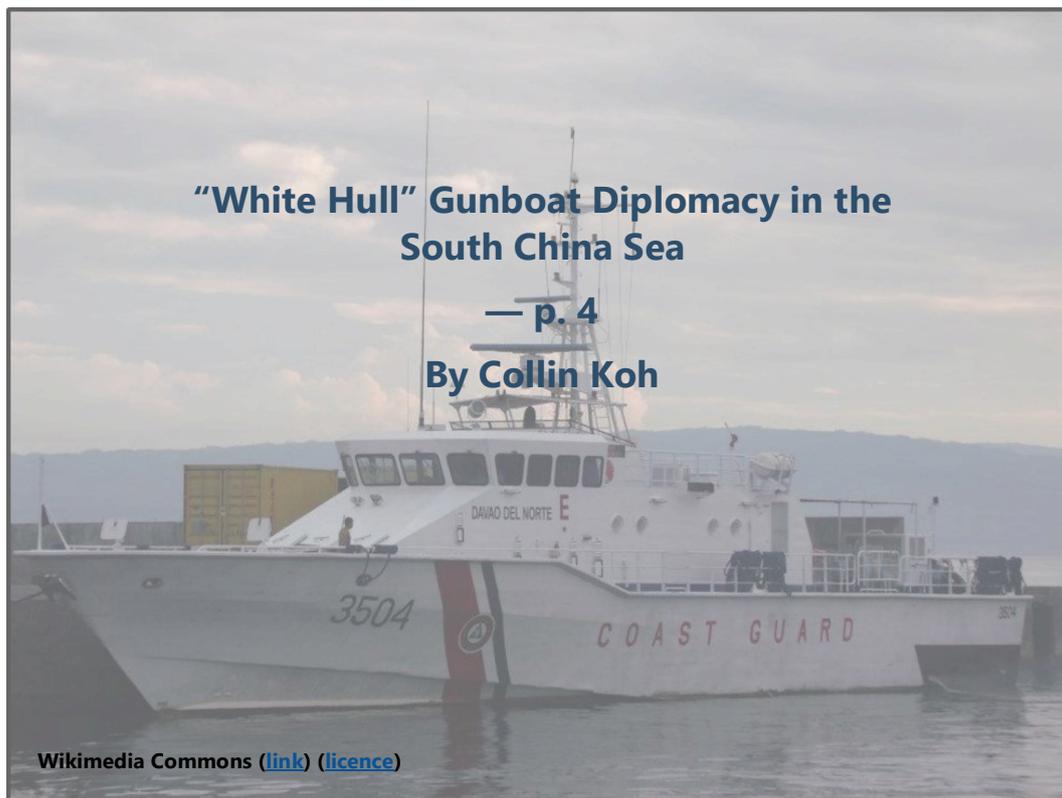


Featured *MSP Perspectives*:



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“White Hull” Gunboat Diplomacy in the South China Sea



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Coastguard-type forces, commonly called “white hulls”, ought to constitute stabilizing presence compared to regular navy forces (or “grey hulls”), seapower theorist Harold Kearsley once wrote. They do not convey an overtly militaristic, war-fighting impression that regular naval forces employed for this purpose inevitably convey.

But the recurring South China Sea incidents show that no longer are “white hulls” more dovish than their naval counterparts. In some cases, the coastguard can prove to be aggressive whereas the navy can be relatively docile.

Outside Asia, the last notable instance of a coastguard exhibiting unusually aggressive behavior was the Landhelgisgæslan (Icelandic Coast Guard), which not only relentlessly chased after foreign trawlers in the North Atlantic and even cut their fishing nets, but also challenged the heavier-armed foreign navies during the infamous Cod Wars.

The contemporary China Coast Guard (CCG) is perhaps a more aggressive rendition of the Cod War-era Landhelgisgæslan. One major difference is that the CCG and its predecessor agencies are dealing with comparatively weaker (and for some, meek as well) Southeast Asian rivals in the South China Sea.

In fact, Southeast Asian governments generally devote limited resources to navies and paid less attention on “white hulls”. This changed since the first decade of the 2000s when the region witnessed a scourge of piracy, sea robberies and other transnational maritime crimes, thereby leading to the emergence of new or expanded coastguard-type agencies.

