



**3RD ANNUAL
RSIS-CNA
WORKSHOP:
ASIA'S MARITIME
CONNECTIONS**

Event Report
27-28 August 2014

**Institute of Defence and
Strategic Studies**

RSiS
Nanyang Technological University

S. RAJARATNAM
SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES

Event Report

**3RD ANNUAL RSIS-CNA WORKSHOP:
ASIA'S MARITIME CONNECTIONS**

ORGANISED BY:

**MARITIME SECURITY PROGRAMME,
S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (RSIS),
NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (NTU), SINGAPORE
AND
CENTER FOR NAVAL ANALYSES (CNA), U.S.A.**

**27-28 August 2014
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Preface | 3 |
| Acknowledgement | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| U.S. Engagement in Asia | 5 |
| Great Powers of the Asia Pacific and the Evolving Strategic Environment | 6 |
| South China Sea—Not Just Rocks and Islands | 10 |
| Cooperation and Competition in the Indian Ocean Region | 11 |
| Conclusion: The Future of Maritime Indo-Pacific | 12 |
| Programme | 13 |
| Participants | 15 |
| About the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies | 16 |
| About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies | 16 |
| About the Center for Naval Analyses | 16 |

Editor

Jane Chan

Rapporteurs

Henrick Z. Tsjeng, Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto and Tan Ming Hui

This report summarises the proceedings of the workshop as interpreted by the assigned rapporteur(s) and editor(s) appointed by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this report.

PREFACE

The Maritime Security Programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), together with the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), hosted their annual bilateral workshop on “Asia’s Maritime Connections” on 27-28 August 2014. The workshop facilitated an exchange of views between experts from both institutions on pressing traditional and non-traditional maritime security considerations in the Indo-Pacific littoral, including the U.S. Rebalance policy, China’s rise, and other concerns towards greater multilateral cooperation in the region. The workshop concluded with a discussion on potential trends in the region moving forward.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

RSIS would like to express its gratitude to the CNA Vice President and Director of Strategic Studies, Dr Eric V. Thompson, and his colleagues for facilitating and contributing to the workshop. The views expressed in this Report do not necessarily represent those of CNA, RSIS, or the participants’ respective countries of origin.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Given the region's distinctive maritime geography, the Indo-Pacific boasts extensive economic and strategic connections. As such, traditional and non-traditional maritime security risks could potentially undermine the security and the economic development of countries in the region.
2. The U.S. rebalance to Asia has generally been welcomed by American allies and partners. However, it faces challenges both from domestic pressure and international obligations, leading some to question whether the United States is truly committed to the rebalance policy. Even within the context of this policy, President Obama's visits to various Asian countries demonstrated Washington's somewhat different approaches towards individual countries.
3. Another challenge is addressing China's rise. China is aspiring to become the foremost maritime power in the region, and is growing increasingly confident in the international stage. Meanwhile, Russia is also showing interest in expanding its naval presence in the Pacific, with implications for the U.S. rebalance.
4. In the midst of these fluid geo-political developments is the South China Sea. China has mainly been using non-military maritime forces to advance its claims, and has been developing its civil maritime surveillance capabilities. However, China will continue to face resistance from other claimants possibly supported by extra-regional players.
5. The U.S. has an interest in seeing the South China Sea disputes peacefully resolved through international law. It may not be taking a position regarding the respective sovereignty claims, but it is not neutral on assertive behaviour in the enforcement of maritime claims. The U.S., however, could use incentives and engagement, rather than outright military deterrence, in its dealings with China.
6. The Indian Ocean Region is also gaining prominence, with international cooperation and competition in the region heating up, and the necessity of maritime cooperation becoming even more critical. Despite tensions, maritime cooperation should continue to take place as it is essential for good order at sea. While demands for effective cooperation will become more pressing, effective regimes for cooperation are still lacking. Dialogue and confidence—developed through multilateral forums and exercises—must be built to overcome these challenges.



U.S. ENGAGEMENT IN ASIA

The U.S. rebalance to Asia is taking place amid challenges from both domestic and international fronts. With crises in the Middle East, the sequestration of the federal budget and perceived weakness of the Obama Administration's "red-line" diplomacy in Syria, doubts have been raised in Asia on whether the administration can fully commit to the rebalance policy, despite best efforts by the U.S. to reassure its allies and partners otherwise.

