

Indo-Pacific Minilateral Series: Maritime Security, the Indo-Pacific, and Advancing Maritime Domain Awareness Workshop



Executive Summary Report 23–25 April 2024

Sponsored by: Near East South Asia (NESAs) Center for Strategic Studies, BRIN Center for Political Research, and Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS)





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Report/Executive Summary
23–25 April 2024

Location: Jakarta, Indonesia

Sponsors: BRIN Center for Political Research, NESACenter, and DKI APCSS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

From 23–25 April 2024, NESACenter and DKI APCSS, along with host partner Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency (Badan Riset dan Inovasi — BRIN), conducted a program examining ways to further progress regional maritime security and information sharing. The program featured sixty-one participants from fourteen different countries. The event took place in Jakarta.

Plenary sessions covered the effectiveness of current regional maritime governance, the escalating threats emerging in the maritime domain, and how to use information sharing and greater MDA tools to respond to asymmetry at sea, among other topics. The event also featured a tabletop exercise designed to examine how whole-of-government approaches can inform maritime policy, how capacity limits set boundaries for policymaking, and how to better communicate within government structures and with the public regarding maritime security challenges.

This was the first Indo-Pacific engagement between these partners focusing on regional maritime security architecture and governance. The report that follows details the program's findings and highlights key takeaways/recommendations. BRIN, DKI APCSS, and NESACenter thank the participants for their contributions and any questions regarding this report can be communicated to NESACenter <https://nesa-center.org/contact/>.

BRIN: <https://www.brin.go.id/en>

DKI APCSS: <https://dkiapcss.edu/>

NESACenter: <https://nesa-center.org/>

FINDINGS:

- Participants routinely returned to the notion that minilateral formations are acceptable to ASEAN and have long existed within the ASEAN region. The point being that ASEAN knows how to co-exist with minilaterals and can interpret them as a way to serve larger regional aims tied to ASEAN itself.
- Disinformation/misinformation was highlighted by several participants as a major challenge in Indo-Pacific. This process is widespread and taking root throughout the region to various ends, but the key commonality is that it hides the reality of what challenges exist in the maritime domain. Some participants expressed skepticism regarding the strategic benefits of the “maximum transparency” information campaign that the Philippines is conducting, while others observed that the campaign is causing China to amend its aggressive behavior.
- Both the eastern Indian Ocean/Bay of Bengal region and Southeast Asia face similar maritime challenges tied to environmental degradation and transnational crime. From trafficking to climate change, there was agreement that greater connectivity has spread awareness of the problem sets, but there remains a delay in cooperative policy to address these challenges. It is widely accepted that no single state can address the challenges faced effectively, so regional, minilateral, and multilateral institutions, like ASEAN, BIMSTEC, or IORA, are as necessary as ever before.
- The challenges posed by disputes in the South China Sea were often discussed during the event, and how regional states not only interpret the challenges present in these waters but are enacting policy to ease tensions. The Philippines’ “Naming and Shaming” approach preferred by President Marcos is an example of how regional states seek to provide greater global knowledge of the challenges present to help navigate confusion. ASEAN’s ongoing effort to arrive at a Code of Conduct was also highlighted as a useful process though there was limited optimism that a code could be agreed upon.
- There are regional debates about the validity of “grey zone tactics” as a concept. What started as an academic term has become a means to avoid discussing various issues occurring at sea and how they relate to established international law. When scholars or policymakers discuss the grey zone are they discussing illegal acts? This was a component of discussions during the event.
- Regional curiosity about new minilaterals related to the maritime domain remains constant. The Quad is one that is often mentioned as a partnership that could complicate regional dynamics, help alleviate regional challenges, or even serve as a net benefit for existing multilateral institutions. There is a wait-and-see approach to minilaterals like the Quad. The region wants to see how they evolve, what policy approaches are used, and how effective said policies are for addressing regional challenges.
- The Indo-Pacific is rarely discussed without mention of strategic competition between major powers, namely the U.S. and China, but participants at the event discussed how regional maritime conversations can progress without becoming entangled in strategic issues. Many of the maritime challenges regional states face are immediate and local in nature. Criminal

networks engaged in trafficking, illegal fishing, and the increasing burdens being felt by coastal communities must remain a, if not the, priority.

