

**RIPS**



Faculty of Political Science  
and International Studies  
University of Warsaw

**RIPS-UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW  
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR**

**MARITIME SECURITY  
COOPERATION IN EAST ASIA**

Summary Paper

January 2025

## Forward

The Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS) and University of Warsaw hosted a international conference in Warsaw to discuss in-depth the current maritime security challenges in East Asia.

East Asia is a large seascape. As Japan and other regional countries depend much on the maritime space for their survival and prosperity, it is critically important to maintain the rules-based maritime international order. The most serious challenge is China's maritime expansion in the absence of any overarching regionwide multilateral security framework. China tries to alter the status quo not only by the PLA Navy but also by its maritime law-enforcement organization and by maritime militia under the disguise of civilian fishermen. China's coercive activities in the vicinity of Japan's Senkaku Islands as well as in the South China Sea have been continuing.

As East Asia is at the forefront of the great power competition, the regional security environment will continue to be volatile and unstable. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also been casting a long shadow on East Asia as well by swaying the rules-based international order.

In this situation, it is increasingly important for the international community to share the correct recognition on the East Asian security environment and also to be reminded of the importance of the principle of the rule of law. Creation of a number of emerging minilateral initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region such as the Quad and AUKUS is noteworthy in this context. How to generate synergy of these initiatives by intertwining all of them will be an important challenge for all the relevant regional and extra-regional actors.

## Program

### Public Symposium: *The Maritime Security Cooperation in East Asia*

---

[Chair]                    *Mr. Hideshi Tokuchi*

[Panelist]

- **Professor Jay Batongbacal** (Professor, University of the Philippines)
- **Dr. Bart Gaens** (Senior Research Fellow, Global Security and Governance Research Program, Finnish Institute for International Affairs)
- **Professor Ruhanas Harun** (Professor, National Defence University of Malaysia)
- **Professor Raul Pedrozo** (Professor, Charles H. Stockton Center for International Law, U.S. Naval War College)
- **Professor Edward Halizak** (Professor, University of Warsaw)
- **Mr. Hideshi Tokuchi**

## Biography

### Public Symposium: *The Maritime Security Cooperation in East Asia*

---

#### **Jay Batongbacal**

Professor, University of the Philippines

**Professor Jay L Batongbacal** is a lawyer with degrees in Political Science and Law from the University of the Philippines, as well as Master of Marine Management and Doctor in the Science of Law, both from Dalhousie University (Canada). At present, he is a full Professor and chairs the Graduate Studies Program at the University of the Philippines College of Law, while also serving as Director of the Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea of the U.P. Law Center and Chair of the LLM Program Committee. He has worked extensively on maritime affairs since 1997, carrying out research, consultancy work, and teaching, with numerous national and international publications to his credit. Dr. Batongbacal was legal advisor to the Philippine delegation that successfully pursued the Philippines' claim to a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in the Benham Rise Region before the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the successful application before the International Maritime Organization for the designation of the Tubataha Reef Natural Park Particularly Sensitive Sea Area. He has been included among the UNESCO/IOC List of Experts for UNCLOS Annex VIII Special Arbitration on Marine Scientific Research. In 2022, Dr. Batongbacal completed a Taiwan Fellowship Program at the National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei, Taiwan and a Fulbright Advanced Research and Lecturing Fellowship at the US Naval War College in Rhode Island, USA. He has since returned to resume teaching undergrad and graduate law courses and is using "experimental game-based learning" with two elective courses, The Law of the Sea and Natural Resources Law. His current research interests include the Law of the Sea, Aerospace Law, and the Law of Naval Warfare.

#### **Bart Gaens**

Senior Research Fellow, Global Security and Governance Research Program, Finnish  
Institute for International Affairs

**Dr. Bart Gaens** works as Senior Research Fellow at the Global Security and Governance Research Programme at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) in Helsinki, Finland. He is also Japan Chair at the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) in Tallinn, Estonia, and holds the title of Docent at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki. In the past he has worked as Project Director for FIIA's Center on US Politics and Power (CUSPP), as

Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Helsinki, and as Specially-Appointed Associate Professor at Osaka University, Japan. He has published on Europe-Asia interregionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process, Japan's foreign policy and regional role, India's foreign policy and relations with the EU, domestic politics in Myanmar, and security-related issues in the Indo-Pacific region. He has also (co)edited volumes and reports on connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, EU-Asia relations, the US-China rivalry, transatlantic relations, and Japan's search for strategic partnerships.