President Obama's recent visits to Asia took place amid these uncertainties. There are some differences in the White House's approaches towards the visits to South Korea, Japan, Malaysia and the Philippines. During President Obama's visit to South Korea, Washington highlighted the military alliance as the lynchpin of security in Asia and emphasised the role of the ROK government as an autonomous yet eager partner for a growing U.S. commitment to the country and region. On the other hand, Washington initially saw the Japan visit in the context of economic relations, but the visit turned out to be more about concurrent strategic policies and the pursuit of common interests.

The Obama Administration's engagement with the Philippines and Malaysia are underpinned by different dynamics. Common themes include Washington's decision to recognise ASEAN centrality and work with both ASEAN and individual member states to reduce South China Sea tensions. In Malaysia, President Obama's visit was seen as helping push U.S.-Malaysia ties towards closer cooperation, with the positive atmosphere heightened by the U.S. contribution to the search for the missing Malaysian Airlines Flight 370. In contrast, the South China Sea dominated President Obama's Manila visit, which was preceded by the

signing of an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement and the Philippines' submission of a memorial to the UN's arbitration tribunal questioning China's claims.

The rebalance also comprises an economic aspect to demonstrate the United States' commitment to Asia's economic well-being. It also seeks to improve American market access in Asia, underscoring the importance of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). All in all, the rebalance appears sustainable, unless current TPP negotiations fail or the American Congress throws out the negotiated pact.

Indonesia's response, meanwhile, provides a glimpse into a regional perspective to the U.S. rebalance. Due to shared values and norms that can reinforce Indonesia's democratic consolidation, Indonesia has begun viewing the U.S. more favourably. Albeit met with a cautious welcome, Jakarta has embraced the United States' rebalance and its potential advantages in security terms.

Nonetheless, there are obstacles to greater cooperation between Indonesia and the U.S., including different priorities and shifting attention, which could also generate disagreements over the kind of assistance Indonesia wishes to receive and that the U.S. is willing to grant. Notwithstanding the challenges, there is much to gain from an expanded U.S.-Indonesia maritime security cooperation. Key enablers must be provided to sustain the cooperation in a continuous manner, including political-constitutional adjustments, which will enable the U.S. to assist Indonesia militarily, and a paradigm shift on Indonesia's part to see the U.S. as a natural ally.



GREAT POWERS OF THE ASIA PACIFIC AND THE EVOLVING STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Two major countries pose strategic challenges to the U.S. rebalance to Asia—China and Russia. China is seen by other countries as behaving in an assertive manner, with Beijing increasingly interested in building its maritime power in line with the notion of the “Chinese Dream.” At the same time, Moscow is looking into expanding its presence in the Pacific, a development of potential concern to the U.S.

China’s maritime aspirations are playing a mounting role in geopolitical developments in the Asia Pacific. From China’s perspective, the country faces a pressurising strategic environment, necessitating the need for naval power and other maritime capabilities to defend their country’s strategic position. China is also seeing its commercial interests globalise, bringing with it the necessity to protect the sea lines of communication (SLOC) vital to its continued economic development.

China’s perceptions about its geopolitical position and its maritime interests differ from those of others. The Chinese are also growing increasingly confident in protecting what they see as their legitimate interests. China will likely continue to pursue non-confrontational assertiveness in the territorial disputes, with strong counter-measures in response to the actions of other countries.

The notion of China as a maritime power is an explicit strategy of the country’s leaders. China seeks to increase its capabilities in terms of coastal security, shipbuilding and merchant marines, along with the development of its Navy. The integration of the Chinese Coast Guard in March 2013 meant that China now has one of the largest coast guard forces in the world. However, the strategic potential of this new entity depends on how its members resolve their bureaucratic differences. Secondly, China hopes to attain self-sufficiency by developing its shipbuilding capacity, so as not to be vulnerable to economic sanctions imposed by other countries. China is already a global leader in shipping and shipbuilding, and seeks to build a world-class Navy.

China’s aspiration to become the foremost maritime power in the region is evident not just from the country’s increasing confidence in terms of its maritime economic

goals and naval development, but also from its discourses and official narratives. The official vision of the Maritime Silk Road illustrates China’s economic aspirations, involving the upgrading and expansion of maritime infrastructure, improving connectivity between ports and enhancing maritime cooperation. While it is still in a preliminary stage of ideation, some evidence of implementation has been observed. Along with economic goals such as the expansion of overseas investment markets and the internationalisation of its currency, China also seeks to improve relations with ASEAN and adjust the regional order in its favour. However, given geopolitical tensions, China would face challenges in getting even just bilateral buy-in from many countries along the Maritime Silk Road.