- In reference to strategic concerns by regional actors, there was a discussion among participants about how economic relationships and development projects are increasingly becoming tied to strategic competition. The economic realm, traditionally seen as a gross positive for all actors, whether directly or indirectly involved, is increasingly becoming tied to regional politics due to various challenges. One economic sector highlighted was the digital/technological segments of the global economy.
- With the ongoing disruptions of commercial transit through the Red Sea having a cascade effect on the global supply chain, participants discussed how tensions and conflict in the MENA region, routinely not a main concern for this region, have become of specific interest. Participants offered recommendations that greater engagement between maritime security experts and practitioners from the Middle East and this region should engage more routinely.
- MDA, while universally agreed as essential for maritime security, is debated regarding how the information that provides greater MDA is accumulated, analyzed, and shared. Namely, the development of certain technological applications and the importance placed upon them by various actors indicates that many are hopeful that technology will serve to be a ‘game changer’ for MDA. That has yet to emerge across the region.
- All regional MARSEC conversations discuss information sharing in reference to sovereignty. Keeping accumulated maritime data to local or national communities is the preferred approach. Yet, a great deal of data related to MDA is available through public sources. There is a healthy debate among the maritime community about the cost/benefit of sharing more information beyond established methods and traditional government-government relationships.
- Participants debated how maritime security efforts across the region could be facilitated by a more experimental approach. Some pointed to incubator efforts by some countries to facilitate private-sector startups. Others pointed to NGOs that are trying new ways to assist local communities. Even more brought up how academic/scientific research has opened new ways to approach maritime security.
- Comprehensively, many conversations during the event centered on maritime governance. Both in how such governance is codified and enacted, along with how it is enforced and insured. The institutions and rules that govern the maritime domain are being challenged in many ways, including tensions between states, threats, and illegality by non-state actors, recent technologies/innovations, and climate change.
- Several of the speakers discussed the need for additional “practical tools” that can aid solutions rather than simply advance discussions. One such tool is a forthcoming ‘best practices’ guide to maritime capacity building developed by the Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies (YCAPS) and being published by the Japan Transportation and Tourism Research Institute.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations generated by the event are listed below:

- Engaged actors, both regional and non-regional, should convene to discuss ways to implement and finance small-scale experiments to advance maritime security across the region. These could be pilot programs to equip local fishers with tools to report unusual experiences more quickly when at sea, or the construction of a network between research institutions engaged in scientific inquiry with local government institutions working to protect regional waters.
- The network of stakeholders in the maritime domain is larger than ever and needs to be more strongly connected. Government-led efforts remain the preferred mechanisms for convening actors in the same space to discuss shared challenges, but there are other options available to keep communications open and spread innovative ideas for addressing shared challenges. Healthy networks, both domestically and regionally, serve to ensure that progress is not undone by bureaucratic silos or institutional blind spots.
- Disinformation/misinformation remains a problem for addressing regional maritime security challenges. International conventions, exercises, conferences, and research efforts should more routinely discuss how to ensure that accurate information is being accumulated and shared regarding the maritime domain.
- Maritime security analysis should move beyond discussion of physical enforcement hardware (ships and aircraft) and awareness of the maritime domain. Cyber domain threats and factors from other domains need to be components of national and regional conversations.
- Engaged research institutions, government bodies, and international forums should seek to gather maritime security experts across regions whenever possible, especially when discussing specific forms of maritime challenges. These can be ad hoc or built systemically through ideas such as communities of practice or a center of excellence.
- Future gatherings of experts and practitioners of maritime security should actively seek to integrate new/rising voices. This event featured a contest whereby innovative ideas were proposed for advancing regional maritime security and governance. The submissions were large in number and quite refined in quality. Three of the submissions were chosen to appear at this event and present their ideas, which are included in the following appendix. BRIN and affiliated partner YCAPS proposed the idea for this particular event. NESAC and DKI APCSS plan to continue such programmatic elements in the future.

APPENDIX:

As part of the program, a contest was held that requested innovative ideas from new voices within the regional maritime security community. The three winning submissions in the contest were featured in a panel during the event. Each of the three ideas are summarized in the section below. The Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies (YCAPS) facilitated the contest. You can learn more about YCAPS and their work at <https://www.ycaps.org/>.

Concept #1

Proposal:

Bringing everyone to the table: a proposal for a national-level joint maritime forum (JMF).

Description:

A national-level joint maritime forum where maritime stakeholders (not necessarily limited to those in a maritime security role) would be free to engage in constructive dialogue on issues of maritime governance.

The JMF will be based on the following principles:

1. Inclusivity: involving not only “the usual” maritime stakeholders, but also representatives of underrepresented maritime communities.
2. Accessibility and transparency: ensuring most outcomes and processes occurring within the forum may be accessed by all interested parties.
3. Co-management: the design and implementation of the forum requires involvement of all stakeholders.

Proposed steps towards implementing the JMF:

1. Government and non-government stakeholders agree to co-manage the operations of the joint maritime forum, ranging from logistics to financing. Funding may be sourced from a combination of international non-government organizations or existing government budgets.
2. Appointing a multi-stakeholder steering committee to design the forum, and subsequent technical committees will be responsible for technical operations.
3. While the forum is in session, specific public sessions will be livestreamed for archival purposes. After forum sessions are conducted, outcome documents are to be published electronically, hosted on an easily accessible cloud server, and promoted through social media and official channels of communication.