### **Ruhanas Harun**

Professor, National Defense University of Malaysia

**Professor Ruhanas Harun** is Professor at the Department of International Relations, Security and Law, National Defense University of Malaysia. With an academic career spanning more than three decades, she has taught extensively in Malaysia, including at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, National University of Malaysia (UKM, Bangi) and at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, Malaysia, and abroad, among others, at the University of Cairo, Egypt, and at the Vietnam National University, Hanoi. She is Fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKM, Bangi, and lectures at the National Centre for Defense Studies (PUSPAHANAS) Ministry of Defense Malaysia. She researches, lectures and publishes on the themes: foreign policy, national security and regionalism. Apart from making a mark as an expert on Malaysia's foreign policy and national security, Ruhanas Harun has also distinguished herself as Malaysia's leading expert on Indo-China, specifically on Vietnam. Current research interests and publications include geopolitics and interstate relations in Southeast Asia, ASEAN regionalism, regional security focusing on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, and Russian strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific. She has contributed widely to academic and popular writings, including newspapers.

### **Raul Pedrozo**

Professor, the Howard S. Levie Chair on the Law of Armed Conflict, U.S. Naval War College,  
Stockton Center for International Law

Professor Raul (Pete) Pedrozo (Captain, USN, Ret.) is the Howard S. Levie Chair on the Law of Armed Conflict, U.S. Naval War College, Stockton Center for International Law. While on active duty, he served in numerous positions advising senior military and civilian Defense officials, including as Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, legal advisor to Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, and legal advisor to the Commander, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command. Professor Pedrozo participated in numerous intergovernmental negotiations, including the International Maritime Organization and Transnational Organized Crime

Convention. He has written extensively on maritime security and naval warfare and co-authored (with Prof. James Kraska) *International Maritime Security Law* (2013), *The Free Sea: The American Fight for Freedom of Navigation* (2018), and *Disruptive Technology, and the Law of the Sea* (2022). He was also a principal contributor and editor for *The Newport Manual on the Law of Naval Warfare* (International Law Studies Vol. 101 (2023)) and the *Annotated Supplement to the Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations* (International Law Studies Vol. 102 (2024)). Professor Pedrozo has an LLM (International & Comparative Law), Georgetown University Law Center and JD (Law), The Ohio State University College of Law.

### **Hideshi Tokuchi**

President, the Research Institute for Peace and Security, Japan

**Mr. Hideshi Tokuchi** has been President of the Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS) since June 2021. He joined the Defense Agency (the predecessor of the Ministry of Defense) of Japan in 1979 as a civilian and retired from the Ministry in October 2015, after completing several senior assignments, including Director-General of the Operations Bureau, of the Personnel and Education Bureau, of the Finance and Equipment Bureau, of the Defense Policy Bureau and most recently the nation's first-ever Vice-Minister of Defense for International Affairs.

Mr. Tokuchi holds several positions in academic and research institutions: Visiting Fellow at the Institute of International Relations of Sophia University, Senior Research Advisor at the Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS)

## **Public Symposium: *The Maritime Security Cooperation in East Asia***

---

### **Summary**

This public symposium focused on maritime security cooperation in East Asia.

Prof. Batongbacal pointed out that the year 2024 was a year in which tensions increased due to China's maritime expansion. In particular, tensions with the Philippines increased due to the Scarborough Shoal incident. In addition, he pointed out that non-traditional security issues such as piracy and illegal fishing are still important. On the other hand, although there are many sub-regional initiatives in the South China Sea, there is a long tradition of maritime security cooperation. He argued that security cooperation between the EU and East Asia will become increasingly important in the future in order to tackle maritime issues and increase resilience to various problems.