The results of the actions of Chinese fishermen in China’s maritime periphery are also coming under mounting scrutiny. Structural changes in China’s fishing industry, from inshore to offshore fishing, have contributed to geopolitical tensions with its neighbours. In response to domestic needs and to ensure long-term sustainability of the fishery sector, the Chinese government has promoted fishing activities in offshore and distant waters to prevent overfishing of inshore waters. Even though some in China have called on the Chinese government to emphasise the strategic role of fishermen in enhancing China’s maritime power, this is not an explicit consideration by officials. While Chinese fishing policies are not explicitly targeted at strengthening China’s claims in the disputed territories, Chinese fishermen themselves may be spurred by profit and patriotic sentiments to continue their activities in disputed areas.

Other than China, Russia is also beginning to demonstrate its role as a maritime player in East Asia. Until recently, Russian foreign policy has neglected the Asia Pacific. Today, however, a shift in Russia’s global maritime strategy towards the Pacific can be seen which may have far-reaching effects on the maritime balance in the Pacific.

Russian leaders view Russian power in the Pacific through its triangular relationship with China and the U.S. Both the growth of Chinese power and the U.S. pivot to Asia are seen as challenges to Russian security. While China is seen as

a convenient partner in balancing against U.S. hegemony, tensions are evident in Sino-Russia relations arising from Russian fears of becoming China's junior partner. Meanwhile, the negative trend in Russia-U.S. relations is unlikely to promote any significant cooperative initiatives between the two countries.

Russian leaders see their country's future strength in Asia as intimately tied to its ability to project influence and power in the maritime sphere, primarily through naval operations. In 2008, Russia began a major military modernisation effort that has included enhancements to the Pacific Fleet. Russian military analysts have written that efforts to make

the Pacific fleet the most powerful of Russia's naval forces are under way, replacing the traditional focus on the Atlantic and European theatres. Yet Russia has also focused on diplomatic efforts to expand ties and bilateral cooperation with other Asian states. Sticking points remain, however, such as the territorial disputes between Russia and Japan. At the same time, Russia also appears interested further south—it has an interest in weapons sales to countries like Vietnam and Indonesia and also has commercial interests in some of the South China Sea oil and gas resources. However, Russia appears to take no position on the individual claims of the South China Sea.





1st Row (seated from left to right):

RADM (Ret.) Michael McDevitt, Ms Jane Chan Git Yin,

2nd Row (standing from left to right):

*Mr Zhang Hongzhou, Dr Li Mingjiang, Mr William J.
Ms Nilanthi Samaranayake, Mr Bronson Percival, Dr*

Not in Picture:

Mr Ristian A. Supriyanto, Dr Hoo Tiang Boon, Mr Richard



Dr Eric V. Thompson, Dr Ralf Emmers, Dr Sam Bateman

*Wesley, Ms Irene Chan, CAPT Brett Fullerton, Mr Henrick Z. Tsjeng,
Euan Graham*

Bitzinger, Mr Kwa Chong Guan

SOUTH CHINA SEA—NOT JUST ROCKS AND ISLANDS

The importance of the South China Sea goes beyond Southeast Asia. Apart from the claimed features and mineral resources it is thought to hold, the area is of vital importance for global seaborne trade. All stakeholders are interested to see peace and stability prevail in these waters. Increasingly, the territorial and boundary disputes in the South China Sea have also drawn in major powers, particularly the United States.

In the South China Sea, Beijing has been utilising non-military maritime forces, such as coast guard and fishery enforcement agencies. In the past decade, China has developed its civil maritime surveillance capabilities through improvements in organisational restructuring, platforms and technology. Despite repeated attempts to streamline multiple agencies responsible for maritime surveillance, Beijing has yet to complete the whole restructuring process, thus leaving existing agencies mired in bureaucratic infighting. Chinese attempts to use its surveillance technology for disaster relief operations and anti-smuggling operations may provide avenues for increased cooperation with regional countries on non-traditional security issues.

