DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR PHILIPPINE SECURITY COOPERATION IN A CHANGING MARITIME MILIEU

DIANNE FAYE C. DESPI

Asia Pacific
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Executive Summary

The heightened importance of maritime security issues, coupled with strategic competition between the major Indo-Pacific powers China and the United States, have turned the extensive maritime domain of Southeast Asia into an arena of great uncertainty. Here, various countries' civilian and military maritime services navigate, operate, compete, and cooperate.

Complex politico-economic dynamics between the United States, the dominant power, and China, the emerging power, greatly affect the strategic positioning of other nations in the region. However, it is not only China's thrust to gain operational superiority in the Pacific Ocean using its wide array of maritime agencies that is complicating the security environment; conditions such as the prevalence of transborder terrorist networks, and the geographical characteristic of the Indo-Pacific as the world's most disaster-prone region, also play a role.

These volatile strategic and operational realities in the maritime domain have given rise to states trying to secure the vast regional waters through new and improved approaches, which are now reflected in the changing face of maritime security cooperation mechanisms in the region.

The 1990s were characterized by several strategic-level and navy-dominated cooperative mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training exercises (CARAT), and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS). These mechanisms focused on establishing lines of communication and developing avenues for greater dialogue, capitalizing on the inherent international nature of navies. There was subsequently a rise in functional cooperative mechanisms in the 2000s, especially in areas of counter-terrorism (e.g. the Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism or SEACAT exercise) and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The late 2000s to the 2010s welcomed more actors into the maritime playing field, as the importance of Coast Guards and other maritime law enforcement agencies became magnified due to several operational developments, most notably the "civilianization" of the maritime domain previously dominated by the armed forces. Further, the 2010s also saw both the "hardening" of the institutions overseeing cooperation measures, as well as the flourishing of practical "minilateral" measures in maritime security cooperation. Examples of these include the Malacca Straits Sea Patrols (MSSP) and the "Eyes-in-the-Sky" Combined Maritime Air Patrols (EiS) among the navies of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, undertaken to ensure safety and security in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. There is also the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA) among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines set up in 2016. There is a greater realization that, with the delicate diplomatic dynamics in the region, the challenge now is how to develop frameworks of cooperation which transcend differences in strategic interests.

Considering its geostrategic location and the diversity of security challenges it faces, the Philippines has crucial need to develop and put forward initiatives which can significantly impact on regional maritime cooperation. However, the country is still plagued with several internal challenges which hinder its own pursuit of maritime security and its capacity to influence and make a difference in the regional security milieu. These include the lack of a comprehensive national marine policy and therefore lack of a coordinated maritime security strategy; poor inter-agency collaboration; shortage of proper assets and platforms for sustained participation in international cooperation initiatives; and practical obstacles such as resource constraints, prioritization issues, and the lack of common doctrine, language and interoperability of equipment.

In order to address these gaps, the author proposes a simple framework that may contribute to maximizing the potential of Philippine participation in regional maritime security cooperation initiatives. It is a framework that is centered on the characteristics of functionality, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Functionality is defined as an approach that zeroes in on the convergence of core strategic maritime interest of the state on one hand, and the operational or imminent security challenges, on the other hand, in order to address present, pressing, and persistent concerns. This involves identifying priority issues and working on these "convergence points" between core interest and imminent challenges.

Inclusivity is comprehensiveness and coherence of initiatives involving both state and non-state actors. It emphasizes the role of particular actors in developing maritime security cooperation, which the author identifies as these three: (1) the central government as the embodiment of national interests, (2) government agencies whose institutional mandates represent sectoral public interests, and (3) the private sector.

Finally, sustainability refers to the commitment of the Philippine state to addressing security challenges through the development of cooperative institutions that promote coordination and collaboration, while safeguarding the interest of the state. Further, sustainability requires proper monitoring and evaluation processes for participation in cooperative mechanisms, the feedback of which will aid in prioritization and planning for resource management, and in capability and capacity development.

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Developing a Framework for Philippine Security Cooperation in a Changing Maritime Milieu

Dianne Faye C. Despi

Introduction

With the uncertainty and volatility of the overall security situation in the Indo-Pacific region, the establishment of a stable order is paramount for all nations within the region and its periphery. The current overall strategic environment is characterized by counterbalancing by the major powers, and their pursuit of cooperation with other states in the region seems to have become a form of competition for the loyalty of allies and friends.