Expected benefits of the forum include:

- Addresses the issue of “unequal dialogue” between government and non-government stakeholders. Outcomes may be used as input for policy formulation and for identifying opportunities for collaboration.
- Promotes public awareness of maritime governance issues, particularly towards the younger population.

- Nurtures the development of an informed “commentariat” of maritime governance experts which could provide critical and nuanced analysis of emerging and existing maritime governance issues.

Potential problems which may be faced:

- Securing initial buy-in from stakeholders. Government stakeholders may be skeptical of the utility of the forum, while non-government stakeholders may be reluctant to participate due to risk of retaliation or dissatisfaction with government stakeholders.
- Ensuring meaningful participation from stakeholders, as opposed to perfunctory participation. This may be alleviated through thoughtful design of forum sessions and activities which engage participants.
- Balancing transparency with protection of privacy, particularly for representatives of marginalized coastal communities who may be reluctant to be identified. One way around this would be to implement the Chatham House rule for certain sessions to encourage participation while also providing some degree of separation.

Concept #2

Title:

Open-Source Maritime Social Network Application.

Introduction:

The maritime sector has become increasingly complex and multi-dimensional with participants from public, private, state, and non-state actors all participating above, below, and on the water.¹ As the oceans and maritime environment continues to be a source of global economic trade, ensuring security for all who access the oceans is vitally important. Empowering coastal communities and ocean users from the private sector to participate and report crime, suspicious activity, and form network hubs of information is a logical progression in the future of our maritime environment. Currently, no such maritime social network exists where coastal communities can connect and share what is going on within their locality and report environmental or related maritime issues. There have been efforts to develop regional enforcement reporting applications, though these often fall short due to their focus on government needs versus emphasis first on the consumer. This point-paper argues the need for a maritime social network to empower communities with connection and participatory method of action to help solve the maritime governance challenges of today and tomorrow.

Background:

Maintaining environmental security is a key aspect to supporting the blue economy, national, and regional maritime security. Over 200 million people in SE Asia are reliant on the sea for their

¹ Indo-Pacific Mini Lateral Series: Maritime Security, the Indo-Pacific, and Advancing Maritime Domain Awareness. (2024, April 23-25). Jakarta, Indonesia. BRIN Center for Political Research.

livelihoods.² Along with this, more than 10 million work in the fishing sector in SE Asia alone.³ Pairing these numbers with the degrading environmental conditions, which are considered a “disaster” across the South China Sea creates the potential for severe deterioration of maritime security. The World Bank Foundation cited that the Indo-Pacific could create 89 million international refugees, causing challenging downstream impacts such as mass maritime migration, regional food insecurity, and civil unrest.⁴ Several multi-lateral mechanisms within the region are taking action to combat IUU fishing including ASEAN, SEAFDEC, and RPOA-IUU, as well as many international capacity building missions such as USAID Oceans, Fish Right, and many other public and non-governmental organizations. However, the issue remains that environmental degradation and the capacity to combat it is not moving at scale, and information and participation is often siloed, creating a worsening situation, and enabling a degraded maritime security environment.

Point:

This paper presents the idea of an open-source maritime social network as a mechanism to help combat local issues facing our maritime security situation. A maritime social network established as a public-private social enterprise would empower coastal communities to post and share information relevant to their locality. Along with social information that creates a connection within one’s port or city, a reporting schema to local authorities for suspicious activity and environmental issues, helping illuminate in a social post what eyes on the water are observing.

1. Supporting Point 1 — A tool for coastal communities:

Technology and digital transformation is poised to reach every corner of the Indo-Pacific as connectivity, cellphones, and digital payments become more readily available.⁵ Coastal communities can capitalize on this advancement to use new tools to learn (education), buy & sell (commerce), and socialize (social network). Such a maritime social network for coastal communities should focus on these specific points of need first and be built for the end user.

2. Supporting Point 2 — A shift towards social benefit:

From an enforcement standpoint, global reporting mechanisms often create data silos for crimes, suspicious activity, and reports. However, communities being informed of what is occurring daily within their waters and ports, offers a social and community benefit in curbing misconduct and potential crime. Community groups in SE Asia such as the Pokmaswas (Indonesia) and Bantay Dagat (Philippines) already exist as a mechanism of traditional management vested within the community to enforce laws. This model can be grown through a social network independently based on the port and location at scale and help new communities establish their own type of governance.