It was suggested that both energy security concerns and geostrategic factors motivate Chinese efforts to improve surveillance and strengthen enforcement patrols in the South China Sea. Given projections of increased demand for energy, offshore energy within China's "near seas" makes an attractive supply option. A case best exemplified is the use of CNOOC oil rig HD-981 inside Vietnam's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Philippines have also entered into exploratory and exploitation activities of oil and gas—most of them were managed through joint venture agreements with foreign energy companies intended to bring the interests of extra-regional players in what would have otherwise been localised disputes. As such, Beijing would continue to face resistance from other claimants possibly supported by extra-regional parties. Adding further complexity is the location of these perceived energy-rich areas in the southern part of the South China Sea. While it is possible that the Chinese "push" for territorial and energy claims might be stretched further south, it would likely be in a less assertive way, and not in the same manner as the placement of HD-981.

Observing these trends is the United States, with an interest in seeing the South China Sea disputes resolved peacefully and in accordance to international law. Despite its professed neutrality regarding the merits of the respective sovereignty claims, Washington is not neutral on assertive behaviour in enforcing maritime claims. However, with regard to the United States' relationship with China, outright military deterrence against China would be a mistake as the U.S. has no strategic interest in a military confrontation. Ultimately, the U.S. needs a sound and active diplomatic strategy to reconcile the various claimants and maintain good relations with all parties.

Despite these geopolitical considerations, maritime cooperation should continue to take place. Maritime cooperation is essential for good order at sea, but effective regimes for cooperation in the waters of East Asia are still lacking. Demands for effective cooperation will become more pressing in the future, given increased shipping traffic, resource pressures, safety, crimes at sea, and the need to promote safety and protect the marine environment.

There are numerous obstacles to cooperation in the South China Sea. The sovereignty disputes and the drive for a Code of Conduct have diverted attention from the necessity for maritime cooperation. There are perceptions that cooperation implies some concession on sovereignty claims. Meanwhile, naval cooperation has been undertaken as a way forward, with collaborative initiatives for naval operations and multilateral exercises held in the region. However, these measures come with the risk of militarising the seas.

There are other possible ways forward. First, a multi-sector approach to ocean and coastal management could be considered. Second, a standing Track 1 regional forum to address issues of cooperation and management could be organised. Third, the full implementation of cooperation under the 2002 Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), as well as the ASEAN-China Maritime Cooperation Fund, should be further looked into. Lastly, the U.S., with much expertise to contribute to maritime cooperation, might consider using "carrots" rather than "sticks" in its engagement with the region.

COOPERATION AND COMPETITION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

Two dominating trends have emerged in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It has all the potential for greater regional cooperation, as well as multiple problems to fuel competition. Recent strategic discourse has expanded the scope of the Indian Ocean to include the Pacific in recognition of the two oceans' growing inter-connectivity in economic and security issues. Critics posit that this new geographical concept—the Indo-Pacific—can be interpreted as a sign of looming competition between India and the U.S. on the one hand, and China on the other. As a relatively new geographical concept, the Indo-Pacific faces structural challenges.

On top of varying technological capacities and several interstate conflicts that have led to the escalation of tensions, the region also faces institutional challenges and the lack of a common identity. Unlike ASEAN and ASEAN-centric multilateral arrangements, the IOR is far behind the curve when it comes to establishing multilateral security regimes. To build a collective identity and reach greater consensus in their agenda and priorities setting, the member states of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) should continue to engage in dialogues so that they can foster a sense of trust and confidence for long term development of the region. For IONS, the first step could be maritime domain awareness through the creation of a shared and common picture. Issues of inter-operability, trust and confidence, as well as lack of collective political will to act can become obstacles. However, increased port visits, bilateral and multilateral exercises, and personnel exchanges among the members of IONS could potentially help alleviate the problem. For IORA, there is recognition that it may need to restructure the organisation to enable various aspects of maritime security to be included in its traditionally economic cooperation-centric agenda.

India has been taking guarded steps to develop and assert its standing in the Indian Ocean region. As seen from India's recent initiatives, the Bay of Bengal is becoming more critical for New Delhi, but different points of view exist between the different arms of government. While more hawkish elements in New Delhi view the Bay of Bengal as India's historical backyard and as a way to deny Chinese access into the Indian Ocean at the benefit of India's own thrust into Southeast Asia, others try to take a more moderate stance. There have also been signs of a softening of India's line regarding the Bay of Bengal as its own exclusive "backyard." In other ways, India has been attempting to demonstrate its leadership in the region, through humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), search-and-rescue (SAR) operations and other leadership roles in regional institutions. It has also supported stability in the Bay of Bengal by accepting the decision by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on its dispute over Exclusive Economic Zones with Bangladesh, as well as economic outreach towards IOR littoral countries and Southeast Asia.

