime threats tend to occur in remote seas, which the marine police and other related agencies like fisheries department do not have equipment to access or patrol, thus they require the assistance of the Thai Navy. Yet, the navy is generally trained for combat and country protection. Then, there is an emerging consensus that Thailand needs a new organisation to handle maritime security related to maritime crime, safety, and other non-traditional challenges.

Another key agency is the National Security Council (NSC), which is in charge of the NMSP planning and oversees overall strategy. NSC is now in the process of setting up a maritime think tank. Meanwhile, the Department of Maritime and Coastal Resources (DMCR) plays a key role for blue economy as a focal point by default.

Apart from the navy and the bureaucracy, there are four groups of non-state actors involved in maritime policy-making to some extent. The first group is academics, represented by marine scientists, economists, and law specialists. Notably, maritime security is considerably influenced by environmental scholars.²¹ The second group is businesses across key maritime industries, such as shipping, energy, and fisheries processing, in addition to fishermen associations, which function as interest groups that can provide information and push for relevant policy and implementation. The third group is represented by local communities which face several environment problems, particularly coastal erosion. The fourth group consists of NGOs and civil society, some of which work on environment, some work closely with local communities. It is the DMCR that involves local communities and NGOs. Meanwhile, the Department of Fisheries works with fishermen associations and local fishermen. In any case, local communities and NGOs tend to have marginal influence in policy-making circles, compared to big businesses in sectors like energy, and the fishermen associations.²²

For international cooperation, Thailand has engaged at three levels: bilateral, minilateral, and regional/multilateral. The cooperation includes information sharing, joint patrols, capacity building initiatives, and collaborative exercises. Thailand plans to enhance surveillance, vessel tracking, and intelligence gathering capabilities. This includes the use of radar systems, surveillance technologies, and information sharing platforms to monitor vessel movements, identify threats, and facilitate effective response measures. Thailand also aims to step up law enforcement and technology on vessel investigation.

At the regional level, ASEAN has a Plan of Action that explicitly provides for the promotion of intra-ASEAN maritime security cooperation. Other schemes include the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), which provide platforms for dialogue, cooperation, and information sharing among member states and external powers. Due to increasing piracy and armed robbery cases in the Malacca Straits at the turn of century, Thailand has engaged in minilateral patrols by ships and aircraft, namely the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) and the Eyes in the Sky Initiative with four other ASEAN countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

Beyond ASEAN, Thailand and other ASEAN countries are partners in the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), the initiative proposed by Japan. Through ReCAAP, Thailand collaborates with other participating countries to share information, intelligence, and best practices to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea. Thailand is also a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for promoting maritime safety and security.

Importantly, Thailand participates in multilateral maritime exercises and drills, such as the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise, and Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT), which are naval drills with the United States. These exercises provide opportunities for interoperability, knowledge sharing, and practical training in maritime security operations.²³ More advanced exercises are with external powers, given their know-how and experience. At present, it seems to be the case that Thailand is cooperating on maritime technology more with the United States, information sharing with ASEAN countries, and maritime research with China. There is a concern that some gaps might exist in understanding of geopolitics among member agencies in the Thai-MECC.²⁴

Gaps in Thailand's approach

There are several policy gaps that need to be addressed. The first gap relates to capacity and capability which need a lot of work, particularly in non-traditional security and maritime spatial planning (MSP). The rapid technological changes make it a constant requirement to catch up with MDA and cyber security. New issues keep coming up like the passage of chemicals that can be used for weapons of mass destruction. The lack of expertise, knowledge, and legal training make it hard for related agencies and officials to prevent and handle complex situations. Thailand also lacks a data base on maritime resources and economic bases, thus is unable to tap into its maritime bio-diversity.²⁵

Second, the legal frameworks need to be comprehensive, up-to-date, and effectively enforced to address emerging threats. Despite the priority, the process is at a snail's pace. The lack of maritime legal basis and clear authority bring a number of problems into practice. In some cases, Thailand needs to rely on ad hoc meetings and decision-making among related agencies. The repair and protection of submarine communications cables represent a case in point.²⁶ The insufficient maritime legal frameworks also bar Thailand from exploiting the rights stipulated in UNCLOS on exploration and utilisation.²⁷

Third, more budget and resources, including manpower, technology, and equipment are needed. Thai-MECC's budget cannot be too large, as allocation needs to be distributed to the member agencies, which may or may not be used directly for maritime security. The budgets are also subject to the ceiling of each ministry.²⁸ Put simply, the Thai-MECC, though having coast guard functions to cope with non-traditional security, is not a separate and independent entity on its own.²⁹ Moreover, there is no sufficient budget for research and exploration.

Fourth, Thailand needs to improve its internal coordination and management. As bureaucratic agencies are vertically oriented, the classic problem on internal coordination persists. Effective coordination and data base linkages among various agencies, therefore, are needed. The IUU case reveals a glimpse of hope. It is quite impressive that Thailand was able to synergise related agencies to tackle the problem to the extent that the EU came to lift the warning card. Such achievement was possible because of a strong political will and the international pressure.³⁰ Moreover, there is a significant overlap between the Thai-MECC and the navy.

Coming from the navy as secondment, most Thai-MECC key personnel still belong to the navy and hope to return there for further promotion and assignments. Such duality may deter the development of the Thai-MECC as an independent entity. Yet, a number of navy officers came to be attracted to the practicality of work at the Thai-MECC and may want remain there.³¹ Given that it has been only five years after inauguration, the Thai-MECC would take more time to grow up and have its own identity.

Fifth, there are shortages in the government and public awareness. Thailand still does not see itself as a maritime nation, despite the long coastal line and the large EEZ. The awareness of maritime security has just slowly developed, punctuated by the IUU issue. In fact, there are huge economic potential yet to be cultivated.³²

Lastly, there is an insufficient linkage between blue economy and Blue Security in both concept and organisation. Thailand tends to recognise blue economic potentials in coastal areas while, in fact, offshore areas can offer various possibilities. The emphasis on tourism and exports through the seas is more like an extension of the current economy, not yet developed to blue economy. Importantly, there is no clear agency in charge, not to mention assignment and priority in practice. Although representing the focal point of blue economy, the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) tends to defer to the DMCR and the NSC.³³ Over all, Thailand still considers the blue economy in terms of environment preservation rather than proactive economic cultivation. In fact, both can co-exist side by side like in blue carbon. Sea grass and empty national gas wells can absorb carbon, which can earn considerable amount of carbon credit.³⁴ Unless linked properly to the blue economy, Thailand's Blue Security will remain underdeveloped.

Recommendations and conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn both conceptually and practically. The conception of Blue Security, largely derived from the English and the Copenhagen Schools, is useful in analysing maritime security in a comprehensive manner. Covering economic and environmental security as well, the concept helps indicate the perspectives and approaches that policymakers should take in dealing with their nation's Blue Security. The following conclusions in practical terms reveal the contributions of the Blue Security concept in the case of Thailand on both problem identification and the way forward.

First, there are four pillars in Thailand's strategic plan in protecting and advancing national maritime interests: (1) sovereignty, (2) environment, (3) fisheries, and (4) maritime crimes. Second, as Thailand has no clear traditional threats, non-traditional security, environment, and fisheries seem to top the agenda. Environment preservation has apparently gained disproportionate attention. Yet, the leadership taken by the navy inevitably places the emphasis on traditional security in terms of deterrence capability. The priority to acquire submarines and frigates before rescue ships and helicopters is quite telling. Third, Thailand has made a significant step to design a new structure, led by the Thai-MECC under the Maritime Interests Protection Law, to cope with maritime security since 2019. Yet, it needs time to get settled

and to become an independent entity, while enormous efforts are also needed to integrate and coordinate among the seven member agencies. Fourth, there are several gaps in Thailand's capacity to cope with increasingly complex maritime issues. The transnational threats in nature cannot be addressed alone but need international cooperation.

Based on the policy gaps discussed above, several policy recommendations can be suggested. First, there is a need for capacity building. This includes providing specialised training on topics like maritime law enforcement, intelligence analysis, advanced surveillance technologies, response protocols, as well as MSP. Thailand needs a short cut of capacity building through international learning and joint research and joint exercises.

Second, Thailand should swiftly develop and update its legal and policy frameworks related to maritime security. This involves enacting legislation, regulations, and protocols that address piracy, IUU fishing, maritime terrorism, maritime cyber security, and other maritime security concerns. Thailand should speed up its alignment with UNCLOS, without delay, to have certain rules for practice.

Third, upon assessment of emerging challenges, the new balance should be made between non-traditional security and deterrence capability, given that Thailand has no clear and present traditional threat.