This recent evolution of the security milieu has also brought about changes in the security architecture and in the nature of regional security cooperation. Some of the most significant developments in the security environment were the United States' articulation of a vision of a more inclusive maritime region, thus the renaming of the former Pacific Command into the United States (U.S.) Indo-Pacific Command,

the emergence of "gray zone" challenges (as will be explained below), China's operationalization of a new strategy through the Belt and Road initiative, and its militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea.

Zeroing in on Southeast Asia, one of the larger insular states with significant potential to contribute to regional security is the Philippines. Straddling several trade routes and sea lines of communication (SLOCs), the country is in a strategic position to potentially influence the maritime security environment. In this sense, it is in the interest of the Philippines to develop the capacity and capability to respond to, if not to proactively address, the security risks amid increasing unpredictability in the current strategic and operational environment. In light of its ill-equipped maritime services, and inadequate institutions, policies, and strategies governing its vast maritime domain, it is critical that the country be able to mitigate and overcome such gaps through leveraging on partnerships with regional states.

In this light, this paper seeks to provide insights and perspectives on the strategic and operational security challenges of the Indo-Pacific region (focusing on Southeast Asia), the changing face of maritime security cooperation in the Southeast Asian subregion, and the role of maritime security cooperative mechanisms in maintaining the delicate security balance. Ultimately, this working paper seeks to contribute to the development of a feasible maritime cooperation framework for the Philippines, focusing on the characteristics of functionality, inclusivity, and sustainability.

The Southeast Asian Maritime Domain: Platform for Cooperation or Competition?

The heightened importance of maritime security issues, coupled with strategic competition between the major Indo-Pacific powers China and the United States, have turned the extensive maritime domain of Southeast Asia into an arena of great uncertainty. Here, various countries' civilian and military maritime services navigate, operate, compete, and cooperate.

This section will discuss the current security environment in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on the strategic and operational issues which underpin recent developments in maritime security cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Strategic Considerations

The contrasting interests of the major powers reflected in their constant push and pull in the regional maritime domain hide an underbelly of great unpredictability and instability in their domestic affairs. Despite the renewed focus on the Pacific theater as mentioned in their Indo-Pacific Strategy Report[1], the complex politico-military dynamics of the United States, including the so-called "isolationist" stance of the Trump Administration, create constraints upon its former identity and role as a "global policeman". Although there is much attention to strengthening the U.S. armed forces, there is a seeming strategic-operational gap, wherein the added mandate by the top leadership to ensure "burden-sharing" now complicates international operations and engagements, particularly of the U.S. Navy[2]. The U.S. has moreover notably scaled down its presence in important diplomatic platforms and dialogues with regional partners, such as those centered around ASEAN and the East Asia Summit[3]. Also, despite the rapid technological leap which allows for precision operations utilizing less boots on the ground, recent problems with U.S. ships and aircraft expose what could be considered "operational fatigue", or what other analysts term as "overextension" due to the multiple engagements of the U.S. armed forces around the globe.

On the other hand, the question of China's internal political stability once again arises with its recent economic slowdown, tighter censorship and repression of internal dissent, and the challenges faced by the Hong Kong government from massive protests, among others. In order to help maintain the primacy of the current regime amidst such internal cracks, China seems to be employing an aggressive geo-economic strategy in the maritime arena. Whether it be via sponsorship of fleets of fishing craft that harrass other fishers or even Coast Guards of other countries, or

terraforming to build full-fledged artificial islands with People's Liberation Army (PLA) military installations in the South China Sea[4], the Chinese have been proactive in the maritime domain, trying to cement their foothold in the region in support of their national goals. Additionally, the country's track record in overfishing, poaching and use of illegal fishing methods raises food security concerns in the countries that source fish from the South China Sea.