These coastguard agencies are meant to alleviate the navies’ peacetime constabulary burden and facilitate a legal approach in enforcing maritime sovereignty and jurisdictional rights granted by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Compared to the 326-vessel CCG (including 100 offshore-capable assets) by the end of 2015 according to the latest *Military Balance 2016*, these agencies are way smaller in size. Their assets are also mostly inshore and coastal, ill-equipped craft which may suffice against criminals at sea.

But against a larger, better-equipped coastguard adversary in an offshore environment, these forces are practically helpless. The recent [Sino-Indonesian](#)

[standoff in waters off the Natuna Islands](#) is just one of such incidents that amply illustrate this severe limitation afflicting Southeast Asian coastguards.

Cognizant of these, China appears confident of success in the South China Sea. Its calculations paid off; not only its Southeast Asian rivals are incapable of fielding any coastguard that can match in numbers and quality, but they also avoid deploying navies. Even when they do send in the grey hulls, these forces behaved cautiously.

In any case, they are well aware that the Chinese navy is too superior to trifle with. When Admiral Scott Swift, chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, [warned](#) about a “palpable sense” in the region that “might makes right” has taken root as a philosophy, he is correct.

And not to forget one of James Cable’s astute observations in his seminal work *Gunboat Diplomacy*: that simply size matters. The side with the larger fleet and superior vessels prevails. This is a sobering reality played out in the South China Sea incidents: larger coastguard ships can furnish Beijing a “stabilizing” and “defensive” veneer to justify its own strategic narrative of being “victimized” in the disputes.

But the recent South China Sea incidents do symbolize those traditional issues Southeast Asia faces when building maritime security capacities; short of funding, at times lack of political will and for some, endemic corruption. China has a larger baseline capacity to begin with, not to forget the requisite resources and shipbuilding capability to expand its coastguard, including more offshore-capable assets displacing 3,000-tonnes and above.

Nonetheless, the very least that can be done despite the odds stacked against them, if Southeast Asian governments wish to enforce their maritime sovereignty and jurisdictional rights, is to focus on more cost-effective, offshore coastguard capabilities instead of expensive toys for the militaries.

A longer version of this article was published in The National Interest. (Click [here](#))



CHINA-INDONESIA | 21 MARCH | JAKARTA GLOBE

Indonesia sends protest to China over Natuna Islands standoff

Indonesia sent a note of protest to China on Monday (21/03) over what the country described as an encroachment of its territory by Chinese coastguard officials after it interrupted an Indonesian patrol ship in the middle of trying to catch an illegal fishing vessel.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN-PHILIPPINES | 1 MARCH | NIKKEI ASIAN REVIEW

Japan looking to lend military aircraft to Manila

Japan will enter into talks with the Philippines on leasing military planes capable of patrolling the South China Sea, with discussions set to start as soon as April.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA-JAPAN-UNITED STATES | 3 MARCH | REUTERS

U.S. plans naval exercises with India and Japan in Philippine Sea

India, the United States and Japan will hold naval exercises in waters off the northern Philippines near the South China Sea this year, the U.S. military said on Wednesday, a move likely to further raise tensions with China.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 8 MARCH | USNI NEWS

Document: DNI Clapper Assessment of Chinese Militarization, Reclamation in South China Sea

The following is an unclassified Feb. 23, 2016 letter from Director of National Intelligence James Clapper to Sen. John McCain answering questions on Chinese reclamation and militarization of its disputed holdings in the South China Sea.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA-JAPAN | 11 MARCH | THE NEW YORK TIMES

As India Collaborates with Japan on Islands, It Looks to Check China

India and Japan are in talks to collaborate on upgrading civilian infrastructure in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an Indian archipelago seen as a critical asset to counter China's efforts to expand its maritime reach into the Indian Ocean.