Dr. Gaens reported on maritime security in East Asia from the perspective of Finland. In his report, he pointed out that over the past 10 years, awareness of the Indo-Pacific region has increased significantly within Europe. Maritime security is also a matter of great concern for Finland, and the country places importance on maritime security from a trade and geopolitical perspective, particularly in the Baltic Sea. In addition, in recent years, the importance of maritime security has increased in terms of protecting submarine gas pipelines and communication cables, as well as in relation to hybrid warfare and attacks on critical infrastructure. In terms of the connection between the Indo-Pacific and Finland, the first concern is the demonstration effect. This is because China is watching Europe's reaction to the war in Ukraine, and events in one theater affect deterrence calculations in the other. Also, as everything is now seen as a security issue, it is becoming beneficial to share each country's experiences in various fields, such as the economy and the environment. For this reason, the effectiveness of cooperation with Asia is increasing. Finally, Dr. Gaens pointed out that cooperation between Europe and Asia is extremely important.

Prof. Harun discussed maritime security from the perspective of Southeast Asia. The countries of Southeast Asia are working on maritime security issues, transcending their differences in political and geopolitical positions. In particular, she pointed out that it is important to promote cooperation and dialogue through the strengthening of regional frameworks. Meanwhile, territorial disputes remain a prominent security issue in the region. The South China Sea is a major node connecting the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, and the peace and security of

this area must always be maintained. ASEAN also announced the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific in 2019, and reported that it is working to strengthen the cooperation framework for maritime security in the region.

Prof. Halizak explained Germany's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the situation in Poland from the perspective of the relationship between Germany and Poland. In particular, he reported on the increased uncertainty in Europe, including Germany, due to the increased challenges in energy supply, the impact of the deterioration of the Chinese economy, and the problem of dependence on China.

Prof. Pedrozo reported on the Indo-Pacific policy of the United States, pointing out that the Indo-Pacific policy of the United States is not only about the United States, but also about the importance of cooperation with its allies Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, as well as with partners in the region. In addition, regarding the QUAD, he pointed out the importance of strengthening cooperation between maritime law enforcement agencies, which has been promoted in recent years.

Tokuchi gave a presentation on the theme of maritime security cooperation for a rules-based international order. Tokuchi stated that the competition between great powers today is not just a struggle for power, but also a struggle over the principles and world view of the international community. He pointed out that China has a hierarchical and undemocratic world view, in contrast to the rule of law and democratic world view based on Western democracy and Anglo-American legal culture. He also pointed out that China is strengthening its hard-line stance in the East Asian maritime domain based on this world view. He also emphasized the importance of maritime security cooperation in responding to China's challenges. The historical developments surrounding the South China Sea suggest that China will continue to expand in order to fill the power vacuum. In order to counter these Chinese moves and maintain stability in the South China Sea, he pointed out that three things are important: close cooperation between like-minded countries and countries in the region, strengthening of alliances and partnerships, and cooperation on capacity building.



## **Panelists' Taking points**

### **Maritime Security Cooperation in East Asia: Perspective from the Philippines**

#### Talking Points

**Jay Batongbacal**

Professor, University of Philippines

1. The year 2024 witnessed the greatest increase in tensions so far in East Asia fueled by China's maritime expansion.

- a. Aggressiveness and use of force against the Philippines at Second Thomas Shoal, Scarborough Shoal, and the South China Sea in the assertion and imposition of its expansive maritime claim.
  - a. China has presently deployed its military and paramilitary forces to "occupy" the SCS
- b. Increasing pressure against Indonesia and Malaysia.
- c. Notable increase in information and cognitive operations supporting Chinese maritime expansion
- d. Provocative military exercises around Taiwan and in the South China Sea, intensifying coercive rhetoric
- e. Increased presence and military activities in East China Sea.
- f. Links between SCS, Taiwan Straits, and East China Sea

2. Other non-traditional security threats relatively subdued and much less prominent, although still present.

- a. Maritime piracy and terrorism so far handled through trilateral cooperation mechanisms.
- b. IUU fishing in South China Sea remain unaddressed on account of territorial and maritime disputes.
- c. Climate change continues to manifest prominently in extreme weather events, but climate mitigation and adaptation measures are still largely either national concerns or addressed through global climate talks.

3. East Asia has had a long, diverse, and fruitful history of maritime security cooperation since the 1990s, although participation has been predominantly sub-regional (e.g., bilateral, trilateral arrangements) rather than region-wide.