In response to these dynamics are intricate diplomatic undercurrents in Southeast Asia seen in a scale like never before. The power play is very visible in the balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging strategies employed by various ASEAN states toward China and the U.S. One startling and unnerving observation is that the Philippines has taken the backseat on issues involving China. The Philippines' internal-external security thrusts have again seen a shift of priorities: from territorial defense back to internal security especially after the Marawi Siege; and a diversification of international engagements – in all aspects, but most evident in security – to non-traditional partners such as Russia and China.

Operational Realities

There are also operational realities in the region which have a tendency to complicate the security situation. First and foremost, China's thrust towards gaining operational superiority in the Pacific, particularly in the South China Sea, has brought about significant changes to the security landscape. The massive coral reef destruction due to the militarization of their artificial islands in the SCS, and their seeming encirclement of India after building their Djibouti base and grabbing Hambantota Port from Sri Lanka have raised the alarm of some countries in the periphery.

One important gamechanger in the operational environment is the prevalence of China's maritime militia, now being referred to as the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia (PAFMM). The PAFMM is often used for swarming tactics, indicative of their sheer numbers on the ground.

Andrew Erickson aptly describes the PAFMM is a "state-organized, developed and controlled force operating under a direct military chain of command to conduct Chinese national activities".[5] The personnel manning the PAFMM ships are fishermen and other marine industry workers who have been trained and supported by the PLA-Navy. The PAFMM's activities are aggressive and have significant impact on law enforcement and commercial operations of coastal states such as the Philippines, and have given rise to the concept of a "gray zone"[6] in current security parlance.

The character of the "gray zone" in the maritime domain refers to the utilization of civilian types of assets and different coercive, 'warlike' instruments and measures other than the military. This is a huge challenge for navies operating in the disputed areas, notably because "gray zone" actors and activities are mostly "civilian" in nature. A unilateral military response is therefore not appropriate for such activities. However, the size, number, and capability of PAFMM vessels greatly overwhelm even the civilian maritime law enforcement agencies of other coastal states. This creates a dilemma for these states as to which agency – civilian or military, law enforcement or defense - will respond to such operations on the ground, and how.

Moreover, the larger Indo-Pacific, wherein Southeast Asia is situated, is the world's most disaster-prone region. This has given rise to various military and non-military initiatives in improving the delivery of search and rescue operations, as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). Also, ISIS terrorists are linking with indigenous radical groups in Southeast Asian countries, examples of which are the Maute Group and the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines. These terrorist networks span the tri-border area of the Sulu-Celebes Seas, and extend their reach from Western and Central Mindanao up to the Palawan area. Additionally, transnational crimes such as piracy, illegal traffic of persons and goods, and smuggling, threaten peace and good order at sea. These three concerns, albeit very different in nature and with different impacts on security operations, can be considered persistent, clear, and present dangers within the region.

Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia through the Years

With many actual and perceived regional security concerns being of a maritime and transnational nature, there is a need for countries to cooperate. Since the late 1980s to the early 1990s, countries have already realized the need for greater regional cooperation to respond to maritime security issues. The cooperative mechanisms during this period were focused on building trust between nations, and developing avenues for dialogue such as the ASEAN Regional Forum. Furthermore, initiatives for bilateral and multilateral maritime security cooperation were mainly undertaken through the countries' navies, due to the international nature of this armed service. U.S.-led maritime exercises, such as the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise and the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT), were at the forefront of naval cooperation in the region. Another major initiative is the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, which started in 1988 in order to develop confidence and cooperation between navies, to exchange information on maritime matters, and to establish lines of communication between participating navies.[7]

Japan was one of the first nations that proposed regional initiatives to combat piracy in Southeast Asia, largely due to the fact that a significant amount of their sea trade passes through the region's waters. One such proposal was for Ocean Peacekeeping, which envisioned "coordinated activities by the regional maritime forces to assure the stable utilization of the oceans"[8]. This was followed by then-Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's proposal for a regional coast guard for Southeast Asia.[9] However, these proposals were met with opposition from China and non-committal responses from the ASEAN countries.

The 2000s saw a growth in functional cooperative mechanisms between and among nations as the security environment became even more complex. In response to the War on Terror by the United States, 2002 saw the commencement of the then-called Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism (SEACAT) Exercise[10]. Further, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which had devastating effects on Indonesia and Thailand,

military and civilian protocols and mechanisms were developed in order to render assistance, such as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER,) paving the way for more coordinated efforts in HADR operations.