[Full Report](#)

Continue on page 6

SOUTH KOREA-UNITED STATES | 12 MARCH | YONHAP

Seoul, Washington roll out joint landing drill

South Korea and the United States on Saturday staged a massive landing drill in an eastern coastal port city, the largest of its kind, amid continued provocations from Pyongyang.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 16 MARCH | NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

K-4 Missile Test A Roaring Success

Even as the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has not yet made public its recent test of nuclear capable submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) K-4, the elite agency, known for developing some best weapons with minimum failures, has validated a few new technologies pushing the country one step ahead in indigenous technology.

[Full Report](#)



SOUTH KOREA | 20 MARCH | YONHAP

Marine Corps launches expanded mobile unit for N.K. contingencies

The Marine Corps has formed a new mobile unit tasked with attacking North Korea from the rear in the event of a contingency, a military official said Sunday.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 24 MARCH | THE JAKARTA POST

National scene: South Korea unveils RI's new submarines

After waiting three years, Indonesia will soon have new submarines, as three submarines purchased from South Korea are expected to be completed soon.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA-MALAYSIA | 25 MARCH | REUTERS

A hundred Chinese boats encroach in Malaysian waters: minister

About 100 Chinese fishing boats have been detected encroaching in Malaysia's waters in the disputed South

China Sea, Malaysia's state news agency and a coastguard official said on Friday.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN | 28 MARCH | REUTERS

Japan opens radar station close to disputed isles, drawing angry China response

Japan on Monday switched on a radar station in the East China Sea, giving it a permanent intelligence gathering post close to Taiwan and a group of islands disputed by Japan and China, drawing an angry response from Beijing.

[Full Report](#)

NORTH KOREA | 29 MARCH | YONHAP

N. Korea increases drone sorties along western border: official

North Korea's military has sharply increased drone sorties along the western part of its border with South Korea, a government official said Tuesday.

[Full Report](#)

THE PHILIPPINES | 31 MARCH | THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Noy mulls submarine force for Philippine defense

As the Chinese military continues to tighten its hold on vast areas in disputed waters, the Philippine government is considering building a "submarine force" as a deterrent to Beijing.

[Full Report](#)

THE PHILIPPINES | 31 MARCH | MANILA STANDARD

PH eyes 2 anti-sub choppers, 2 frigates

The Philippines has contracted Anglo-Italian defense contractor Augusta Westland to deliver two anti-submarine helicopters, worth P5.4 billion, to be used with the two brand-new frigates the government is planning to buy from India.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 31 MARCH | REUTERS

China says no need to 'gesticulate' over South China Sea plans

China's Defence Ministry denounced as gesticulation on Thursday speculation it would declare an air defense zone over the disputed South China Sea, after the United States said it had told China it would not recognize one.

[Full Report](#)



INDO-PACIFIC | 21 MARCH | ANTARA

17 countries attending Maritime Security Desktop Exercise

At least 17 countries are attending the seventh "Maritime Security Desktop Exercise" meeting in an effort to improve coordination and the exchange of information on handling regional maritime security.

[Full Report](#)

NEW ZEALAND | 3 MARCH | SCOOP.CO.NZ

NZDF'S Humanitarian Aid Operation in Fiji in Full Swing

The New Zealand Defence Force's (NZDF) humanitarian aid operation in cyclone-ravaged Fiji is now in full swing with the arrival this morning of multi-role vessel HMNZS Canterbury, close to 300 additional personnel to assist with the disaster recovery efforts and 106 more tonnes of emergency relief supplies.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 3 MARCH | GLOBAL TIMES

Foreign vessel towed by Chinese ships near reef

China said on Wednesday that it sent rescue ships to the South China Sea to tow a stranded foreign vessel, in response to Philippine media reports that China prevented Philippine fishermen from operating in the Wufang Reef.

[Full Report](#)

NORTH-KOREA- PHILIPPINES | 4 MARCH | REUTERS

Philippines bars North Korea-linked ship from leaving port over safety issues

The Philippines Coast Guard has banned a North Korean freighter from leaving port until safety deficiencies, found during a security and safety inspection of the vessel, are rectified, officials said on Friday.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN-TAIWAN | 5 MARCH | THE CHINA POST

Latest Taiwan-Japan fishery meeting decides to maintain current rights

Taiwanese and Japanese fishermen will continue to follow existing fishing regulations agreed by both sides as the latest round of bilateral fisheries talks concluded in Taipei on Friday.