² Pomeroy, R. S., Parks, J. E., & Green, G. (2020). Combating illegal fishing to strengthen maritime security and environmental sustainability. Indo-Pacific Defense Forum. Retrieved from: <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2020/01/fisheries-partnerships/>

³ Edwards, S., & Bradford, J. (2023, March 28). AMTI update. In *Evolving Threats to Southeast Asia’s Maritime Security*. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. Retrieved from: <https://amti.csis.org/southeast-asias-maritime-security-challenges-an-evolving-tapestry/>

⁴ World Bank Foundation. (2021, September 13). Climate change could force 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050: Decisive collective action could reduce climate migration by as much as 80 percent. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/13/climate-change-could-force-216-million-people-to-migrate-within-their-own-countries-by-2050>

⁵ World Economic Forum. Digital ASEAN. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/projects/digital-asean/#:~:text=ASEAN%20is%20the%20fastest%20growing,over%20the%20next%20ten%20years>

Counterarguments:

There is concern around several points of such a maritime social network including: government spying, spoofing by bad actors, and data control. Each of these arguments should be acknowledged and are common challenges of existing social networks. Government spying on citizens is a real challenge as was recently highlighted within the United States that sensitive data was sold to enforcement agencies to respond to protests and other threats in their local area.⁶ Another concern is the ability of bad actors to “spoof” the reporting schema, where they post that a suspicious activity is happening somewhere else and that this would divert resources to a false alarm. This is also a realistic situation that would need to be refined and tested to understand the capability and limitations and should be tested against continuously. Finally, data control and information ownership are an important consideration as data and national sovereignty has raised numerous concerns as in the case with TikTok in the United States as a national security threat. These questions and counterarguments present real-world examples of likely challenges of such a network, that will need to be continuously tested and addressed over time through quality assurance and control, working with both the communities using the application as well as local and regional governments to form a trustworthy partnership.

Conclusion:

An open-source maritime social network provides a roadmap to increasing participatory engagement with coastal communities as they face the increasingly complex dynamic of participants across the oceans. Currently, there are no maritime social networks filling the space, enabling communities to both share information within their circles as well as to enforcement, which would aid in supporting a global shift towards countering environmental crimes from a grass roots level at scale. While there are challenges existing that could negatively impact the efficacy of such a maritime social network, there exist a real need for such a system to support communities as the increasing threat of maritime security expands beyond the capacity of enforcement agencies, requiring a co-participatory approach.

Concept #3

Proposal:

Japan should sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with INDOMALPHI as a Capacity-Building Partner.

Background:

The Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines trilateral, or INDOMALPHI, was formed in 2017 under the Trilateral Cooperative Agreement (TCA) between the Foreign Ministers and Defense Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Since its establishment, regular patrols, trainings, coordination, and intelligence sharing have successfully countered threats including piracy and terrorism.

Under Japan’s new Overseas Security Assistance Framework, Tokyo is drawing up a 10-year plan to improve the maritime capabilities of four Southeast Asian countries, three of which are the

⁶ Broersma, M. (2024, March 26). X ‘Selling Real-Time Data’ For Law-Enforcement Purposes. Silicon Technology Powering Business. Retrieved from <https://www.silicon.co.uk/e-regulation/surveillance/x-law-enforcement-surveillance-555992>

INDOMALPHI countries. Japan has both the technical and operational capacity, as well as a clear will, to help fill the gaps in the three countries' maritime security capabilities.

Recommendation:

An INDOMALPHI-Japan MOU should include the following sub-agreements:

1. Bilateral maritime information sharing agreements between Tokyo and Jakarta and Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur. Then Japan should be included in the trilateral information sharing framework under INDOMALPHI.
 - In December 2023, Japan and the Philippines signed an MOU to help one another improve their “maritime domain awareness.” Tokyo’s conclusion of similar MOUs with Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur would enable a smooth transition in including Japan in the trilateral information sharing framework currently stipulated under the TCA between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.
2. Annual quadrilateral framework for coast guard exercises, trainings, and other capacity building activities.
 - Based on the precedent set by INDOPACOM in developing and implementing a U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral multi-year framework that includes annual, named, multi-domain trilateral exercises, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines should pursue the same kind of combined planning process to identify what kinds of trainings, exercises, and other capacity building activities to execute, when and where. Ideally, this framework could then be decided on and announced in a joint statement by the four countries.
3. Dialogue to discuss issues and share best practices related to bureaucratic reforms, deepening jointness between maritime services, and inter-agency communication.
 - Japan’s ongoing progress in bureaucratic reforms, deepening jointness, and improved inter-agency communication and deconfliction can hold important lessons for Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines which are each facing similar challenges.

Conclusion:

Taken collectively, these recommendations could enable a repurposing of INDOMALPHI to shift its focus from what was originally organized to prevent armed robbery at sea—something the grouping has clearly been effective at mitigating—to more broadly improving the overall capacity and capabilities of the countries’ collective maritime security organizations and coast guards to monitor and respond to threats within their EEZs. Essentially, Japan can be an enabling power to support the three countries in building this capacity and acquiring the capabilities so that INDOMALPHI itself can have the potential to take on a greater role or expanded agenda, should the three countries desire to do so.