Fourth, to overcome the classic fragmentation in bureaucracy, it is essential to step up integration mechanisms as well as maritime jurisdiction. The Thai-MECC shall strengthen information sharing mechanisms and operational planning, which can help enhance overall maritime security capabilities.

Fifth, Thailand should link Blue Security more with blue economy, which has high potentials. Blue economy must be more specified and broadened beyond seaborne trade and tourism, as well as be more understandable for the public.

To address the policy gaps, international cooperation is essential and can contribute to most suggestions above. Importantly, Thailand needs external pressures to inform and push Thailand forward in the maritime domain, as a maritime nation. Overall, international cooperation and persuasion are crucial in propelling Thai Blue Security ahead. Moreover, Thailand should work with the international community, both multilateral and minilateral arenas, to promote ocean governance and order at sea.

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18 United States

Gregory B. Poling and Harrison Prétat

Introduction

A resident Pacific power with territories and alliances spanning the region, the United States has undergone tectonic shifts in foreign policy and security strategy in the last ten years as the rise of China has led to a rethink of principles held dear since the end of the Cold War. Facing new challenges, from great power competition to the impacts of climate change, U.S. strategic thinking on maritime issues has in recent years called for an integration of public and private sector actors to develop novel solutions that go beyond traditional elements of naval power.

Yet, even within this changing environment, the United States has remained guided by a fundamental interest in a rules-based maritime order that stretches back to the country's earliest origins. From the colonial era through its initial Pacific forays in the 19th century, its growing regional security commitments in the aftermath of World War II, and its current pursuit of a Free and Open Indo Pacific, the United States' interest in protecting maritime trade has played a primary role in shaping the evolution of its maritime strategy.

Today, U.S. success in defending a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific depends on the ability of allies and partners to secure their own interests. In supporting their efforts, the United States faces difficulties in adapting its methods to the needs and capabilities of partners that lack comparable capacity and resources. It has also struggled to update its own naval investment patterns to match the needs of the current security environment, especially the pacing challenge from China. As the United States seeks to work with partners to achieve joint goals and secure the foundations of a free maritime order in the Indo-Pacific, it will have to distinguish and discard outmoded approaches while adopting more resilient and inclusive strategies.

The United States' view of its key maritime interests and priorities

There are few foreign policy priorities as longstanding or consistent for the United States than its commitment to freedom of the seas. That commitment is rooted in the nation's early history as a coastal trading confederation. The American colonies were first dependent upon, and then excluded from, the protective umbrella of

British naval power to defend the commercial networks on which their economic well-being depended. From its earliest days, therefore, the independent United States championed, and struggled to build the naval power to defend, a rules-based order that would secure the ability of all states to sail and trade on an equal footing.

Just four years after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson in 1793 informed London and Paris that the United States would fix its territorial sea at three nautical miles. Congress wrote that into domestic legislation the following year, making the United States the first country to legislate a three-mile territorial sea.¹ In 1794, the U.S. Congress also directed funds towards the construction of the first six ships of the U.S. Navy. And those ships were soon put into action defending the rights of U.S. merchants and mariners. From 1801 to 1805, they were dispatched in the First Barbary War to halt piracy sanctioned by Tripoli. British violations of U.S. neutrality and its impressment of American sailors contributed to the outbreak of the second war against the United Kingdom in 1812. And then in 1815, the U.S. Navy was dispatched back to the Barbary Coast in response to renewed predations against American merchants by Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis.²

This institutional belief that seaborne trade and attendant maritime freedoms were vital to the national interest also led the way for early U.S. involvement in the Pacific. American merchants began trading directly with China in the early 19th century.³ Not long after, the U.S. government saw the need for a two-ocean navy to help defend the rights of these traders. It sent the first warships of the new East India Squadron to the Pacific in 1835. Determined to enjoy the same rights and privileges in Asia as the European powers, the U.S. Navy soon began mimicking their use of gunboat diplomacy and colonialism to enforce the ‘international’ rules of free seas and open markets. Commodore Matthew Perry infamously forced Japan to open its ports to American merchants in 1853 by threatening to bombard Edo (now Tokyo) Harbor. The next year, the East India Squadron launched its first patrols along the Yangtze River to protect the rights of American merchants in the treaty ports opened in the wake of the Opium Wars between China and the United Kingdom. Those patrols continued until the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific.⁴

The East India Squadron was subsumed by a new U.S. Asiatic Squadron in 1868. And 30 years later, at the outbreak of the Spanish American War, ships of that Asiatic Squadron sailed into Manila Bay under the command of Cmdre. George Dewey where they defeated a Spanish fleet and began nearly half a century of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. The Navy was one of the strongest voices for keeping hold of the Philippines and Guam at the end of the war, arguing that they would be useful additions to the network of coaling stations and other facilities being built across the Pacific. The Navy wanted that network to project power in Asia in the way that the British could—a prerequisite if it was to defend American commercial and legal rights without relying on European fair play. The same arguments contributed to the annexations of Hawaii and eastern Samoa in 1898 and 1899. That the United States today is a resident Pacific power through its territories and allies is, in large part, a consequence of its centuries-old commitment to defend freedom of the seas.⁵

The rules constituting freedoms of the seas changed markedly over the course of the 20th century. The United States was sometimes at the vanguard in proposing those changes, especially during the administrations of Presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and, to a lesser extent, Richard Nixon. But it was most often racing to contain or catch up with reforms promoted by others. In either case, as the rules changed, the U.S. government remained steadfast in its commitment to international maritime law and freedom of the seas—whatever its current iteration—as a bedrock of American national security and prosperity.

The first U.S. effort to extend maritime jurisdiction in the 20th century related to law enforcement needs. Dating back to the 1790s, U.S. law had allowed the U.S. government to combat smuggling and certain other illicit activity headed for U.S. shores at a distance up to 12 nautical miles. Such allowances were widespread in national law and practice at the time, forming the precursor to the modern concept of the contiguous zone which extends limited law enforcement rights beyond the territorial sea. In 1935, the U.S. Congress passed legislation extending this zone up to 62 miles from shore. Ten years later, in September 1945, President Harry Truman signed off on what became known as the Truman Proclamations (though they were actually the product of the Roosevelt administration). These two proclamations allowed the United States to establish fishery conservation zones in the high seas beyond its territorial waters, and to lay claim to the resources of the continental shelf to a depth of 200 metres.⁶

The fisheries proclamation was never implemented, but the U.S. continental shelf claim set off a chain reaction of ever-more-extensive foreign maritime claims that the United States would soon regret. The U.S. government spent the next three and a half decades fighting first to resist that tide of expanding maritime jurisdiction and, failing that, to join with the international community to establish a new status quo. That was finally accomplished through the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

The United States played a key role in the negotiations that eventually led to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Even before the start of negotiations, the United States joined hands with the Soviet Union to sketch the basics of the grand compromise at the heart of UNCLOS: any extension of the breadth of the territorial sea and expansion of coastal state jurisdiction beyond would be balanced by the preservation of key freedoms of navigation, especially normal transit rights through international straits and the preservation of the high seas freedoms in what eventually became the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).⁷ In addition, the Nixon administration was the first to suggest a ‘trusteeship zone’ for the extended continental shelf beyond the 200-metre isobath and an international authority to collect and distribute royalties from the deep seabed beyond, presaging the eventual compromises on seabed mining that would delay conclusion of the convention for years.⁸

And though political gridlock in the Congress has kept the United States from ratifying UNCLOS, the U.S. government treats its core components as customary international law and works to uphold them as doggedly as it once did the three-nautical-mile territorial sea.

The United States' strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

The United States' has since its formative years depended on its navy as the primary guarantor of its maritime interests. The U.S. Navy remains the world's largest by displacement and, by all reasonable estimations, the world's most powerful.⁹ Since the end of World War II, the United States has also committed to a global network of alliances that, while themselves requiring a strong U.S. naval capability to maintain, function as multipliers of U.S. naval power.

Recent strategic thinking, however, has reflected a recognition that the traditional naval power alone is not capable of addressing many emerging maritime threats which occur below the threshold of armed conflict or in the areas of law enforcement and environmental protection. Several key documents related to maritime strategy have been published in recent years that reveal current strategic priorities and responses to a broader spectrum of maritime challenges.

Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power is a tri-service maritime strategy document published in December 2020 by the Marine Corps, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Coast Guard.¹⁰ Though released under the outgoing Trump administration, *Advantage at Sea* defines several important strategic priorities that have carried through to the Biden administration and its own strategic guidance. *Advantage at Sea* defines U.S. security and prosperity as dependent on the seas and identifies a rules-based international system and free and open access to the world's oceans as the foundation of wealth and peace for nations across the globe since World War II. China and Russia are named as the principal threats to relative global peace and prosperity, with a special identification of China as a priority competitor that seeks to remake the international order in its favour. In defining strategies for confronting these defined challenges, two of the document's five stated themes stand out, with the first being to better integrate the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard to develop 'Integrated All-Domain Naval Power' which can better handle the full spectrum of threats including grey zone coercion, sea control, and deterrence and crisis response. Another critical theme is the strengthening of alliances and partnerships, with these being identified as the United States' key strategic advantage over competitors China and Russia.

In the fall of 2022, the Biden administration released its own suite of strategic documents that include the National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense Strategy (NDS), and a National 5-Year Strategy for Combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) Fishing.¹¹ Through encompassing more than just the maritime domain, both the NSS and NDS continue to identify China as the United States' principal competitor and 'pacing challenge' around which U.S. defence strategy will be oriented.¹² Both documents also define 'integrated deterrence' as a core strategic principle. Integrated deterrence is defined as a response to 'new strategies of threatening behaviour below and above the traditional threshold of conflict' that seeks to broaden U.S. deterrent strategy beyond conventional and nuclear force by integrating U.S. capabilities across military and non-military domains, regions, government institutions, allies and partners, and the spectrum of conflict.¹³

The concept has similarities to Advantage at Sea's 'Integrated All-Domain Naval Power', but is extended to all elements of national security. Integrated deterrence thus also links threats, capabilities, and deterrence in the maritime domain to those in other domains.

Both the NSS and NDS have sections dedicated to regional strategies. In the Indo-Pacific, the NSS declares an intent to promote a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' and 'affirm freedom of the seas and build shared regional support for open access to the South China Sea'.¹⁴ The NSS also puts an emphasis on alliance and partnership networks in the region, and specifically restates that the U.S. treaty commitment to the defence of Japan applies to the Senkaku Islands. The NDS declares an intent to deter attempts to resolve disputes in the region by force, ensure 'free and open access to the Indian Ocean region', and 'address acute forms of grey zone coercion' from China in the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, and South China Sea.¹⁵ The NSS also features a section entitled 'Protect Sea, Air, and Space' which identifies ecosystems, including marine ecosystems, as crucial providers and enablers of food security, economic and military activity, and a stable climate.¹⁶ It defines excessive maritime and airspace claims as well as IUU fishing as threats to these ecosystems, and declares an intent to defend freedom of navigation and overflight and oppose destructive fishing practices prohibited by international law.

The National 5-Year Strategy for Combatting IUU Fishing was produced by the United States. Interagency Working Group on IUU Fishing, which was itself established by the Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement Act of December 2019 (Maritime SAFE Act) and serves as a forum for 21 federal agencies to coordinate on efforts to combat IUU fishing.¹⁷ The report defines three strategic objectives, along with recommended activities and benchmarks to support them: (1) Promote sustainable fisheries management and governance; (2) Enhance the monitoring, control, and surveillance of marine fishing operations; and (3) Ensure only legal, sustainable, and responsibly harvested seafood enters trade.¹⁸ The report also identifies priority regions as well as five priority flag states (Ecuador, Panama, Senegal, Taiwan, and Vietnam) that both engage in IUU fishing but are also interested in receiving assistance to reform the practices of their fleets.¹⁹

The United States also maintains several unique programs of activity aimed at maintaining a rules-based maritime order whose establishment pre-dates the current strategic environment but which have gained prominence amid recent maritime tensions in the Indo-Pacific. The joint State Department/Department of Defense Freedom of Navigation Program, established in 1979, involves diplomatic efforts and freedom of navigation operations across the globe to challenge unlawful maritime claims or restrictions on navigational freedoms that contravene international law. Twenty-two operations were conducted under the program in FY2022, with eight of them occurring in the South China Sea.²⁰ A complimentary program exists under the Department of State's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, which has since 1970 produced *Limits in the Seas*, a series of technical and legal studies of foreign maritime claims that assess their consistency with international law. Reflecting the current strategic focus on China, *Limits in the Seas 150*, published in January 2022, was an especially lengthy entry

in the series that examined China's claims in the South China Sea, and especially Beijing's efforts to develop a legal concept of offshore archipelagos outside the scope of UNCLOS.²¹

Gaps in the United States' approach

The United States has more aggregate maritime capability than any other state. Its sensing, law enforcement, surface, naval aviation, and undersea capabilities qualitatively, and in most cases quantitatively, exceed those of any competitor. Even with the world's largest EEZ, the United States has an unparalleled ability to monitor, patrol, and interdict illicit actors in the waters under its jurisdiction, and to project military force across the globe. That level of capability might seem from the outside like it leaves no gaps. But the United States faces shortfalls, redundancies, and operational blind spots just like any state.

Naval capabilities

One of the most worrying maritime gaps for the United States is the widening gulf between its stated national defence priority—great power competition with China—and the platforms, posture, and doctrine of the U.S. Navy. The Navy remains the largest in terms of displacement but China predominates in number of ships.²² The situation is even worse when confined to the Indo-Pacific, where the United States deploys only a fraction (albeit a sizeable one) of its forces while China focuses almost exclusively on that theatre. To this imbalance can be added the increasing backlog of maintenance and unsustainable level of crew fatigue that plagues the U.S. fleet and contributed to several high-profile accidents in recent years.²³ Lastly, since China enjoys the world's largest ship-building industry while the United States' has been hollowed out by decades of diversion and underinvestment, the numerical advantage in favour of Beijing will continue to grow.

The United States maintains significant qualitative advantages, particularly in undersea warfare and naval aviation. Recent wargames such as that by the Center for Strategic and International Studies International Security Program suggest that these capabilities, combined with long-range precision strike, strategic bombers, and a favourable posture underpinned by the United States-Japan alliance, would still be sufficient to prevail in the most worrying military contingency—repelling a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.²⁴ But that would come at horrendous cost. And it means the vast majority of the fleet, consisting of surface combatants, would be irrelevant since it could not hope to operate within range of China's shore-based missile barrages, whether around Taiwan or in the South or East China Seas. The same goes for the United States' vaunted aircraft carriers, which the same wargames predict would sit out the fight or be rapidly sunk.

Despite the growing disconnect between strategy and capabilities, the U.S. Navy has been slow to adapt. Its budget continues to grow but can barely keep up with current needs, forcing a 'divest to invest' strategy to fund programs that will

not pay dividends until the 2030s.²⁵ And still the Navy pumps money into large surface combatants and other platforms ill-suited to the modern military environment of the Indo-Pacific. Part of this is the fault of parochial politics and bureaucratic inertia. Members of Congress cling to the legacy shipbuilding programs in their districts even against the advice of the Pentagon to preserve constituents' jobs. Hopeless optimists in the naval community continue to push unrealistic goals of a 400 or 450 ship navy.²⁶ And Navy brass has failed to put forward a compelling and ambitious vision to transform the service in painful but necessary ways, as their counterparts in the U.S. Marine Corps are doing.

Law enforcement, maritime domain awareness, capacity building

The U.S. government has one of the most effective maritime law enforcement capabilities in the world and, as a result, U.S. waters and the EEZ are relatively well-regulated. There are, of course, always gaps, especially when it comes to detection of illicit activities in the EEZ and interdiction of small craft in coastal waters. These missions are particularly difficult in the more remote parts of the U.S. EEZ in the Pacific Ocean. Given its considerable financial and technological resources, the United States has been an enthusiastic adopter of new satellite-based, shore-based, and uncrewed remote sensing platforms to more effectively detect and monitor illicit activity at sea. The United States benefits from the fact that a large number of the most successful companies developing commercial solutions in this space are U.S.-based and therefore strive to secure U.S. government contracts as a foundation of their business models.²⁷ But the U.S. government still faces some gaps on this front.

One is the tendency of parts of the U.S. government to distrust private sector solutions and therefore waste resources developing redundant in-house capabilities that already exist in proven off-the-shelf commercial products. Another is the perennial difficulty of interagency information sharing—data isn't useful if it can't get to the right authorities in time for successful interdiction. The establishment of the National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office has helped facilitate better information sharing among U.S. agencies and with partner nations, but there is always more work to do in breaking down bureaucratic stovepipes.²⁸ Lastly, there are legal problems with the use of remote sensing technologies. In the United States, as elsewhere, privacy regulations prevent the sharing the vessel monitoring system (VMS) and other data from vessels widely, limiting their use for research and transparency efforts. There are also questions about the ability to use remote sensing and uncrewed platforms as the basis for prosecution.²⁹ This is especially important as efforts like the Port State Measures Act shifts the enforcement of fisheries laws from sea to shore—if the United States doesn't adapt laws and regulations so that new technologies meet the evidentiary standard for prosecution, then it will miss out on the full opportunity presented by remote sensing and uncrewed platforms.