Another significant multilateral mechanism, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), was inaugurated in 2006 as a response to the piracy problem in the region, with the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP ISC) established in Singapore. There were fourteen (14) inaugural contracting parties including countries from North, Southeast, and South Asia, and this has now grown to twenty (20) countries, including the United States and Australia.[11] The ReCAAP ISC facilitates communication between national authorities and the whole maritime community to assist coastal states and shipowners/masters in law enforcement and risk-mitigation activities, respectively.[12]

In 2009, the Information Fusion Centre (IFC), also based in Singapore, established by the ASEAN offered opportunities for increased cooperation on maritime domain awareness. It facilitates information sharing and collaboration among its partners by providing actionable information on maritime security threats to regional and international navies and maritime agencies. Furthermore, IFC became home to various multilateral maritime information-sharing portals and platforms, such as the ASEAN Information Sharing Portal, the Western Pacific Naval Symposium's Regional Maritime Information Exchange, and the Malacca Straits Patrol Information System.[13]

The 2000s until the 2010s also welcomed the rise of more actors in the field of maritime security cooperation. Beginning with the significant number of sea robberies and transnational crimes of the early 2000s, until recently when China's PAFMM joined the repertoire of maritime actors in the South China Sea, Coast Guards have become increasingly important in the region. In response to the "civilianization" of the maritime domain, coastguards have become "important strategic cushions between navies in ASEAN[14]". This gave rise to several initiatives to develop and harden the roles of national Coast Guards of the Southeast Asian countries, such as

the formation of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in 2005; the "hardening" of the Philippine Coast Guard's mandates (made more distinct from those of the Philippine Navy) with the promulgation of the Coast Guard Law in 2009; the newly-formed Vietnam Fisheries Resource Surveillance joining the Vietnam Coast Guard in 2013, and the formation of the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA)[15] alongside the Indonesian Sea and Coast Guard in 2014[16]. Further, Japan has been instrumental to Coast Guard development in the region, particularly in setting up the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM) in 2004, and in contributing to the capability- and capacity-building of several regional Coast Guard forces, such as those of the Philippines and Vietnam, and even Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean.

The 2010s also saw the "hardening" of institutions and cooperation measures, and the flourishing of "minilateral" practical maritime security cooperation measures (PMSCMs)[17]. Collin Koh defines PMSCMs as "essentially 'coalitions of the willing' comprising local actors who share a common maritime area of interest"[18]. Compared to high-level multilateral initiatives, such avenues for cooperation are easier to establish, since less actors are involved, hurdling the main issues of political differences and disparity in capacity and capability. Moreover, these minilateral activities bank on existing protocols and frameworks, and contribute to building trust based on operational familiarity.

This phenomenon is primarily in consideration of the delicate diplomatic dynamics between the countries in region, in which the challenge is how to develop cooperation which transcends strategic differences, such as different threat perceptions and the lack of mutual trust. In this case, working-level cooperative activities proliferate. John Bradford calls this "operationalized" security cooperation, which is defined as "a specific type and degree of cooperation in which policies addressing common threats can be carried out by midlevel officials of the states involved without immediate or direct supervision from strategic-level authorities".[19] Examples of operationalized maritime security cooperation include combined naval exercises, regularly scheduled combined law enforcement patrols, and naval intelligence exchanges.

Concrete examples include the Malacca Straits Sea Patrols (MSSP) and the "Eyes-in-the-Sky" Combined Maritime Air Patrols (EiS), which started in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Both are practical cooperative arrangements composed of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand's navies, tasked to ensure safety and security in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.[20] Another initiative is the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA) between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, set up in 2016 to address the issues surrounding border porosity around the Sulu and Celebes Seas. Some of the activities outlined in the TCA include the establishment of Maritime Coordinating Centers, intelligence sharing, and rotational naval and air patrols.[21]

Given the nature of localized maritime security challenges and the greater ease in facilitating minilateral responses to these challenges, it is expected that initiatives of this kind – minilateral, interest-based, and practical – will proliferate in the future. The broader multilateral mechanisms, such as the (Expanded) ASEAN Maritime Forum and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (Plus) will remain important platforms for dialogue, but the face of cooperation has changed into smaller, more specialized avenues to address practical issues. The question now for the Philippines is whether it is equipped and ready to seriously engage in these new arrangements.