- a. ASEAN remains a central magnet and principal node for many kinds of maritime security cooperation activities and projects, both against traditional and non-traditional threats to maritime security cooperation.
- b. Results, however, have been mixed.
  - a. An “in-house” solution to the principal maritime security challenge (China’s expansion) remains elusive
  - b. ASEAN-China negotiations on a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea continue to drag.
  - c. China’s deployments and assertiveness continue to increase and intensify
- c. Sub-regional (bilateral and trilateral) and regional cooperation initiatives continue to increase and diversify despite (or because?) of challenges
  - a. Continued expansion of Philippines maritime security partners: Japan, US, France, Canada, UK, South Korea, India.
  - b. Strengthening and multiplication of bilateral cooperation activities
  - c. Regional efforts such as ASEAN Coast Guard Forum

4. EU is a major geopolitical and economic stakeholder in East Asia with multi-faceted interests

- a. Geopolitical
  - a. Upholding the rules-based international order is key to ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific
    - i. UNCLOS and high seas freedoms
  - b. Maritime security cooperation with ASEAN and Northeast Asia increasing
    - i. ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meetings on Maritime Security
    - ii. Bilateral arrangements
  - c. Concerns over China’s increasingly aggressive actions in South China Sea and Taiwan Strait
  - d. Peaceful resolution of issues over Taiwan, a regional economic and technological powerhouse

- e. Strengthening partnerships with like-minded countries like Japan, South Korea
  - b. Economic
    - a. EU as the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest trading partner of ASEAN, and significant relationships with Japan, South Korea, China
      - i. Access to key resources and supply chains, especially semiconductor technology
    - b. Sustainable Development and climate change mitigation and adaptation
    - c. Support for ASEAN centrality, regional integration, and economic cooperation
  - c. Links between EU and East Asia developments
    - a. Implications of China's maritime expansion in SCS, Taiwan Straits, and East China Sea
      - i. Control of routes and trade
      - ii. Monopolization of trade and communications
      - iii. Influence over individual partners
    - b. EU and East Asia interests at stake
6. Need to continue and enhance maritime security cooperation between EU and East Asia to build up resistance and resilience against
- a. Enhance dialogue and exchange of best practices: high-level exchanges
    - a. Notable increase in interactions between Philippines and various EU members
  - b. Need for further enhancement of cybersecurity cooperation, information sharing, and capacity building
    - a. Major vulnerability for Philippines and Southeast Asia
    - b. Must now also also turn toward infrastructure (submarine cables, satellite communications)
  - c. Importance of renewing efforts to upholding international law and norms
    - a. Renewed campaign against the SCS Arbitration Award
    - b. Coercive deployments and activities
  - d. Strengthening of maritime domain awareness

- a. Notable increase in efforts to promote MDA
- b. Significant challenges remain with information exchange, fusion, and platform compatibility and integration
- e. Build on successes in combatting maritime crime (especially maritime piracy and terrorism), and move more into environmental criminal activities
- f. Cooperation on addressing environmental challenges
  - a. Marine litter and micro-plastics
  - b. Biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction
  - c. Climate change adaptation

## Maritime Security Cooperation in East Asia – a Finnish perspective

**Dr. Bart Gaens**

Senior Research Fellow, Finnish Institute for International Affairs

1. During the past decade, awareness of the importance of the Indo-Pacific region for Europe's prosperity has grown exponentially. As noted by the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy of 2021, trade exchanges between the Indo-Pacific and Europe are higher than between any other geographical region in the world, with annual trade reaching EUR 1.5 trillion in 2019. In addition, the region hosts *critical sea lanes* that are of vital importance to EU trade: approximately one-third of global maritime trade transits through the South China Sea.
2. However, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was the main catalyst that brought Asia and Europe closer together. As noted by HRVP Josep Borrell, "what happens in the Indo-Pacific has a direct impact on Europe". Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has also brought Japan and Finland closer together, and shifted the focus from trade to security. Mutual interest in issues relating to *resilience and maritime security* has increased substantially.
3. Maritime security is critically important for Finland, for at least three reasons.
  - a. First, the Baltic Sea is not only a vital route for *trade* but also a location of *geopolitical* tensions in the region. Almost 90 per cent of Finland's exports and imports are transported by sea, so safeguarding its waters is of prime importance. The Baltic Sea is part of the operating theater of Russia's "shadow fleet" transporting Russian oil under a foreign flag, circumventing sanctions.
  - b. Second, after Finland and Sweden joined NATO in April 2023 and May 2024 respectively, the Baltic Sea is now sometimes referred to as a "*NATO*"-lake. However, Russia retains access through Saint Petersburg and Kaliningrad. NATO's increased presence in the Baltic Sea heightens the threshold for using military force, but also raises new security challenges.
  - c. *Hybrid warfare and attacks on critical infrastructure* have increased markedly, targeting gas and oil pipelines and undersea cables. Recent disruptions include (1) 18 November 2024: damage to a communication cable managed by Finnish telecom