Lastly, the United States is probably the largest source of capacity building, training, and other support for maritime law enforcement authorities abroad. In the Indo-Pacific, this takes the form of initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative, Southeast Asia Cooperation Afloat and Training, Indo-Pacific

Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness, and many bilateral and multilateral coastguard-to-coastguard initiatives. Nearly every country in the Indo-Pacific now makes use of the SeaVision platform developed by the U.S. Departments of Transport and Navy, which has facilitated information sharing and improved the processing of remote sensing data. Nevertheless, there remain important barriers to practical usage of remote sensing by regional partners.

The United States and other donor nations tend to support capacity building efforts modeled on their own experiences. But the exquisite, and expensive, maritime law enforcement ecosystem in the United States will never apply to small island and large ocean developing states in the Indo-Pacific. The United States has increasingly recognised this by emphasising remote sensing and uncrewed platforms, but it is safe to say that coast guard cutters and traditional patrol aircraft still get the lion's share of attention despite their relative inefficiencies. U.S. maritime security cooperation also tends to lead with the Navy, not the Coast Guard, given the vast difference in budgets, fleet size, and overseas engagements between the two services. As a result, even efforts like the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative with its focus on maritime domain awareness tend to be funneled primarily through navy-to-navy engagement.³⁰ That can leave partner nations' law enforcement agencies underserved and subject to the same interagency bottlenecks that trouble all bureaucracies. Giving maritime domain awareness capabilities to a partner nation is great, but if it never makes its way to that partner's coast guard or fisheries police, then it will be severely underutilised.

Recommendations and conclusion

The United States' longstanding commitment to maritime freedoms and rule of law at sea have manifested in a range of efforts aimed at securing peace and stability between and among states, defending the core tenets of international maritime law, combatting crime at sea, and protecting the marine environment—a broad frame of maritime engagement that spans the full range of threats defined within the 'Blue Security' concept. But between these lines of effort remain gaps, and integration between traditional security strategy and initiatives aimed at non-traditional maritime threats remains imperfect. To fully realise a holistic, 'Blue Security' approach to maritime security would require the United States to fuse efforts more fully between military and civilian agencies and departments engaging in the maritime security space.

The United States remains preeminent in its maritime capabilities. Sustained efforts in alliance-building and in establishing and promoting a rules-based maritime order have put it in a favourable position in the Indo-Pacific, where many countries share its values. But it must continue to adapt its approaches to keep pace with fast-growing Chinese maritime capabilities and enable regional partners to withstand 21st-century maritime challenges.

It is imperative that the United States reorient its naval investment away from large surface ships to focus on smaller surface combatants as well as undersea and unmanned platforms. Distributing naval power across a larger number of smaller platforms creates a more flexible and resilient deterrent force that is less

vulnerable to anti-ship missiles and better suited to the security environment of the Indo-Pacific.

Maritime security cooperation with partners in the region needs to be better tailored to their needs and capabilities, not oriented around the United States' strengths. This means a greater focus on law enforcement, including increased engagement from the U.S. Coast Guard as well as additional training and distribution of commercial maritime domain awareness tools among regional fisheries enforcement and coast guard agencies.

Lastly, U.S. leaders need to continue efforts to build the political will to ratify UNCLOS. Royalty payments on future offshore resource extraction are not worth the sacrifice in the credibility the United States continues to make by not ratifying the central legal framework that embodies the rules-based maritime order. Ratification would align the United States' legal position with its historic clarity of purpose on freedom of the seas and bolster its efforts to build regional consensus on maintaining the rule of law at sea.

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19 Vietnam

*Nguyen Thi Lan Anh*¹

Introduction

Vietnam is a coastal state with a long coastline of more than 3000 km and numerous islands. The country is one of the eight littoral states in the semi-enclosed South China Sea. The South China Sea is known for its rich living and non-living resources and its bio-diversified marine environment. It provides a livelihood for millions of fishermen and the hydrocarbon resources fuel the economies of a number of regional countries including Vietnam. Located in a major world shipping route, the South China Sea connects the Indian Ocean to East Asia and accounts for approximately one third of all world shipping cargo. Unlike some other littoral states, Vietnam is only able to connect to other maritime domains through the South China Sea, making this space vital for development and security. Vietnam, therefore, would like to maintain peace and maritime security of the South China Sea through cooperation to address common challenges to the maritime environment and security for sustainable ocean development.

In a normal situation, a country like Vietnam would have benefited from the rich maritime resources and critical navigation routes of the South China Sea for its development. Unfortunately, the complex and long-standing sovereignty and maritime disputes in the South China Sea prevent Vietnam from taking full advantage of the sea for its development. This poses a serious security threat, however, as China, one of the other parties to the dispute, is trying to change the status quo, imposing its own arbitral interpretation of international law and using force and coercion to control the South China Sea.²

Moreover, as world politics shifts to a more confrontational setting where existing and emerging powers are competing fiercely, more countries are trying to change the current rule-based order to one that reflects their own interests. The South China Sea, in such a context, has become a theatre of big power rivalry, where misunderstandings and provocative activity could easily lead to real conflict.³ In this situation, Vietnam faces greater challenges when it comes to maintaining its maritime interests and priorities.

Given the need for a 'Blue Security' maritime strategy in a rapidly changing geopolitical context, it is time to review Vietnam's maritime strategy to determine the best measures for securing its maritime interests and priorities. This chapter

will first explore the maritime interests and priorities of Vietnam in security and development and Vietnam's strategy and approaches to safeguarding its maritime interests and priorities. The chapter will then review the effectiveness of Vietnam's current maritime strategy and approach in light of the changes in the geopolitical environment. It will conclude by making recommendations for improvement.

Vietnam's view of its key maritime interests and priorities

The South China Sea plays a vital role in the development and security of Vietnam. In terms of development, maritime economic sectors account for a significant proportion of its GDP. In 2022, Vietnam's seafood export reached USD 11 billion, making the country the world's third largest seafood exporter at seven per cent of the world market share, and making fisheries one of the top ten exports of Vietnam.⁴ The Southern maritime zones adjacent to the Mekong Delta are the most important area for aquaculture and the North and Central coastal areas are the main regions for Vietnam's capture fisheries.⁵ The fishing industry provides about 4.7 million direct and indirect jobs across all production chains of Vietnam.⁶ As the fishery industry continues to grow with aquaculture advancement and serve as one of the most significant sectors of the economy, it is Vietnam's priority to ensure that this industry develops sustainably and in accordance with international standards and regulations.

In addition to fisheries, the oil and gas industry is another significant sector of the Vietnam's economy. Starting its exploration and exploitation activities since 1986, Vietnam has exported 355 million tonnes of crude oil, worth USD\$145 billion over the last 30 years.⁷ In the period 2008–2015, Petrovietnam, the state-owned enterprise in charge of Vietnam's oil and gas industry, contributed 42 per cent to the GDP of the country, higher than those contributed by all foreign-invested and private enterprises.⁸ From 2016, the industry's contribution to the GDP has reduced significantly due to the decline of production in large fields. Vietnam, tried to explore new offshore and deep-water blocks within its continental shelf, but has developed oil and gas processing activities and oversea oil and gas projects.

As Vietnam's fossil energy reserve is estimated to last only the next 30 years and in preparation for its net zero commitments by 2050, Vietnam also places high priority on developing renewable, particularly off-shore, energy. A well-established supply chain, a long coastline, ample wind resources, and shallow seabed areas suitable for floating foundations make Vietnam ideally positioned to support off-shore renewable energy development.⁹

Last but not least, maritime logistics and port connectivity have received much attention in the context of supply chain restructuring and green development. There are 44 seaports in Vietnam, with an annual capacity of 470–500 million tons. From 2006 to 2018, the World Economic Forum ranked Vietnam 80th among 139 countries based on the quality of port infrastructure, averaging 3.80 out of 7 (highest). Eighty per cent of container exports and imports are still transhipped through smaller ports and ships, according to the Vietnam Port Association.¹⁰ As a result of not using deep-water ports, goods owners lose approximately US\$2.4 billion

every year.¹¹ Port infrastructure development is therefore prioritised along with the use of digital and automatic systems, as well as partnership with a network of green ports and sealanes.¹²

With regard to maritime security, Vietnam faces both traditional and non-traditional maritime threats from the South China Sea. In 1974 and 1988, China resorted to the illegal use of force in the South China Sea due to sovereignty and maritime disputes, resulting in the loss of Vietnamese lives and the violation of Vietnamese sovereignty. China abandoned Deng Xiaoping's dictum of 'hiding your strength, biding your time' after the 18th Party Congress in 2012 and set big ambitions of becoming a great global power. As a result, it has engaged in more assertive activities in the South China Sea towards its neighbours, including Vietnam. China has engaged in the modernisation of naval forces and the implementation of a layered 'cabbage strategy'¹³ through the coordination of the navy, coast guard, and maritime militia in order to enforce its so-called historic rights within the nine-dash line. In the South China Sea, it has also prevented legitimate maritime economic activities of other littoral states through the harassment of commercial vessels.