Maritime Security Cooperation: The Philippine Experience

As one of the large Southeast Asian insular countries, the Philippines holds a pivotal role in maritime security cooperation, especially in maritime domain awareness. However, there are several challenges to the Philippines in its pursuit of the country's maritime security, affecting its capacity to contribute significantly to, let alone lead, maritime security cooperation initiatives in the region. This section outlines some of these challenges.

First on the list of challenges to the Philippines is the lack of a coordinated maritime strategy. This stems from the lack of a comprehensive national policy on maritime issues, which should clearly elucidate the

country's short- and long-term maritime security objectives and priorities, delineate overlapping missions and functions of specific government agencies, and serve as guidance for all current and future maritime-related initiatives. This is exacerbated by weak institutional capacity when it comes to maritime-related issues. There was a National Marine Policy (NMP) first enunciated in 1994 and implemented by the now-defunct Cabinet Committee on Maritime and Ocean Affairs (CABCOM-MOA).[22] However, there was no concrete implementing strategy for the policy. Efforts to reanimate the policy were undertaken in 2017, but it does not seem to be a priority and is still in the pipeline as of this writing.

Second, various maritime agencies (such as the National Coast Watch System, the Philippine Navy, the Philippine Coast Guard, etc.) still conduct their respective international cooperation initiatives and programs independently of the others, and coordination at inter-agency platforms is still not fully operationalized. This is partly due to overlapping mandates and lack of assets to accomplish these mandates. Moreover, many initiatives are also personality-led or dependent on certain champions or advocates, which has led to lack of sustainability. As one government official mentioned, there seems to be an unwritten rule of "no buy-in of the strategic leadership, no movement" when it comes to maritime initiatives. Also notable is the fact that there is still much room for improvement in institutionalizing inter-agency exercises and dialogues, to increase interoperability between the Philippine maritime services themselves.
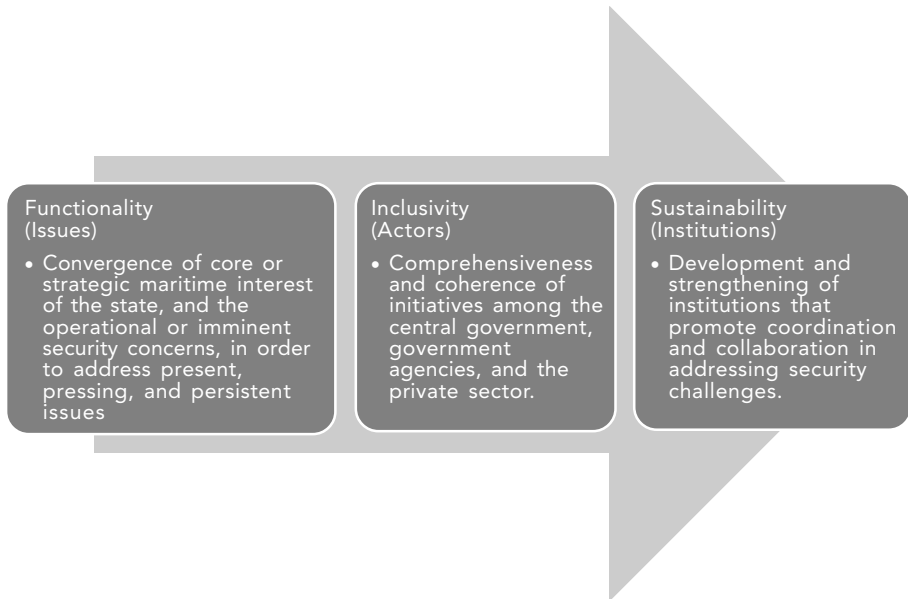
Third, Philippine maritime agencies lack proper assets and platforms for sustained participation in maritime security cooperation initiatives. Despite the national government efforts of late and several additions from partner countries such as Japan and South Korea, the current fleet sizes for the Philippine Navy, Philippine Coast Guard, and other maritime agencies are still inadequate for purposes of effectively patrolling the country's massive maritime domain, much less contribute to international cooperative mechanisms. Fleet modernization is also an issue, considering that the maritime services still need to compete with each other and with other non-maritime agencies for larger modernization budgets. Weak infrastructure, both physical (e.g. lack of modern ports) and digital (i.e. lack

of coordinated, secure, and updated communication systems and information databases) grossly limit the capacity of the Philippines to engage in maritime domain awareness initiatives.