company Cinia between Finland and Germany; (2) 2 December 2024: damage to a fibre-optic cable connecting Finland and Sweden; and (3) 25 December 2024: damage to Estlink 2 subsea cable between the power grids of Finland and Estonia. In October 2023, the BalticConnector gas pipeline linking Finland and Estonia was damaged, alongside a communications cable (attributed to a Chinese vessel, raising concerns about the Russia-China strategic partnership).

4. What is the relevance of the Finnish case for the Indo-Pacific? What are possible lessons to be drawn?
  - a. First, as pointed out by Rory Medcalf (2024), the “demonstration effect” is important, in other words actions and outcomes in one theatre affect deterrence calculations in the other. China is certainly watching the West’s reaction to the war in Ukraine in general, and individual EU member states’ reactions to Russian hybrid warfare.
  - b. “Securitization of everything”: Hard and soft security concerns (including military, security, economic, and environmental dimensions) are inseparable; also, comprehensive security, based on the idea that authorities, businesses, non-governmental organizations and citizens are jointly responsible for safeguarding a society’s vital functions, is at the basis of the Finnish security policy. Sharing experiences and expertise on comprehensive security with Asian countries would be highly useful.
  - c. Finland focuses heavily on cooperation with others at bilateral, subregional, minilateral and multilateral levels: Finnish-Swedish Defence Cooperation (FISE), Nordic Council, European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) in Helsinki, NATO’s Maritime Centre for the Security of Critical Undersea Infrastructure. Possibilities to cooperate with Asian countries on training and capacity-building of coast guards and civil authorities, including in areas like maritime domain awareness?
  - d. There are synergies in the sphere of sustainable connectivity and supply chain resilience. Finland is strongly aware of the importance and potential of connectivity promotion as an alternative to China (Finland is the only EU member state with a Global Gateway ambassador). Cooperation in the sphere of maritime security can happen through an implementation of the EU-Japan connectivity partnership (e.g.,

modernisation of critical maritime hubs in Africa) and the EU-India connectivity partnership (e.g., the Blue and Raman cable systems as part of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, IMEC).

## **East Asia Maritime Security cooperation: opportunities and challenges.**

**Ruhanas Harun**

Professor, National Defense University of Malaysia

The East Asian region is currently navigating a complex landscape of maritime security challenges, with traditional and non-traditional security threats posing risks to both regional and global stability. The region remains one of the most geopolitically and strategically significant areas in the world, at the same time faces various challenges affecting its peace and stability. Despite political differences, regional countries have shown efforts to address maritime security challenges through enhancing regional cooperation in order to maintain the general peace and stability in the region. However, there are opportunities for collaboration and dialogue, as evidenced by the rise of various security frameworks and mechanisms incorporating maritime security issues. Geography and geopolitics intertwined forcing nations to establish cooperative relationship as means to address and mitigate threats and enhance maritime security in the region. While these mechanisms and strategies have received favourable support, and to a large extent, ensured maritime security, the evolving geopolitical and geostrategic environment also pose challenges to their sustainability and effectiveness. This brief intervention discusses opportunities for maritime security cooperation in East Asian and its challenges, with special attention to the Southeast Asian region.

Maritime security cooperation in East Asia emerged in various forms, at bilateral, multilateral and in recent years, mini-lateral levels. Many countries, especially smaller ones, do not have adequate resources of their own to fulfil the task of protecting their own security needs, therefore must find ways to secure their security interests through mutually beneficial cooperation with others within and beyond the region. Security cooperation frameworks serve as forum for dialogue and coordination among agencies of maritime security, and a platform to develop a comprehensive regional approach to maritime security cooperation. Existing maritime security cooperation in the ASEAN region include frameworks such as the Tripartite Malacca Strait Patrol, Eyes in the Sky, the Sulu -Celebes Sea Trilateral Maritime Patrol and others focusing on maritime areas that are difficult and sensitive to manage. Additionally, there are expanded maritime security cooperation framework such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on