Despite the South China Sea Arbitral Award of 2016, China has moved ahead with the ill-found 'four sha' claim to assert the exclusive economic zones and continental shelves for all geographical features of the South China Sea.¹⁴ By taking advantage of the militarized artificial islands in the Spratlys, it has also stepped up its harassment and coercion activities.¹⁵ In conjunction with the pivot to the Asia Pacific and the Indo Pacific strategy of the United States and its allies and partners, the South China Sea has become a theatre for big power competition. As a result, there are high risks of collisions and armed conflicts due to intensified military presence, unprofessional manoeuvres, misunderstandings, and grey zone tactics. All of these traditional maritime threats raise the need for Vietnam's commitment to settle disputes by peaceful means and promote cooperation for peace and stability in the region, and are discussed further below.¹⁶

Along with traditional maritime security threats, Vietnam faces numerous non-traditional threats, particularly those related to maritime environments. It is often said that Vietnam is vulnerable to climate change, resulting in sea-level rise, and salt water intrusion.¹⁷ It also ranks among the top ten countries generating the most plastic debris.¹⁸ Furthermore, there is a shortage of living resources and a degradation of marine biodiversity.¹⁹ Inter-agencies and transboundary cooperation are necessary to address these maritime environmental issues.

Additionally, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and organised transnational crimes, e.g. arms robbery, piracy, and maritime smuggling, pose non-traditional threats to the fishing industry and the safety of ports and sealanes.²⁰ Vietnam has put a high priority on improving its fishing industry to comply with international standards and regulations, aiming to remove the yellow card issued by the EU (Vietnam was issued a yellow card in 2017 due to insufficient progress in fighting IUU fishing).²¹ A similar effort has been made in cooperation with other nations and agencies to enhance information sharing and increase maritime domain awareness, so that arms robbery and piracy can be more effectively suppressed.²²

Vietnam's strategies and approaches to defend maritime interests

Responding to the rapidly changing maritime security environment, since 2017, 16 countries and international organisations have announced their Indo-Pacific strategies.²³ Differing from this trend, Vietnam has only stated its maritime strategy for its own maritime zones and geographical features in the South China Sea. The strategy is outlined in a number of national documents, namely the national defence white papers and the maritime economic strategy. As the South China Sea plays a vital role in the development and security of Vietnam, the country takes a holistic and whole-government approach to achieving its maritime interests and priorities.

With regard to security, the national defence white papers provide the main security principles, namely affirming and elucidating the fundamental nature of peace and self-defence of national defence, including those applied in maritime spaces.²⁴ The latest national defence white paper issued in 2019 acknowledged the existence of the sovereignty issues in the South China Sea as a matter of history and called for peaceful settlement on the basis of international law. The Paper affirmed that 'Viet Nam resolutely and consistently protects sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction over its waters as provided in international law'.²⁵ It highlighted Viet Nam's commitment to always observing international law and supporting 'the protection of free trade, freedom of navigation and overflight, and peaceful economic activities at sea'.²⁶ It also stressed the need for joint efforts with other countries to maintain stability, comply with international law, seriously implement the Declaration on the Code of Conduct (DOC), and striving to achieve a Code of Conduct (COC) between ASEAN and China.

To safeguard its maritime security interests, Vietnam has built up the capacity of its navy and the system of law enforcement agencies. There are six forces responsible for law enforcement at seas in Vietnam with differing jurisdictions and powers, namely the Vietnam Coast Guard (VCG), the Fishery Resource Surveillance Force (FRSF), the Border Guard, the Customs, the Environment Police, and the Vietnam Maritime Administrations (VMAs). Among the six agencies, the VCG and the Border Guard have a general mandate over all maritime affairs within their scope of operation, while other forces' functions are specialised in terms of, *inter alia*, fisheries, customs, environment, and port management. Concerning the geographical scope of operation, the broadest operational area belongs to the VCG, the FRSF, and the Environment Police – extending to the maritime zones and continental shelf of Vietnam – and the smaller areas of operation are of the Border Guard, Customs and the VMAs, which are limited within the internal water, territorial sea, and seaports of Vietnam.²⁷

In addition to self-reliance, Vietnam also strives to strengthen maritime security through international cooperation. Vietnam actively participates in all ASEAN led fora and mechanisms on maritime security, including the East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting (ADMM), ADMM+, ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), Expanded AMF, ASEAN Navy Chiefs Meeting (ANCM), Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM), and the Meetings of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation on the DOC.

The country is also keen to develop bilateral cooperation with countries sharing common interests. To date, Vietnam has established strategic partnerships and comprehensive strategic partnerships with 18 countries, namely Russia, India, China, South Korea, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Italy, France, Malaysia, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. As part of the 18 countries with strategic partnerships, Vietnam has comprehensive strategic partnerships with seven countries, namely Russia, India, China, Republic of Korea, the United States, Japan, and Australia. Through these partnerships, Vietnam has been able to build its capacity in maritime security through technology, equipment transfers, and personnel training. Additionally, trust and confidence has been built with partners through port visits, culture exchanges, and information sharing. Stability and good order at sea is pursued through joint patrols/exercises, joint search and rescue operations, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

In terms of development, the Communist Party of Vietnam issued Resolution No 36 on the strategy for a sustainable development of Vietnam's marine economy to 2030 and vision to 2045. According to this resolution, the sea is part of the sacred national sovereignty of the Fatherland, a living space, and a means of international exchange.²⁸ It also set an aspiration that 'Vietnam must become a strong and rich country thanks to the sea; develop its marine economy sustainably in association with ensuring national defence and security and maintaining independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity; strengthening foreign relations and international cooperation regarding the sea, contributing to securing a peaceful and stable environment conducive to development'.²⁹ In order to achieve this goal, a number of sectors were prioritised for development, including tourism and marine services, marine economy, exploitation of oil and gas and other marine minerals, aquaculture and fishing, coastal industry, and renewable energy and new marine economic sectors.

Each of the above-mentioned sector falls within the mandate of different state functional agencies in Vietnam, including National Administration of Tourism, Marine Administration, Petrovietnam, Agency on Seas and Islands, Directorate of Fisheries, Electricity, and Renewable Energy Authority. Private industries also play an important role in promoting marine economy development, particularly in the fields of tourism, aquaculture, marine transportation, and renewable energy.

With regard to hydrocarbon resources, Petrovietnam has partnered with more than 40 international oil companies from the United States, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Canada, Spain, Australia, Korea, Thailand, and France, operating in the upstream, midstream, and downstream sectors. In particular, Vietnam successfully concluded an MOU with Malaysia for joint development of oil and gas resources in the overlapping continental shelf in the South of the South China Sea.³⁰

As part of its efforts to better manage marine resources, Vietnam also enhanced bilateral international cooperation with neighbouring countries. A joint fishery agreement was reached in 2000 with China, which entered into force from June 2004 to June 2019. In accordance with the agreement, China and Vietnam established a joint fishing zone in the Gulf of Tonkin and successfully conducted a number of joint patrols in the area.³¹ Joint patrols were also conducted between Vietnam and

Cambodia in their undelimited waters. In addition, Vietnam and the Philippines also set a model for conducting Joint Oceanographic Marine Scientific Research Expeditions in the South China Sea (JOMSRE-SCS) from 1996 to 2007, which was renewed in 2021.³² The two countries have also maintained annual meetings of the Vietnam-Philippines Joint Permanent Working Group on Maritime and Ocean Concerns (JPWG-MOC) since 2004.

In addition to boosting maritime economic activities, Resolution No 36 emphasised the importance of sustainable development of the marine economy, science and technology, and high-quality marine human resources.