[Full Report](#)

Continue on page 8

INDIA | 6 MARCH | THE HINDU

Gujarat on high alert after 5 abandoned boats found in last 3 months

The Gujarat government has beefed up security across the state, especially along its coastal belt, following a note by national security adviser Ajit Doval about the possible infiltration by 8 to 10 terrorists through land or sea border with Pakistan.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA | 7 MARCH | CNN

Weapons seized by Australia may have come from Iran, intended for Houthis

An Australian naval ship has seized a large arms cache that may have come from Iran and headed to Yemen by way of Somalia.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 13 MARCH | ANTARA

Indonesian government to sink Interpol fugitive vessel FV Viking

The Indonesian Government is to sink the FV Viking vessel, wanted by the Interpol for several marine regulation infringements, in Pangandaran Waters, West Java Province on Monday (March 14).

[Full Report](#)



SOUTH KOREA | 16 MARCH | KBS WORLD NEWS

S. Korean Navy, Coast Guard Stage Cargo Inspection Drills

South Korea's Coast Guard and Navy staged a joint training drill off the coast of Busan to stop and inspect a foreign ship suspected of ferrying strategic weapons to North Korea.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA-JAPAN-MALAYSIA | 18 MARCH | THE JAPAN TIMES

Indonesia, Malaysia urged to join Asia-oriented anti-piracy pact

A Japanese official has urged Indonesia and Malaysia to join an international pact on anti-piracy measures for Asia that was created at the initiative of Japan.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA-SEYCHELLES | 21 MARCH | THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Geo-strategic boost: Indian Navy deploys P 8I aircraft to Seychelles for surveillance

In a boost to geo-strategic relations, the Indian Navy has deployed a P 8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft to Seychelles since March 20, 2016, for surveillance in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Seychelles, in accordance with the MoU between the two government.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA-TAIWAN | 22 MARCH | THE CHINA POST

Shots fired at Taiwan fishing boats

Two Taiwanese fishing boats claimed to have been fired upon by an Indonesian government vessel while operating in the Strait of Malacca early on Monday.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 29 MARCH | THE JAKARTA POST

RI tugboat, crew held by Abu Sayyaf

The Indonesian Government is still verifying reports that an Indonesian tugboat has been hijacked and its crew members are being held hostage by Philippine militant group Abu Sayyaf.

[Full Report](#)

VIETNAM | 29 MARCH | TUOI TRE

Meet the sea reconnaissance unit of Vietnam

Officers from the reconnaissance unit of the Vietnam Coast Guard protect the country's maritime area against illegal activities in the most difficult and dangerous situations.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 30 MARCH | ANTARA

Reform in fishery sector needs courage and consistency: Minister

Marine and Fisheries Minister Susi Pudjiastuti said reformation of the fishery sector is not easy but it has to be carried out to preserve the sustainability of the marine resources.

[Full Report](#)



SINGAPORE | 29 MARCH | THE STRAITS TIMES

Cosco and PSA ink mega terminal deal

Cosco-PSA Terminal, a joint venture of Chinese shipping giant Cosco Pacific and PSA Corp, has decided to take even more space in the nation's next state-of-the-art shipping terminal at Pasir Panjang.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 3 MARCH | SPLASH 24/7

Indian state-run lines told to order locally

State-run shipping lines in India will have to order vessels locally after 2025, according to new Ministry of Shipping guidelines. Companies such as Shipping Corporation of India and Dredging Corporation of India will help shipyards develop once a 10-year financial aid package to local shipbuilders expires.

[Full Report](#)

RUSSIA | 6 MARCH | THE MARITIME EXECUTIVE

New mega-shipyard for Russia

Russia has begun the reconstruction of the old Zvezda shipyard in Primorsk Kray in the Far East.

[Full Report](#)

OMAN-IRAN | 6 MARCH | TIMES OF OMAN

Salalah port signs deal with Iran for boosting bilateral trade

Port of Salalah, the biggest port in Oman, has signed a memorandum of understanding with Shahid Rajaei Port and Chabahar Port through the Port and Maritime Authority (PMO) of Iran.