Combatting Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) aimed, among others, to increase members' capacity building through sharing of best practices in combating piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Given the importance of maritime trade in the East Asian region, safeguarding the freedom of navigation and ensuring the safety of shipping, and maintaining good and peaceful order at sea is in the interest of all countries. ASEAN led mechanisms such as ARF, ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus could provide venue for discussions and trust building. Maritime security is one of the main areas of cooperation under the ambit of the ADMM. The ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), established in 2010, and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) are part of the efforts towards creating an effective ASEAN mechanism to address regional maritime issues in a holistic and integrated approach.

Territorial and maritime disputes remain the most prominent threats to regional maritime security. One such hotspot is the South China Sea, being disputed by China and several ASEAN countries. The South China Sea is the main linkage between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, safeguarding its peace and security should be given the utmost attention. ASEAN claimant states in the dispute have worked together towards resolving the conflict. Major initiatives include establishing the DOC, drawn up in 2012 and negotiating for the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea. China remains a major stumbling block towards COC's early conclusion, but parties are still hopeful that such mechanism would help mitigate threats of escalation, and finally help to resolve the dispute. Regional countries, including Malaysia, view diplomatic channel as an important means in managing disputes, especially those involving many stakeholders with asymmetrical capabilities and divergent geostrategic interests. As Malaysia takes up the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2025, and as a maritime nation, it is hopeful to gather strength in cooperation with other members and friendly countries to bolster maritime security in the region. The ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) is another initiative towards cooperation in maritime security in Asia-Pacific region. Adopted by the 34th ASEAN Summit in 2019, aimed at offering an outlook to guide cooperation in the region, promoting maritime safety and security, increasing maritime security capacity building and regional maritime domain awareness.

In conclusion, despite the many challenges, maritime security cooperation in East Asia has been well established and tailored to specific needs of regional countries. However, it has also evolved in terms of focus and partnerships in view of the evolving geopolitical and geostrategic

environment encouraging nations to forge new ones to respond to the need of the hour. On the whole, maritime security cooperation, despite the numerous challenges, should be considered as a viable way forward to ensure peace and security in East Asia.

**Maritime Security Cooperation in East Asia: An American perspective**  
**The Quad's Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness**

**Raul (Pete) Pedrozo**

Professor, the Howard S. Levie Chair on the Law of Armed Conflict, U.S. Naval War College,  
Stockton Center for International Law

**I. U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy**

The 2022 U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy is premised, in part, on advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific to drive regional prosperity and bolster Indo-Pacific security. The Strategy recognizes that this cannot be accomplished by the United States alone, but rather requires strengthening the collective capacity of all like-minded U.S. allies and partners, as well as non-aligned regional States, that have helped build the rules-based order that has brought economic prosperity and security to the region for over 70 years.<sup>1</sup>

Building a framework of strong and mutually reinforcing coalitions will focus on bolstering America's five regional treaty alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, as well as strengthening relationships with leading regional partners like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Pacific Islands nations.<sup>2</sup>

**II. The Quad**

As one of the premier regional groupings, the Quad—Australia, Japan, South Korea, United States—plays a critical role in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific by (*inter alia*) building the capacity of regional partners to maintain maritime security and enhance maritime domain awareness to ensure that the waters of the Indo-Pacific are governed and used according to international law. The Quad recognizes that the maintenance of peace, safety, security, and

---

<sup>1</sup> THE WHITE HOUSE, INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY OF THE UNITED STATES (Feb. 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

stability in the maritime domain underpins the development and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>3</sup>

Established to coordinate humanitarian assistance and disaster relief after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Quad has become a leading regional partnership dedicated to advancing a common vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific through practical cooperation on diverse 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges. At the Tokyo Summit in May 2022, the Quad launched the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) to enable its partners to better monitor their waters across the Indo-Pacific and provide capacity building measures for regional partners.<sup>4</sup>

### **III. Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness**

IPMDA also has a secondary role. The initiative supplements the Quad's strategic interest in curbing Chinese coercive behavior in the region, especially the East and South China Seas. Although no nation wants to needlessly invoke the ire of China, many are interested in alternatives to China's assertive presence in the Indo-Pacific region when it serves their national interests and promotes shared maritime principles.<sup>5</sup>

Maritime domain awareness (MDA) is a fundamental requirement for peace, stability, and prosperity. IPMDA is designed to offer a near-real-time, integrated, and cost-effective MDA picture that will provide partners in the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region the ability to fully monitor the waters on their shores to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific.<sup>6</sup> Over the next five years, IPMDA will build on existing MDA efforts and rapidly introduce emerging technologies to bear to enhance regional maritime security.