In this light, Vietnam has succeeded in applying the integrated management approach to its maritime zones and actively cooperated with functional organisations in programs of the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and other regional organisations. So far, 14 out of the 28 coastal provinces and cities of Vietnam have developed their strategies for integrated coastal zone management.³³ The Deputy Prime Minister's approval of the Power Development Plan 8 for the 2021–2030 period, with a vision to 2050, on May 15, 2023 also paved the way for the development of renewable and green energy.

Gaps in Vietnam's approach

In spite of Vietnam's comprehensive and integrated government approach with a wide range of agencies, the country faces numerous limitations within the new geostrategic environment.

First, Vietnam's navy still faces huge asymmetrical power issues despite its large investments in improving capacity and modernising. Since China's rise, China's defence budget has steadily increased. In 2021, China's defence budget expenditure exceeded USD\$293 billion, while Vietnam's was USD\$5.5 billion.³⁴ This results in a disparity between China and Vietnam in terms of military rankings. China is ranked third, whereas Vietnam is ranked 19th.³⁵ In terms of navy, a report entitled 'How China Modernising its Navy' of the China Power Program of Center for Strategic and International Studies states that China built more vessels between 2017 and 2019 than India, Japan, Australia, France, and the United Kingdom combined. China's navy modernisation is focused primarily on upgrading and enhancing its littoral warfare capabilities, especially in the South China Sea.³⁶ As Vietnam has no realistic chance of catching up with China's military might, deterrence is in some ways lacking and deterrence based solely on the use of hard power will not be effective.

Second, a growing military presence and the use of grey zone tactics in the South China Sea presents substantial challenges to Vietnam's efforts to manage and resolve disputes peacefully. As far as the legal perspective is concerned, China's maritime claims have always been somewhat ambiguous. In 2009, China published a map containing the so-called nine-dash line claim. However, no coordinate and legal regime for the water within that line was defined. By using the inconsistent language of 'sovereignty over ... adjacent waters and sovereign rights and

jurisdiction over relevant waters' in combination with its maritime activities, China appears to claim all maritime resources within the nine-dash line.³⁷ Even though the South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal rendered the nine-dash line illegal, China still inserts the nine-dash line in all official maps.

However, China changed its claim to the so-called four sha claims in order to assert the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelves for four groups of geographical features in the South China Sea, including the Paracels and Spratlys.³⁸ It is noted that such methods of drawing the straight baselines from which to generate an EEZ and continental shelf for the Spratlys was also ruled out by the Arbitral Tribunal in the South China Sea case.³⁹ By deliberately using the terminologies and legal regime provided under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), but in contrary to the Arbitration Award, China has sought to impose its arbitral interpretation of UNCLOS based on might. In addition, China issued numerous municipal laws to govern the so-called waters under Chinese jurisdiction, but in fact, apply to the waters under the nine-dash line or 'four shas' claims, creating serious infringements on the sovereign rights and jurisdictions provided under UNCLOS of Vietnam and other littoral states in the South China Sea.

In terms of activities at sea, China armed its coast guard and maritime militia and commissioned these forces under its navy's united command. Together with the large number of public fishing vessels, these groups implemented the 'cabbage strategy' and used their might to coerce and harass the legitimate activities of other littoral states,⁴⁰ among which Vietnam was the most frequent target. China's massive land reclamation in the South China Sea from 2012 to 2016 and the militarisation that followed have contributed to the creation of strategic outposts for China's expanded coercion. In the recent illegal operation of what is suspected to be a seismic survey conducted by marine research vessel Xiang Yang Hong 10 in Vietnam's EEZ and continental shelf in May 2023, the vessel was accompanied by a number of Chinese coast guard, maritime militia, public fishing vessels and a frigate in multi-layer formations, using Fiery Cross Reef as their commanding centre. The coast guard vessels were eager to perform dangerous manoeuvres, creating unsafe navigation and leading to serious incidents at sea.⁴¹ Having a significant disparity in capacity, China intended to turn all the illegal activities into the new normal, denying Vietnam's legitimate rights and jurisdiction, and making it difficult for Vietnam to counter. Moreover, China's *de facto* control over the South China Sea also poses serious problems for the maritime environment⁴² and maintains the fishing rights of local fishermen within the legitimate fishing grounds in the South China Sea, which, to some extent, impedes the effort to combat IUU fishing.⁴³

Third, the South China Sea has become a theatre of big power competition since China announced its big naval power strategy and the US pivoted to the Asia Pacific as well as issued the Indo Pacific Strategy. China is the number one trading partner of Vietnam, but also with whom Vietnam runs most of its trade deficit. Meanwhile, the United States is the largest market for Vietnamese export and trade surplus.⁴⁴ Vietnam's strategy is to increase international cooperation to maintain peace and stability, foster development, and promote prosperity. To this end, Vietnam follows the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, diversification, and multilateralisation.

Vietnam is committed to continuing to be a friend, a reliable partner, and an active and responsible member of the international community.⁴⁵ Against the backdrop of big power competition, Vietnam has tried to balance both the United States and China. This strategy, however, encounters huge challenges as China and the United States enter the phase of confrontation and containment. The activities of maritime cooperation, particularly naval cooperation, between littoral states in the South China Sea with the United States are perceived by China as unwelcome activities. China nonetheless has used its asymmetrical power to try and coerce Vietnam and other countries in the region. The situation creates challenges for Vietnam in maintaining its autonomy and safeguarding its maritime interests without taking sides.

Fourth, the South China Sea lacks an effective dispute management mechanism. Currently, the only available mechanism is the COC negotiation between China and ASEAN countries, which has been ongoing since 1996 and has thus far resulted in a non-binding DOC in 2002. The prospects for the current COC negotiations remain gloomy due to the sharp differences between the parties. Further, ASEAN seems to be an unsuitable mechanism for discussing South China Sea issues due to the lack of interest from some of its members. As a consequence, Vietnam is compelled to rely on bilateral mechanisms which cannot cover the multilateral aspects of the South China Sea dispute.

Recommendations and conclusion

Vietnam occupies a geostrategic location. The South China Sea offers both advantages and challenges to Vietnam's security and development. The diversification of marine ecology and resources, as well as the connectivity of navigation routes, present a variety of opportunities for a littoral state like Vietnam. However, the non-traditional maritime security threats, such as IUU fishing, maritime environment degradation, and transnational crimes, create complexity and hindrance for the country. In addition, Vietnam is currently facing numerous traditional maritime security threats due to asymmetrical power dynamics, grey zone tactics, and geopolitical competition.

Given that Vietnam's hard power cannot be compared with China in any respect, it is argued that it should adopt the liberal and constructivist approaches instead of relying on a realist approach to take advantage of opportunities, overcome challenges and ensure its Blue Security. In fact, Vietnam appears to adhere to liberal and constructivist approaches in conjunction with the English school of international society. In this regard, Vietnam emphasises the importance of international law, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, and the participations of mid-powers in maintaining good order at sea, while simultaneously highlighting the centrality of ASEAN and the influence of international public opinion on the behaviour of big powers.

Vietnam advocated the peaceful settlement of the South China Sea disputes in accordance with international law, particularly UNCLOS. It also developed comprehensive and whole-government approaches, invests in capacity building for effective and sustainable ocean exploitation and management, and strengthens international cooperation for maintaining good order at sea and addressing transnational maritime threats.

For better safeguarding its maritime interests and priorities, Vietnam should adhere to international law more consistently, use international law as guidance for its foreign policies and behaviour, and promote international cooperation with an open mind and flexible approach with like-minded countries that share common interests and values. International law is always perceived as the strongest weapon for small and medium-sized countries. Middle- and small-power countries must work together in order to maintain the normative authority, values, and spirit of international law as enshrined in the United Nations Charter after the Second World War.

For its part, using international law as guidance for its foreign policies and behaviour, Vietnam should firstly clarify all sovereignty and maritime claims in accordance with international law, including the adjustment of the controversial straight baselines.⁴⁶ The countries should delimit overlapping maritime zones with neighbouring countries in light of UNCLOS. Vietnam has recently successfully concluded the negotiation on EEZ delimitation with Indonesia on the basis of international law, particularly UNCLOS. In the future, these good practices should be applied to maritime delimitation with Malaysia, the Philippines, and Cambodia. For disputes that are long-lasting and cannot be resolved by diplomatic means, judicial measures should also be considered.⁴⁷

Promoting international cooperation is still the right approach to capacity building and technology transfer in the context of the rapid development of science and technology. It has focused on cooperation with ASEAN member states and bilateral cooperation with 18 strategic partnerships. The importance of bilateral cooperation and ASEAN's centrality remains valid in the new context. Within ASEAN, however, not all of its members share the same interests and values, hence depending on what areas of cooperation can be accomplished, smaller groups will be more effective.⁴⁸ In addition, given the success of other cooperation models not necessarily based on geographical proximity, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), the group of major emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Vietnam should approach multilateral cooperation with a stronger sense of flexibility and openness. When it comes to maritime security, regional countries like Japan, Australia, and India may share more common interests with Vietnam than some in Southeast Asia. It is similarly important for Vietnam to take advantage of the technology for renewable energy and the models of integrated and sustainable coastal management, as well as the blue navigation routes of the United Kingdom, EU, and United States for its maritime economic development.