[Full Report](#)

KOREA | 9 MARCH | SPLASH 24/7

Hanjin and HMM told to reduce debts if they want to access state funds

Korean authorities will turn the taps off leading lines until they bring their extraordinary debts under control.

[Full Report](#)

Continue on page 10

AUSTRALIA | 10 MARCH | THE MARITIME EXECUTIVE

Australia's Port of Melbourne up for grabs

Australia passed legislation on Thursday to enable the long-term lease of its largest shipping container terminal, the Port of Melbourne, freeing up privatization plans to move ahead after months of political headwinds.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 11 MARCH | SPLASH 24/7

Wuhan to invest \$793m in new port area

Major Yangtze River port Wuhan Port is going to develop a new port area, including a container terminal, at Hannan in Wuhan. Total investment for the project will be around RMB5.15bn (\$793m).

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 12 MARCH | HELLENIC SHIPPING NEWS

Mandatory container weight verification

The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), at its ninety-fourth session (17-21 November 2014), adopted, inter alia, amendments to SOLAS regulation VI/2 (see resolution MSC.380(94)), to require the mandatory verification of the gross mass of packed containers.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 17 MARCH | THE MARITIME EXECUTIVE

Moody's sees no relief for bulk or container shipping

Ratings and research agency Moody's has downgraded its outlook for dry bulk and container shipping to negative, from stable, suggesting that business conditions are expected to worsen.

[Full Report](#)

SINGAPORE | 22 MARCH | PORT NEWS

Port of Singapore throughput down 3.8% to 92.27mlnt in Jan-Feb'16

Cargo volumes handled at the Port of Singapore in January-February 2016 fell by 3.8%, year-on-year to 92.27 million tonnes, the Port Authority statistics show.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 25 MARCH | THE HINDHU

Govt to attract \$18bn investment in maritime sector

The Union Shipping Ministry has embarked on an ambitious plan to mobilise \$18 billion in investments (Rs 1.2 lakh crore) from foreign and domestic investors to fast-track the growth of India's maritime sector.

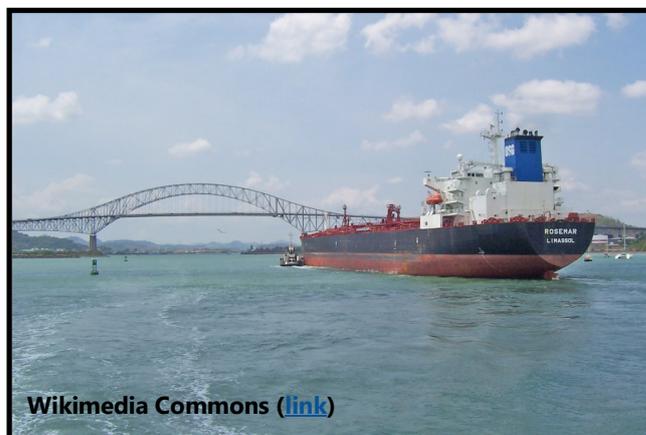
[Full Report](#)

CHINA-ASEAN | 26 MARCH | XINHUA

China mulls upgrade of Lancang-Mekong ship

China is working with five ASEAN members to improve the main shipping lane on Lancang-Mekong river that the six nations share.

[Full Report](#)



[Wikimedia Commons \(link\)](#)

PANAMA | 29 MARCH | LLYOD'S LOADING LIST

Panama Canal expansion to open 26 June

Final testing ahead of the opening of the expanded Panama Canal is expected to be completed in the coming weeks, with the official Panama Canal Expansion set to be officially inaugurated on Sunday 26 June.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 30 MARCH | BUNKER PORTS NEWS

Import-Exports vessels to clear Indonesia's ports faster: Govt

To reduce dwelling time, the government has announced a new policy that would integrate risk assessment on goods imported and exported through Indonesia's ports.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 31 MARCH | HELLENIC SHIPPING NEWS

China shipping profits sink on low rates, lingering overcapacity

China Cosco Holdings Co. posted a 22 percent slump in earnings last year, while China Shipping Container Lines Co. swung to a loss as overcapacity of vessels led to lower rates.

[Full Report](#)