Lastly, there are practical obstacles which hinder more proactive participation initiatives from the Philippine side. Mark Valencia, looking at the region, particularly notes tight operating budgets; lack of common doctrine, language and interoperability of equipment; and widely varying stages of technological development' among neighboring states.[23] Aside from those there is a seeming mismatch in priorities between the Philippines and surrounding countries. For example, some of the most urgent maritime challenges for the Philippines are border security, addressing crimes at sea, and maritime counterterrorism, while for other countries, especially in the tri-border area of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, of higher priority might be mixed migration issues, and economic security for their coastal areas. Given the country's limited resources and capabilities, there are constraints on its ability to commit to cooperate with other countries on low-priority issues, e.g. marine environmental protection and maritime domain awareness, against more pressing issues such as piracy, smuggling, and maritime terrorism.

Developing a Philippine Maritime Security Cooperation Framework

Earlier, it was argued that the major challenge for the countries in the region is to develop, enhance, and sustain cooperative channels transcending their strategic differences. This raises the need for a cohesive maritime security cooperation model for the Philippines, as it will be pivotal in identifying the depth and breadth of cooperation, and how to optimize the country's participation in international cooperative mechanisms. In this light, the author suggests a simple framework which may help the Philippines improve its capacity to participate in and even initiate cooperative mechanisms to address maritime security concerns. The framework highlights the characteristics of functionality, inclusivity, and sustainability, reflected in the diagram below:

Functionality (Issues)	Inclusivity (Actors)	Sustainability (Institutions)
• Convergence of core or strategic maritime interest of the state, and the operational or imminent security concerns, in order to address present, pressing, and persistent issues	• Comprehensiveness and coherence of initiatives among the central government, government agencies, and the private sector.	• Development and strengthening of institutions that promote coordination and collaboration in addressing security challenges.

These three elements are depicted in a continuum. Based on experiences and practices of maritime security cooperation in Southeast Asia, the development and enhancement of regional cooperative mechanisms often start with the identification of singular or multiple issues to address, moving towards agreement on the depth and breadth of involvement of the actors, and solidifying their commitment through institutional development. Inasmuch as this is a work in progress, the author hopes to contribute to developing a maritime cooperation framework for the Philippines, through understanding the shortcomings and inadequacies in the current procedures and methods that hamper participation in cooperative mechanisms.

Functionality

The author posits that the first element to be considered in developing a strong maritime security cooperation framework is functionality, which is defined as the convergence of core or strategic maritime security interests of the state and its operational or imminent security concerns, in order to

address present, pressing, and persistent challenges. Priority issues for international cooperation will be defined around these concerns which could be considered as "convergence points".

As we have seen with ReCAAP and the TCA, cooperative mechanisms with strong foundations on particular functional issues produce favorable results. It should be noted that territorial and maritime delimitation, despite its utmost importance to states, is often a source of divergence between countries which are claimants of a particular territory or maritime area. Thus, cooperation on issues related to delimitation or sovereignty will not go far. However, a common strategic maritime interest of states is the preservation of order and stability as well as assertion of authority and control by states over illicit non-state actors and other forces (including natural phenomena) that would threaten such order and stability and potentially harm their national development. The key to functionality is being able to set aside current strategic differences in order to pursue initiatives related to converging permanent or long-term interests, then to identify the converging imminent and operational conditions that challenge these interests.

For the Philippines, notable issues for collaboration and cooperation include (in no particular order) maritime safety and shipping, maritime domain awareness, search and rescue, coastal welfare, fisheries (particularly fish stock data collection), maritime connectivity, transnational crimes and piracy, illicit trade, maritime terrorism, marine environmental protection, the rule of law and good order at sea, security of sea lines of communication, enhancing disaster response and resiliency, and energy security. Given the transnationality of these issues, it should also be determined which issues overlap and which among them could be addressed by a single mechanism.