Notes

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Appendix

Data Tables: Maritime Strength and Security

Table 20.1 Australia

EEZ Size	8.2 million square kilometres
Coastline Length	34,000 km
%GDP to Defence	1.97% (2021–2022)
Coastguard Vessels	6 × Cape Class Patrol Boats, 2 × Cutters
Merchant Ships	= 4 × LNG carriers only
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	Nearly 50 commissioned vessels, including: 2 × LHDs 3 × Hobart Class Destroyers 8 × Anzac Class Frigates 6 × Collins Class Submarines

Table 20.2 Bangladesh

EEZ Size	118,813 km ²
Coastline Length	720 km
%GDP to Defence	1.1288% (2022)
Coastguard Vessels	26 (2022)
Merchant Ships	80 (2021)
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	Submarines: 2 units Fleet Core: 48 units Amphibious Assault: 16 units (2023)

Table 20.3 China

EEZ Size	Approx. 3,000,000 km ²
Coastline Length	Approx. 32,000 km
%GDP to Defence	1.26% (2016) 1.6% (2022, SIPRI)
Coastguard Vessels	546 (Military Balance, 2022)
Merchant Ships	7,362 (bulk carrier 1,684; container ship 355; general cargo 1,164; oil tanker 1,133; and other 3,026) 2,661 from Hong Kong (bulk carrier 1,135; container ship 558; general cargo 155; oil tanker 394; and other 419) 1 from Macau

(Continued)

Table 20.3 (Continued)

Naval Assets (Type; Number)	SS: 59 (6 SSBN, 6 SSN, 46 SSK, 1 SSB) CV: 3 CG: 7 DDG: 42 FFG: 41 FS: 50 LHD: 11 LPD: 8 LST: 28 Landing crafts: 60
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Table 20.4 Fiji

EEZ Size	1.3 million square kilometres
Coastline Length	1129 km
%GDP to Defence	1.4%
Coastguard Vessels	N/A
Merchant Ships	N/A
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	Guardian Class patrol vessels (2), RFNS Savenaca, RFNS Puamau Pacific Forum Patrol Vessels (1), RFNS Kikau Oceanic survey vessel (1), RFNS Volasiga Hydrographic survey vessel (1), RFNS Kakau

Table 20.5 France

EEZ Size	10.9 million square kilometres
Coastline Length	17,659 km
%GDP to Defence	1.9
Coastguard Vessels	14 3
Merchant Ships	421 (over 100 GT)
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	65 Ballistic Missile Submarines – <i>Triomphant</i> class (4) Nuclear Attack Submarines – <i>Barracuda</i> (2); <i>Rubis</i> (3) Aircraft Carrier (1) Amphibious Assault ship (3) Air-defence Destroyer – <i>Horizon</i> class (2) Anti-submarine Warfare Destroyer – <i>Aquitaine</i> Class (6) Air Defence Destroyer – <i>Aquitaine</i> Class (2) ASW Destroyer – 1 from 2024 General Purpose Frigate – <i>La Fayette</i> Class (5) Surveillance Frigate – <i>Floréal</i> Class (6) Icebreaker – 1 Offshore Patrol Vessel (4–2,300 tonnes; 6–1,250 tonnes, 1–1,300 tonnes; 3–700 tonnes) Survey Vessels (Oceanographic/Hydrographic – 5)

Table 20.6 India

EEZ Size	23,72,298 km ²
Coastline Length	7,516 km
%GDP to Defence	2%
Coastguard Vessels	<u>Surface Vessels</u> 156 Special Role Vehicle (SPV) – 03 Offshore Patrol Vehicle (OPV) – 27 Fast Patrol Vehicle (FPV) – 43 Interceptor Boats (IB) – 67 Hovercrafts – 16
	<u>Air Assets</u> 78 Dornier – 39 Chetak – 19 ALH – 20
Merchant Ships	1,520
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	SSBN – 01 (Arihant) SSK – 16 Aircraft Carriers – 02 LPD – 01 Landing Ship Tanks – 07 Landing Craft Utility – 08 Destroyers – 11 Frigates – 12 Corvettes – 18 Offshore Patrol Vehicles – 10 Patrol Vessels – 18 Patrol Boats – 108 Replenishment Ships – 5 Research and Survey Vessels – 10 Support Ships – 7 Training Vessels – 6 Tugboats – 24 Miscellaneous – 26 (Open source data as on July 2022)

Table 20.7 Indonesia

EEZ Size	About 3,000,000 km of EEZ
Coastline Length	About 81,290 km (note: another data mentioned 108,000 km)
%GDP to Defence	0.7% of GDP
Coastguard Vessels	At least 683 Vessels (Bakamla has 30 vessels, Transport Ministry has 374 vessels, Water Police has 74 vessels, Fisheries Ministry has 26 vessels, Marine Customs has 179 vessels)
Merchant Ships	11,961 ships totalling 16,969,996 of gross tonnage
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	10 frigates, 21 corvettes, 4 submarines, 9 mine sweepers, and 202 patrol vessels

Table 20.8 Japan

EEZ Size	4,470,000 km ²
Coastline Length	35,600 km
%GDP to Defence	1.193% (2023)
	0.957% (2022)
Coastguard Vessels	474
Merchant Ships	5,300
Naval Assets	Escort Ship 50
(Type; Number)	Submarine 22
	Mine Warfare Ship 21
	Patrol Bessel 6
	Transport Ship 10
	Auxiliary Ship 29

Table 20.9 Malaysia

EEZ Size	334,671 km ²
Coastline Length	4,675 km
%GDP to Defence	0.98% (2023), 1% (2024)
Coastguard Vessels	Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency
	5 × Offshore Patrol Vessels
	69 × Inshore Patrol Vessels
	165 × Fast Interceptor Craft
Merchant Ships	1,772
Naval Assets	7 × Frigates
(Type; Number)	6 × Corvettes
	10 × Offshore Patrol Vessels
	20 × Fast Attack Class
	42 × Fast Interceptor Class
	4 × Minesweepers
	2 × Amphibious Ships
	2 × Auxiliary Ships
	2 × Scorpène SSK Submarines

Table 20.10 New Zealand

EEZ Size	4 million km ²
Coastline Length	15,134 km
%GDP to Defence	Approximately 1.0% GDP
Coastguard Vessels	N/A
Merchant Ships	114
Naval Assets	Nine Ships:
(Type; Number)	2 × ANZAC-class Frigates
	1 × Multi-role Vessel
	2 × Offshore Patrol Vessels
	1 × Polar Class Sustainment Vessel
	1 × Dive and Hydrographic Vessel
	2 × Lake Class Inshore Patrol Vessels

Source: All data has been obtained from open sources.

Table 20.11 The Philippines

EEZ Size	2,263,816 km ²
Coastline Length	36,289 km
%GDP to Defence	0.9963% in 2022
Coastguard Vessels	Capital Ships: 28 Small Craft: 27 Small Boats: 533 Air Assets: 7
Merchant Ships	2,564
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	Frigates: 2 Corvettes: 1 Offshore Patrol Vessels: 42 Amphibious Assault: 14 Total Hulls: 59

Source: All data has been obtained from open sources.