Due to its geographical location, the Indian Ocean Region is also vulnerable to natural disasters. These risks have been underpinned by recent major catastrophes, demonstrating the urgent necessity for international cooperation in HADR and SAR in the region. However, sovereignty concerns, geopolitical rivalry and competing national interests are realities to be deliberated before the conduct of any multilateral HADR or SAR operation. To overcome these issues, dialogue and trust even before a disaster strikes could be considered.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF MARITIME INDO-PACIFIC

The workshop concluded with a wide-ranging discussion on the future scenarios of maritime Indo-Pacific.

The Projection of China's Maritime Power

- Driven by energy security concerns, China's energy consumption, supplied by overseas and offshore sources from within and outside Chinese borders, is set to increase.
- Consequentially, Beijing views the South China Sea as a potential future energy source, and will increasingly see the Indian and Pacific Oceans as a single strategic system. This heightens the importance of SLOC to China along the Indo-Pacific rim.
- Beijing has made investments in its shipping and shipbuilding industries to support its overseas commercial interests, accompanied by similar developments in its maritime defence industry. Its fishing industry will also become more critical due to growing domestic demands and declining fish stocks.
- In order to secure its SLOC, China pursues a different approach in the Indian Ocean in contrast to the Western Pacific. While remaining largely dependent on the U.S. for SLOC protection in the Indian Ocean, China has contributed on niche areas such as counter-piracy in the Gulf of Aden. In contrast, China has become increasingly concerned about the U.S. maritime presence along its coastline and EEZ in the Western Pacific.

U.S. Rebalance and Regional Responses

- Central to Chinese concerns is the U.S. rebalance and its potential impact towards constraining Chinese maritime growth. Although the U.S. rebalance was first mooted as an economic initiative to create jobs by expanding U.S. businesses in Asia, its headline-grabbing tenet has been about U.S. security initiatives.

- Although generally well-received in Southeast Asia, there are different perceptions from individual countries on the U.S. rebalance. No matter how the Sino-U.S. geopolitical interaction evolves, its impact will certainly be strongly felt in Southeast Asia. What happens after the conclusion of the arbitration process in the Sino-Philippine dispute and the state of U.S. policy as President Obama nears the end of his second term would be key trends that bear further observation.
- Equally important are the roles of other major powers, particularly Japan, India and Australia. The state of the Sino-Japanese relationship will ultimately depend on the dynamics of the Sino-U.S. relationship. In contrast, how the Sino-Indian relationship evolves under the new administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains to be seen. In addition, Australia appears to be shifting its view of China as an outright competitor, with the view that Australia does not have to choose between the U.S. and China.

Good order at sea

- Despite geopolitical competition, common maritime security threats still require trans-governmental cooperation. While largely non-traditional in nature, tackling these threats would be more difficult where cooperation among stakeholders is warranted.
- The issue of trust becomes prominent since it is a precondition for cooperation. But trust and cooperation should not be seen in a zero-sum perspective, since both aspects are mutually-reinforcing. A habit of cooperation, even among countries mired in geopolitical competition and disputes, can foster mutual confidence over time.
- Among all the alternatives discussed, cooperation in information-sharing to build common maritime domain awareness is attractive. A possible way forward could be a forum to foster dialogue on information sharing with the aim to share views and best practices, and build confidence.

PROGRAMME

Day 1

26 AUGUST 2014 (Tuesday)

1830–2030 hrs **Welcome Dinner at Orchard Hotel**

1045–1200 hrs **Panel Session 2**
Great Powers and the Evolving
Strategic Environment

Chair:
Dr Euan Graham

Panellists:
Dr Li Mingjiang

Dr Dmitry Gorenburg
(presented by RADM (Ret.) Michael McDevitt)