It is worth noting, however, that central to identifying which issues to collaborate and cooperate on is identifying the gaps which could not be addressed by states unilaterally by singular maritime agencies and inter-agency collaboration. This is also in order to avoid overlaps and redundancies when it comes to participating in cooperative mechanisms.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity refers to the comprehensiveness and coherence of initiatives between states (which embody their 'national interest'), between government agencies of a particular country (whose institutional mandates represent sectoral public interests), and between the public and private sectors within a state. Note that there are three levels which cover the particular actors in developing cooperation. State inclusivity means that, owing to the transnationality of threats, the inclusion of all affected states should be endeavored in pursuing cooperation. However, caution should be exercised with regard to the inclusion of the maritime powers, as what may be seen as a platform for cooperation may become one for competition.

Secondly, inclusivity also requires strong inter-agency coordination within each country. Despite the ad-hoc nature of some initiatives, one cannot do away with protocol in participating in cooperation initiatives, as this could result to inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the utilization of finite resources. There had been several efforts in the past related to developing an inter-agency operating protocol for the Philippine maritime services which properly takes stock of all agency inputs in order to identify gaps and address the overlaps in mandate and redundancies in initiatives. However, the promulgation and implementation of such protocol has not been completed due to several factors, such as lack of support from strategic level decision-makers, inter-agency rivalry and lack of initiative to create avenues for dialogue and interoperability exercises, overlapping mandates, and the lack of appropriate assets for particular activities. Remarking on this problem, one government official interviewed for this study noted that there are current efforts as of this writing to harmonize Philippine maritime agency mandates under one Executive Order, which would be instrumental in developing a comprehensive operating protocol.

Lastly, as maritime issues affect most everyone in society, inclusivity also refers to the involvement of the private sector, including local coastal communities, in considering international maritime security cooperation initiatives, particularly those related to securing economic activity, and environmental protection. Involving members of the shipping industry,

fishing companies, and even the energy industry especially in planning, research and development, and information gathering, would significantly improve their relations with government agencies, and raise awareness of the current and future initiatives of the government with regard to the maritime economic sector. Further, constant dialogue between the maritime agencies and non-governmental organizations and coastal communities would also enhance the overall planning process for addressing maritime security concerns, as well as enhance cooperation and collaboration in the local level. This will lend a sense of ownership to private citizens, thereby increasing awareness and maximizing their participation in worthwhile initiatives.

Sustainability

Finally, sustainability refers to the commitment of states in addressing security challenges through the development of cooperative frameworks. It is all about the development and strengthening of institutions that promote coordination and collaboration, while safeguarding the interest of each state.

This could be done through the harmonization of laws and priorities, and the promotion of a common understanding about issues and how to resolve them. Communication is key in sustaining cooperation, and the development of international protocols and norms will definitely decrease the possibilities of miscommunication between states. This also promotes an appreciation for the rule of law, which is basically the only way to level the playing field for all interested parties, and the best way to ensure the strategic value of a particular mechanism. It should be further noted that cooperation between states in an area where there is a marked degree of asymmetry of capacity should always be encouraged, but always "on the basis of mutual respect and regard for inalienable state rights".[24]

As transparency, accountability, and predictability are the hallmarks of a good international partner, setting policies, implementing mechanisms, and evaluating bodies into place for the Philippine side will ensure stability and sustainability of Philippine participation in future cooperative

initiatives. In the Philippine experience, strengthening the capacity of the National Coast Watch Council (giving it "teeth") to orchestrate, lead, and implement initiatives for maritime security through a revitalized National Marine Policy would be pivotal. Further, sustainability requires proper monitoring and evaluation processes for participation in cooperative mechanisms, the feedback of which will aid in prioritization and planning for resource management, and in capability and capacity development.

Conclusion

With the ever-changing security environment of the Indo-Pacific region, coupled with the enduring and emerging strategic and operational realities, cooperation mechanisms are evolving to respond to more complex issues. The rise of these new challenges requires the development of new and/or improved responses, and this was reflected in the changing face of maritime security cooperation mechanisms to secure the vast regional waters.