Table 20.12 Papua New Guinea

EEZ Size	3.12 million km ²
Coastline Length	17.110 million km
%GDP to Defence	0.3329 % in 2022
Coastguard Vessels	4
Merchant Ships	197
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	Landing Craft Heavies; 2 Fast Amphibious Craft; 4 Small Amphibious Assault Craft; 3

Table 20.13 Singapore

EEZ Size				
Coastline Length	505 km			
%GDP to Defence	2.77			
Coastguard Vessels	Over 100			
Merchant Ships	3,227			
Naval Assets	<i>Class</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	
	Ships	Formidable	Frigate	06
		Victory	Missile Corvette	06
		Independence	Littoral Mission	08
			Vessels	
		Sentinel	Maritime Security and Response Vessels	04
		Bedok	Minehunter	04
		Endurance	Amphibious Warfare	04
		Submarine Support and Rescue	Submarine Rescue	01
	Submarines	Invincible	Submarine	04
		Archer	Submarine	02
		Challenger	Submarine	02

(Continued)

Table 20.13 (Continued)

Weapons	Harpoon	Anti-ship Missile	Unknown
	Aster	Vertically Launched Surface-to-Air Missile	Unknown
Unmanned Assets	Barak	Surface-to-Air Missile	Unknown
	Whitehead Torpedo		Unknown
	OTO Melara Gun		Unknown
	Typhoon Gun		Unknown
	Mine		Unknown
	Countermeasure Unmanned Surface Vessels		
	Protector Unmanned Surface Vessel		Unknown
Aircraft	ScanEagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicle		Unknown
	Sikorsky SH-60	Multi-mission	08
	Seahawk	Maritime Helicopter	
	Fokker 50 Maritime Patrol Aircraft	Maritime Surveillance	01

Source: All data has been obtained from open sources.

Table 20.14 South Korea

EEZ Size	447,000 km² Source: ROK Land and Geospatial Informatix Corporation (LX), <i>LX Bearing the Sea [해를 품은 LX] (Jeonju: LX, 2017), p. 10.</i>
Coastline Length	15,282 km Source: Kim, Tae-hyung, "How long is the Korean coastline?" Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Agency, 21 June 2021.
% GDP to Defence	2.55% (2021) Source: ROK MND, <i>Defence White Paper (Seoul: MND, 2022), p. 253.</i>
Coastguard Vessels	Sambong-Class: 2 Taepyongyang-Class (3,000t): 12 Jaemin-Class (1,500t): 11 Hangang-Class (1,000t): 9 Taegeuk-Class (500t): 23 Haewoori-Class (300t): 19 Haenoori-Class (100–200t): 28 P-boats (50t): 82 Special Purpose Boats: 166 Total: 352 Source: ROKCG, <i>Korea Coast Guard Annual Report (Incheon: Korea Coast Guard, 2021), p. 374.</i>
Merchant Ships	1,680 Source: Samil PwG [New Maritime Power, Talking about the Future of South Korea's Shipping Industry: Understanding the Shipping Industry and Strategic Proposals] [신해양강국, 한국 해운업의 미래를 말한다: 해운업의 이해와 전략적 제언] (PwC Korea, 2023), p. 12.

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Table 20.14 (Continued)

Naval Assets (Type; Number)	<p>Submarines Dosan Anchangho-Class: 2 Sonwonil-Class: 9 Jangbogo-Class: 9</p> <p>Ships <i>DDG</i> King Sejong-Class: 3 <i>DDH</i> Admiral Yi Sunsin-Class: 6 King Gwanggaeto-Class: 3 <i>FFG</i> Daegu-Class: 8 Incheon-Class: 6 Ulsan-Class: 2 <i>PCC</i> Pohang-Class: 5 <i>PKG</i> Yoon Yeongha-Class: 18 <i>PKMR</i>: 16 <i>PKM</i>: 31 <i>LPH</i> Dokdo-Class: 2 <i>LST</i> Chunwangbong-Class: 4 Gojunbong-Class: 4 <i>MLS</i> Nampo-Class: 1 Wonsan-Class: 1 MSH Yangyang-Class: 5 MHC Gangnyeong-Class: 6 <i>AOE</i> Soyang-Class: 1 Cheonji-Class: 3 Others: 22 Total: 167 <i>Source: Various cross-check sources</i></p>
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Source: All data has been obtained from open sources.

Table 20.15 Sri Lanka

EEZ Size	510,000 km ² <i>Source:</i> https://news.navy.lk/eventnews/2022/03/25/202203251630
Coastline Length	1,340 km <i>Source:</i> https://news.navy.lk/eventnews/2022/03/25/202203251630
%GDP to Defence	2.03% (2022) <i>Source:</i> https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/sri-lanka-slash-military-by-third-cut-costs-2023-01-13/
Coastguard Vessels	Off-shore Patrol Vessels – 2 Fast Patrol Vessels – 2 Fast Patrol Boats – 10 Inshore Patrol Craft – 10 Stabi Craft – 3 Harbour Craft – 3 <i>Source:</i> https://coastguard.gov.lk/slcg-fleet.html

(Continued)

Table 20.15 (Continued)

Merchant Ships	NINA
	BAGAWAN
	GRACE
	LMS LAXAPANA
	HIGH SEA PASSAGE
	JOHANNA
	HIGH SEA CHALLENGE
	KANDY
	RAJA
	GAS CHALLENGER
	LANKA MARINE NILWALA
	VIJAYABAHU
	GAS SUCCESS
	BARANA II
	MAHA WEWA
	VELUSUMANA
	THERAPUTHTHABHAYA
	NANDIMITHRA
	SURANIMALA
	GOTAIMBARA
	ARIES
	VASABHA
	WARUNA
	CEYLON BREEZE
	CEYLON PRINCESS
	HERCULES
	ALANKARA VII
	OCEAN TRINCO
	GAS COURAGE
	LANKA PRIDE
	LANKA MARINE MAHAWELI
	M.V.MAHANUWARA
	KUMANA
	POSH HUSKY
	YALA
	OCEAN LANKA
	POSH HARDY
	JALGAMINI
	SOMESHWAR
	JAYA LAKSHMI NARAYAN
	EKDANT
	LANKA FREEDOM
	MADURU OYA
	YAANIK
	VIRGO
	HE PING ZHI LU
	YEVIN
	SEAPOL RUBY
	MV. SHREEJI SAGAR
	M.T. RAVANA
	M.T. PANDUKABHAYA
	Ceylon Star

Source: Sri Lanka ship registry information provided with permission to author by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Ports and Shipping, November 2023.

(Continued)

Table 20.15 (Continued)

Naval Assets (Type; Number)	Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessels (AOPV) – 4 Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) – 3 Fast Missile Vessel (FMV) – 2 Fast Gun Boat (FGB) – 5 Coastal Patrol Vessels (CPV) – 2 Fast Attack Craft (FAC) – 9 Inshore Patrol Craft (IPC) – 1 Wave Rider – 1 Cedric – 1 Landing Ship, Tank (LST) – 1 Landing Craft, Mechanised (LCM) – 1 Landing Craft, Utility (LCU) – 3 Fast Personnel Carrier (FPC) – 2 Auxiliary – 1 <i>Source:</i> https://www.navy.lk/index/fleet.html
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Table 20.16 Thailand

EEZ Size	323,488.32 km ²
Coastline Length	3,148 km; 2,055 km (Gulf of Thailand) and 1,093 km (Andaman)
%GDP to Defence	1.2 % (2022)
Coastguard Vessels	57 vessels; 40 (Navy), 17 (Marine Police)
Merchant Ships	376
Naval Assets (Type; Number)	1 Helicopter Carrier 4 Landing Platform Docks 9 Frigates 1 Corvette 3 Patrol Crafts (Anti-submarine) 4 Ocean Patrol Vessels 26 Patrol Crafts 23 Coastal Patrol Vessels 9 Landing Crafts 1 Mine Countermeasure Support Ship 4 Mine Hunter Vessels 4 Hydrographic Vessels 9 Tugboats

Table 20.17 United States

EEZ Size	3.4 million square nautical miles
Coastline Length	12,383 miles
%GDP to Defence	3.5% (2023)
Coastguard Vessels	243 (2018)
Merchant Ships	177 vessels (2023)
Naval Assets	Aircraft Carriers; 11
(Type; Number)	Surface Combatants; 110
	Submarines; 66
	Amphibious Warfare Ships; 31
	Mine Warfare Ships; 8
	Combat Logistics Ships; 30
	Fleet Support; 33
	Auxiliary Support; 1
	(2023)

Table 20.18 Vietnam

EEZ Size	Around 1 million km ²	
Coastline Length	3260 km	
%GDP to Defence	8.8%	
Coastguard Vessels	30	
Merchant Ships	1,246	
Naval Assets	Type	Number
(Type; Number)	Submarines 636-M-Kilo	6
	Submarines Yugo	2
	Frigate KBO-200 Project 11661E Gepard	4
	Corvettes/FSG BPS-500 HO-A (Type 124A)	2
	Corvettes/FSG Tarantul V	10
	Corvettes/FSG Tarantul I	4
	Amphibious LST-525	6
	Amphibious LST-542	4
	PF Offshore Osa II	8
	PF Offshore Svelyak	2
	PF Offshore Shershen	3
	PF Offshore Turva	5
	PC Inshore SO-1	4
	PC Inshore Zhuk	10
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