Dr Sam Bateman

Day 2

27 AUGUST 2014 (Wednesday)

0830–0900 hrs **Registration of Delegates at Venue**
of Conference

0900–0915 hrs **Welcome Address**

Dr Ralf Emmers
Associate Dean, RSIS

Opening Remarks

Dr Eric V. Thompson
Vice President and Director of
Strategic Studies, CNA

1200–1330 hrs **Lunch**

1330–1515 hrs **Panel Session 3**
China and the Evolving
Strategic Environment

Chair:
Dr Li Mingjiang

Panellists:
Dr Hoo Tiang Boon

Mr Zhang Hongzhou

RADM (Ret.) Michael McDevitt

0915–1030 hrs **Panel Session I**
Perspectives on US Engagements
in Asia

Chair:
Dr Sam Bateman

Panellists:
Dr Eric V. Thompson

Mr Ristian A. Supriyanto

1515–1530 hrs **Tea Break**

Mr Bronson Percival

1530–1715 hrs **Panel 4**
Indian Ocean Region

Chair:
Dr Eric V. Thompson

Panellists:
Ms Jane Chan

Ms Nilanthi Samaranyake

Mr Henrick Z. Tsjeng

1030–1045 hrs **Tea Break**

1830–2030 hrs **Conference Dinner at Blue Bali**

Day 3
28 AUGUST 2014 (Thursday)

0900–1030 hrs **Panel 5**
South China Sea—Not Just
Rocks and Islands

Chair:
Ms Jane Chan

Panellists:
Ms Irene Chan, RSIS

Dr Euan Graham

RADM (Ret.) Michael McDevitt

1030–1045 hrs **Tea Break**

1045–1230 hrs **Open Discussion: “Futures”**

Moderator:
Dr Sam Bateman, RSIS

1230–1245 hrs **Closing Remarks**

Mr Kwa Chong Guan
Senior Fellow, RSIS

1245–1345 hrs **Lunch**



PARTICIPANTS

Dr Sam Bateman

Adviser and Senior Fellow, Maritime Security Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Mr Richard Bitzinger

Coordinator and Senior Fellow, Military Transformations Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Ms Irene Chan

Senior Analyst, China Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Ms Jane Chan Git Yin

Coordinator and Research Fellow, Maritime Security Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Dr Ralf Emmers

Associate Dean
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

CAPT Brett Fullerton

Deputy Director, International Plans and Policy (N5)
U.S. Navy

Dr Euan Graham

Senior Fellow, Maritime Security Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Dr Hoo Tiang Boon

Assistant Professor, China Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Mr Kwa Chong Guan

Senior Fellow
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Dr Li Mingjiang

Associate Professor and Coordinator, China Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

RADM (Ret.) Michael McDevitt

Senior Fellow, Strategic Studies
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Mr Bronson Percival

Senior Advisor, Strategic Studies/International Affairs Group
Center for Naval Analyses

Ms Nilanthi Samaranayake

Research Analyst, Strategic Studies/
International Affairs Group
Center for Naval Analyses

Mr Ristian A. Supriyanto

Associate Research Fellow, Maritime Security Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Mr Henrick Z. Tsjeng

Associate Research Fellow, Maritime Security Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Dr Eric V. Thompson

Vice President and Director of Strategic Studies
Center for Naval Analyses

Mr William J. Wesley

Executive Director for Plans and Policy
Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Mr Zhang Hongzhou

Associate Research Fellow, China Programme
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

The **Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)** is a key research component of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). It focuses on security research to serve national needs. IDSS' faculty and research staff conduct both academic and policy-oriented research on security-related issues and developments affecting Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific. Its research agenda presently comprises the following programmes: Military Transformations, Military Studies, Maritime Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Asia and the United States.

For more information about IDSS, please visit www.rsis.edu.sg/research/idss.

ABOUT THE S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** is a professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. RSIS' mission is to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of security studies and international affairs. Its core functions are research, graduate education and networking. It produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Region Studies. RSIS' activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia Pacific.

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR NAVAL ANALYSES

The **Center for Naval Analyses** is a federally funded research and development centre serving the Department of the Navy and other defence agencies. Center analysts pioneered the field of operations research and have addressed issues that relate to military preparedness, operations evaluation, systems analysis, foreign affairs, strategic relationships, humanitarian operations and logistics.

Decades of service to the national defence community have kept the Center continually engaged in working with complex data sets, problems of undefined scope and scale, and issues of great urgency. The Center's efforts are defined by a unique brand of multi-disciplinary, field-based real-world, real-time research and analysis that combines observations of people, decisions, and processes.

For more information about CNA, please visit www.cna.org.





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SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL
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Nanyang Technological University

Block S4, Level B4, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798

Tel: +65 6790 6982 | Fax: +65 6794 0617 | www.rsis.edu.sg