Maritime Security in Southeast Asia: Maritime Domain Awareness

The Malacca Strait Security Initiative and Prospects for Minilateral Initiatives

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Discussion Points

- Definition and Delimitations
- Overview: The Malacca Strait Security Initiative
- Evaluating MSSI
- Extra-regional Powers in the ‘Equation’
- Concluding Remarks
What is Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)?
Maritime surveillance data has to be effectively gathered, collated and understood by the stakeholders. Comprehensive MDA encompasses both unilateral and cooperative measures at the multi-stakeholder level.

What constitutes successful MDA?
Minilateral initiatives: what?

- Minilateral initiatives that involve sub-regional cooperation within the ASEAN geographical scope.
- Minilateral initiatives are not new in Southeast Asia, since they dated back to the 1990s with particular attention on the South China Sea, in some ways related to MDA.
- Minilateral initiatives dealing with MDA against non-traditional maritime security threats are discussed here.
- Selected ASEAN countries.
Maritime Security Challenges in SE Asia
## History of naval cooperation in SE Asia

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Case Study
Malacca Strait Security Initiative
MSSI: Overview

- Precursor: bilateral coordinated patrols amongst Malacca Strait littoral states
- 2004: Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP) under MALSINDO trilateral arrangement
- 2005: Eyes-in-the-Sky (EiS) promulgated
- 2006: SOPs established to enhance MSSP; MSSP and EiS amalgamated under the Malacca Strait Patrols umbrella (based on the proposed MSSI scheme) to formalize arrangement
- Trilateral Joint Coordinating Committee comprising 3 working groups: MSSP, EiS and Intelligence Exchange Group
Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore ships and aircraft conducting sea and air patrols.
Impact of the MSSI on MDA

‘Out-of-the-Limelight’ Complements to MSSI

- National capacity-building
  - Formation of MMEA by Kuala Lumpur in 2005
  - Formation of MSTF and IFC by Singapore in 2009

- Bilateral arrangements
  - Indonesia–Singapore SURPIC I in 2005 and SURPIC II in 2009
  - US technical support to Indonesia and Malaysia, e.g. Integrated Maritime Surveillance System
Roles of Extra-regional Powers

- EiS open to extra-regional power participation: so far, Australia and New Zealand are amongst those interested
- In 2004, Japan reportedly deployed MPA to help patrol skies above the strait
- Help in terms of financial and technical support in capacity-building
- Low-profile, less obtrusive joint activities such as CARAT and SEACAT
WASHINGTON IN THE EQUATION
Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System (CENTRIXS)
Average Cumulative Number of Naval Cooperation in SE Asia

Source: author's own database compiled from various official and open sources; selected ASEAN sample countries – Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam
Prospects for growth of minilateral MDA initiatives

- Since the beginning of 2000, fastest growth recorded in bilateral and multilateral initiatives.
- In contrast, minilateral initiatives remain nascent and largely overshadowed by wider multilateral initiatives.
- Minilateral initiatives remain geographically narrowly-and issue-focused, in view of the diverse and sometimes diverging maritime threat perceptions amongst ASEAN countries.
- Sustainability of minilateral initiatives is highly dependent on individual capacity-building efforts of participant countries.
- Involvement of extra-regional powers, at least in the area of capacity-building, remains inevitable.
Beyond minilateral MDA initiatives: Promising Signs

- The formalisation of the MSSI in 2006 represents the starting point for future prospects of wider and more institutionalised maritime security cooperation.
- Since 2006, Malacca Strait littoral states have opened the possibility of extra-regional power participation, such as the case of India.
- In July 2010, the four Malacca Strait littoral states roped in Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines and Vietnam as observers to the discussion and review of existing MSSI.
- In July 2011, ASEAN navy chiefs formalise their meeting to expand maritime security cooperation.
- In January 2012, ASEAN leaders agreed to enhance the use of the ASEAN Maritime Forum for more wide-ranging and inclusive participation into maritime security matters.
Can MSSI illuminate the way forward for future maritime security cooperation in SE Asia, with respect to MDA in particular?

Characteristics of MSSI are reflective of the overall patterns of SE Asian naval cooperation since the 1980s: graduated/phased; avoidance of wholesale imposition of foreign models; predilection for national sovereignty; NTS as the ‘convergence point’. 

The way forward...
Thank You! Questions?