---

<sup>3</sup> U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON, Fact Sheet: The United States' Enduring Commitment to the Indo-Pacific: Marking Two Years Since the Release of the Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy, Feb. 9, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-enduring-commitment-to-the-indo-pacific-marking-two-years-since-the-release-of-the-administrations-indo-pacific-strategy/>.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Shanna Khayat, *PacNet #48 – A work in progress: The Indo-Pacific partnership for maritime domain awareness*, PACIFIC FORUM (June 23, 2023), <https://pacforum.org/publications/pacnet-48-a-work-in-progress-the-indo-pacific-partnership-for-maritime-domain-awareness/>.

<sup>6</sup> THE WHITE HOUSE, Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders' Tokyo Summit 2022, May 23, 2022, [hereinafter Quad Tokyo Summit (2022)], <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/fact-sheet-quad-leaders-tokyo-summit-2022/>.

IPMDA establishes a framework to operationalize the maritime strategic partnership between the Quad and its Indo-Pacific partners. It builds a faster, wider, and more accurate maritime picture of near-real-time activities in partners' waters by integrating three critical regions in the Indo-Pacific—the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region. This allows partners to track dark shipping—vessels that turn off their automatic identification systems (AIS) transponders—and other tactical-level activities (e.g., rendezvous at sea), as well as improve partners' ability to respond to climate and humanitarian events; monitor regional maritime spaces; counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing to protect their fisheries; secure sea lines of communication; and enforce their laws within their waters.<sup>7</sup>

IPMDA relies on unclassified, commercially available data using existing technologies (e.g., Automatic Identification System and radio-frequency technologies) to provide data on a “common thread” of activities to a wide range of regional partners. IPMDA also facilitates an effective multilateral security apparatus by extending support for information sharing across existing regional fusion centers, such as the Information Fusion Center-Indian Ocean Region (India), the Information Fusion Center (Singapore), the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (Solomon Islands), and the Pacific Fusion Center (Vanuatu).<sup>8</sup>

Since it was announced in 2022, the Quad has successfully scaled the program across the Indo-Pacific region—through the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, with partners in Southeast Asia, to the Information Fusion Center—Indian Ocean Region, Gurugram. In doing so, the Quad has helped over 24 countries access dark vessel MDA data, so they can better monitor the activities in their exclusive economic zones and prevent unlawful activities.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in 2024, the Quad began to layer new technology and data into IPMDA to enhance delivery of cutting-edge capability and information to the region. This allows the Quad to leverage electro-optical data and advanced analytic software to sharpen the MDA picture for partner nations.<sup>10</sup> However, if IPMDA is to succeed, participating States will need to overcome the extensive gaps that exist “in current information-sharing, capacity-building, and coordinated

---

<sup>7</sup> Id.; Khayat, *supra* note 5.

<sup>8</sup> Quad Tokyo Summit (2022), *supra* note 6; Khayat, *supra* note 5.

<sup>9</sup> THE WHITE HOUSE, Fact Sheet: 2024 Quad Leaders' Summit, Sept. 21, 2024, [hereinafter Quad Leaders' Summit (2024)], <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/09/21/fact-sheet-2024-quad-leaders-summit/>.

<sup>10</sup> Id.

action practices, as well as resolve challenges like technology interoperability, resource accessibility, and vessel identification.”<sup>11</sup>

To mitigate these gaps, the Quad will provide participating States with interoperable technologies (e.g., radar systems and data regulation processes) and conduct multilateral maritime exercises to demonstrate joint capability.<sup>12</sup> To address problems associated with vessel identification, IPMDA leverages publicly, commercially available “information systems and identification technologies, as well as training maritime law enforcement personnel to remotely patrol and surveil international waters.”<sup>13</sup>