However, for the Philippines, several challenges constrain it from undertaking its own maritime security initiatives, and therefore its capacity to influence and make a difference in the security milieu. This includes the lack of a coordinated maritime strategy, which stems from the lack of a comprehensive national policy on maritime issues; lack of inter-agency collaboration; shortage in proper assets and platforms for sustained participation in maritime security cooperation initiatives, and other practical obstacles, which include resource constraints, prioritization issues, and lack of common doctrine, language and interoperability of equipment.

In order to address this, the author has developed a simple framework to guide Philippine maritime security cooperation initiatives centered on the characteristics of functionality, inclusivity, and sustainability. These characteristics center on the three elements of practical cooperation: issues, actors, and institutions, which interconnect towards the objective of securing the country's vast maritime domain.

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Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation, Inc.

Established in 2014, Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation, Inc. (APPFI) is an independent policy think tank that aims to promote peace, development, and cultural understanding for peoples of the Philippines and the Asia Pacific through research, international dialogue, and cooperation. It is the Philippine member of the regional network ASEAN Institutes for Strategic and International Studies.

The organization's work focuses on the implications of international and regional developments for the Philippines and its foreign relations. It has dedicated programs which cover international security developments, maritime affairs, connectivity and integration, and China.

Principally, APPFI undertakes three major activities. First, it conducts and publishes policy-oriented research, disseminates the same to relevant stakeholders, and provides quarterly analyses of regional developments. Second, it organizes roundtable discussions and national as well as international conferences, solely or in partnership with other institutions. Third, it hosts exchanges and develops issue-based partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector in the Philippines and the Asia Pacific.

RESEARCH PROGRAMS

- CHINA PROGRAM

  APPFI's original flagship program focuses on China and Philippines-China relations. The China Program stands on two pillars: (1) promoting better understanding among Philippine stakeholders of the implications of China's emerging role in East Asia and the world, and (2) strengthening linkages and engaging in Track Two diplomacy between these two neighboring countries.

- MARITIME DEVELOPMENT & SECURITY PROGRAM (MDSP)

  This multidisciplinary program explores how the Philippines can enhance advantages and minimize threats and risks arising from its maritime strategic environment, looking toward both the internal and external dimensions. MDSP aims to generate timely discussions and appropriate recommendations regarding the strategic implications of Philippine maritime security, marine economic resources, and coastal development.

- REGIONAL INTEGRATION & CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (RICP)

  The RICP promotes a critical understanding of the political economy of regional development, and of economic trends and issues that affect Philippine national and regional interests. It seeks to generate insights and research that will enable the Philippines to strategically navigate through its international economic engagements, and interact beneficially with regional states and multilateral institutions.

- REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM (RSAP)

  The RSAP examines the evolving security environment, the role of multilateral and other forms of security associations, and institutional developments that affect Philippine and regional security. RSAP will be a hub producing research, intelligent commentary, and policy briefs from leading experts and specialists in the Philippines and the wider Asia-Pacific region.

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

Closely linked to, but independent from the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Philippines is a German political foundation. Established in 1964, KAS Philippines was the first ever KAS office in Asia. Ever since its inception, KAS has been actively working in the Philippines under the principles of freedom, justice, and solidarity.

With the main purpose of developing programs that boost the country's democratic institutions and processes, KAS strongly believes that human dignity and human rights are at the very heart of their work. Thus, KAS regards people as the starting point of its initiatives towards social justice, democratic freedom, and sustainable economic activity. KAS Philippines creates, develops, and sustains networks within the political and economic arenas by bringing people together who take their mandates seriously in society.

Given that KAS provides, not just research, but also robust and dynamic activities, the foundation considers itself not just as a think tank, but a think-and-do tank that works along socially equitable, economically efficient, and ecologically sustainable lines. KAS Philippines' country foci are institutional and political reform, the social market economy, and peace and development in Mindanao. The foundation works with civil society organizations, the academe, governmental institutions, political parties, think-tanks, the media, and decision-makers, creating strong partnerships along the way. Particularly, KAS Philippines aims to increase political cooperation in development cooperation at the national and international levels.