#### **IV. Other Quad Initiatives**

In 2024, the Quad also announced the establishment of a new regional Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI). This new initiative will enable regional partners to maximize tools provided through IPMDA and other Quad partner initiatives, to monitor and secure their waters, enforce their laws, and deter unlawful behavior. Under the MAITRI, the Quad is coordinating comprehensive and complementary training across the full suite of legal, operational, and technical maritime security and law enforcement knowledge domains. This includes expanding engagement with regional maritime law enforcement fora, sharing best practices, and improving civil maritime cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, the Quad inaugurated the Indo-Pacific Logistics Network, a pilot project that will share airlift capacity among the four Quad nations and leverage collective logistics strengths, to support civilian response to natural disasters more rapidly and efficiently across the Indo-Pacific region.

Finally, in 2025, the U.S. Coast Guard, Japan Coast Guard, Australian Border Force, and Indian Coast Guard will launch the first-ever Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission in the Indo-Pacific to enhance coast guard cooperation. This will include exchanging personnel to improve interoperability between the Quad nations’ coast guards.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Khayat, *supra* note 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Quad Leaders’ Summit (2024), *supra* note 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

## **Maritime Security Cooperation for the Rules-based International Order in East Asia**

**Hideshi Tokuchi**

President, the Research Institute for Peace and Security, Japan

### **1. Difference of world views**

Today's great power rivalry is not only about power but also about principles and world views.

The concept of the rules-based international order built upon the principle of the rule of law is a democratic view of the world, reflecting the modern Western style of democracy and the Anglo-American legal culture.

China's world view is different. It is hierarchical and not democratic. China believes that the rules-based international order is something to protect developed countries' interests at the expense of developing countries'. It is wrong.

### **2. Expansion of China's claims and assertive activities at sea in East Asia**

China is more assertive and muscle-flexing at sea in recent months than before.

The Chinese continue to chastise the arbitration award of July 2016 and to criticize the international call for China to abide by the award. China even expanded its nine-dash line claim by adding another dash in the east of Taiwan in its new national map in August 2023. China is trying to change the status quo by physical force as well in the South China Sea.

China has been operating its Coast Guard and maritime militia ships in the East China Sea as well and those ships often encroach into the Japanese waters around the Senkaku Islands. They are more active in recent years than before. As the balance of power in the East China Sea is being tilted toward the Chinese side, the South China Sea today may be the East China Sea tomorrow.

### **3. Objectives of China's activities at sea**

According to the Defense White Paper of Japan, there are five objectives of China's activities at sea in recent years as follows: first, to check adversaries' operations as far away as possible from China for the defense of China; second, to develop capabilities to deter Taiwan's independence; third, to weaken the control of other countries over the islands and the air and sea space in their vicinity on which China makes its one-sided claims; fourth, to acquire, maintain and protect its maritime rights and interests; and fifth, to defend its sea lanes.

China has been doing large-scale and rapid land reclamation on seven features of the Spratly Islands since 2014. If these features are used for full-scale military purposes, it could significantly change the security environment of the Indo-Pacific region.

#### 4. International maritime security cooperation to address China's assertiveness

The history of the South China Sea clearly tells us that China always tries to take advantage of power vacuum. In order to maintain the stability in the South China Sea, we must fill in the power vacuum and retrieve the balance of power. There are three points: first, enhancement of presence of like-minded countries in close cooperation with the regional countries; second, enhancement of alliances and partnerships; and third, capacity building cooperation.

In order to build a more effective system of norm to enhance the rules-based international order, the following two points are important: First, we must reject cynicism on the power of international law. Law is not powerless. No political society can exist without law. Second, we must win public support in lawfare which China engineers. China's deed is different from its word, but it is hard to know what it is doing in the middle of the sea. Therefore, it is important to share the information about the Chinese real activities and to disclose them internationally.

For all these efforts, international partnership is a must. Partnership is not a burden but a great asset for all the members of the international community. Partnership between NATO and IP4 is gaining momentum through the Partners Session of the NATO Summit in Washington. Japan-NATO partnership is growing based on the ITPP. Partnership of the Quad is in progress with the Wilmington Declaration, including IPMDA. Partnership between ASEAN and Japan has been elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership. Japan's security cooperation with ASEAN countries is also developing based on Japan's new plan for a free and open Indo-Pacific and also on Vientiane Vision 2.0. It is time for us to move forward for substantive cooperation.