

PROSPECTS FOR THE QUAD COAST GUARDS TO COOPERATE TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC VISION

By John Bradford, Kei Koga and Scott Edwards



YCAPS is a non-profit organization building connections and developing people in Japan's base-hosting communities and beyond.

Authors: John Bradford, Kei Koga and Scott Edwards

Editorial support: Takuya Matsuda

Layout: Gabriela Wurst

Cover image

Author: U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

Image title: U.S., Japan Coast Guard strengthen capabilities through joint exercise

Source: "U.S., Japan Coast Guard strengthen capabilities through joint exercise",

Flickr link: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/us-pacific-command/50977082716/in/photolist-2kEESFf-2emmj3g-2ohguJd-2o5UtrZ-2msQYoc-2gwo6kT-2nyowST-2gQfpxZ-2gMtkAr-2nN6BjG-2o5ZfVq-2mi5xNm-2mnNweY-2omkvnA-2nBX713-2mnXiNv-2mnSo-qc-2nErbp9-2mnXi2k-2mkNnL1-2oornFQ-2nyXy4g-2netGdN-2ny6uKZ-MfJCUk-2kWEqew-2miXf2w-2nGnxZi-2ozqJxR-2kYzAVH-2ozsFTC-2nrbFT5-2nxuL7k-2n3SDvY-2jAsjUv-2jAniH-N-2hm2Cht-2kYs2Yn-2ojSQ61-2n1p9J8-2nmQ8X4-2o9wYAY-2iLmxnN-2n3QY5e-2jAkVY2-2gXmt1F-2aiichx-2mjd13C-2kE7DBD-2mnSmUw>

License: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Image description by author:

HONOLULU, Hawaii (Feb. 22, 2021) - Ships from the U.S. Coast Guard and Japan Coast Guard conducted exercises near the Ogasawara Islands of Japan, Feb. 21, 2021. The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball and Japan Coast Guard Ship Akitsushima, two of the respective services' newest and most capable vessels, operated alongside response boats to practice interdicting foreign vessels operating illegally inside Japanese waters. (U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of the Coast Guard Cutter Kimball) 200221-G-G1050-1002

No changes were made to the original image by YCAPS.

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Key Points and Actionable Recommendations	7
Main Paper	
Introduction	10
Quad Objectives: FOIP and Maritime Security	12
The Need for Improved Indo-Pacific Maritime Governance Capacity	16
Quad Coast Guards: Forces, Posture and Cooperative Activities	20
United States Coast Guard	20
Japan Coast Guard	22
Indian Coast Guard	23
Australian Border Force and Maritime Border Command	25
Comparing Quad Coast Guard Capacities: Implications for Potential Cooperation	27
Areas for Expanded Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges	31
Diplomatic Coordination	31
Common Frameworks and Operational Standards	32
Cooperative Capacity-Building Activities	34
Joint and International Operations	37
<i>Alondra Rainbow</i> Hijacking – Anti-Piracy and Information Sharing	39
Malaysian Airlines 370 and Air Asia Flight 8501 – Search and Rescue	40
MT <i>New Diamond</i> Disaster – Marine Safety and Pollution Control	41
Conclusion	43
Appendix: Expert Commentaries on Prospects for Quad Coast Guard Cooperation	44
Indian Coast Guard – Pooja Bhatt	45
Japan Coast Guard – Kentaro Furuya	48
Australia Border Force/Maritime Border Command – Kate Clayton and Bec Strating	51
United States Coast Guard – James R. Sullivan	55

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Quad member states (Australia, India, Japan and the US) broadly share converging visions for implementing the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). This includes a desire to sustain and advance a rules-based maritime order that enables the free, fair and safe use of the region's maritime domain. The Quad has already developed a handful of cooperative initiatives in the areas of naval cooperation and maritime domain awareness, but to implement their shared FOIP vision they should also enhance cooperation among their Coast Guards. As leading maritime law enforcement agencies, the coast guards are well-suited to assist with the development of regional maritime governance capacity. This is particularly welcome because many of the region's coastal states have significant maritime security capacity shortfalls and these factors put the free, fair and safe use of regional waters under pressure from a wide range of troublesome state and non-state actors that elect to undermine the rules-based order for their own gains. Coastal states are showing strong demand for maritime security assistance so long as it does not trigger certain sensitivities such as infringing on sovereignty or the drawing of non-aligned states into the Sino-American great power competition. With their focus on maritime law enforcement and common good, coast guards are well-placed to advance cooperation by sidestepping these sensitivities.

Meaningful variation between the Quad coast guards presents both opportunities and challenges in terms of the potential for optimized cooperation. The US Coast Guard (USCG) is the oldest, most established and largest in terms of personnel. However, its fleet of large ships is relatively small considering the vast size of the American exclusive economic zone and the force's global missions. It is gaining resources, but not at the same rate as it is being called upon to expand its role in the Indo-Pacific. The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) has a strong history of conducting capacity-building projects and missions throughout much of the Indo-Pacific and has been the regional leader

in terms of maritime security cooperation. It is also growing but increasing Chinese pressure in the East China Sea disputes demands the focus of its attention and force. The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is smaller than the USCG or JCG and has been focused on the Indian Ocean region but is starting to develop a more expeditionary posture and invest in the opportunities to cooperate further afield. Australia does not have a coast guard, but similar duties are filled by the Australian Border Force (ABF) and Maritime Border Command (MBC), complemented by elements of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). ABF and MBC do not have the vessels to be expeditionary forces but do adopt a defense-in-depth approach to maritime security that include diplomatic engagement and capacity-building activities. The various national mandates, capacities and weaknesses among the Quad coast guards make certain areas more suitable for cooperation and some partnerships more likely to be fruitful than others.

Priority areas for cooperation should be diplomatic coordination, the development of common frameworks and operational standards, the delivery of cooperative capacity-building activities and the execution of joint operations. Diplomatic coordination among the Quad coast guards will set a strong agenda for action and amplify the services' individual impacts on the regional security situation. Standardizing the protocols and procedures for cooperation among each other and with third parties will directly result in the common frames that expand maritime governance capacity by lowering transaction costs and making activities more efficient. Joint operations will become more appropriate as the Quad coast guard deploy more forces near one another and develop habits of cooperation. Historical case studies show that interoperability is improving but reveal areas for improvement.

While the overarching logic of expanding cooperation among the Quad coast guards is clear and the costs of inaction too high, successful execution will be bedeviled by the details. Even the best opportunities will require thoughtful and deliberate decisions to prevent them being bogged down by small hurdles and

challenges. This being the case, success will rely on commitment, communication, and coordination. Direction and guidance must come from the top, but execution must be delivered by all levels of the organizations involved. Quad Coast Guard cooperation will also be most effective when it enables regional states to make decisions that are clearly in their own best interest rather than those that appear to be aligning with the Quad members or against any other state.

KEY POINTS AND ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Points

- The Quad member states (Australia, India, Japan and the US) broadly share converging visions for implementing the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. This includes a desire for a rules-based maritime order that enables the free, fair and safe use of the global commons.
- Divergence among the Quad members' specific perspectives on and approaches to maritime security challenges have slowed efforts to advance the relationship's maritime dimensions. However, these are manageable.
- Although the Quad members have successfully initiated maritime projects, cooperation between their coast guards is an under-explored, yet likely fruitful, way to advance implementation of the FOIP.
- Many Indo-Pacific coastal states need to acquire the maritime governance capacity to secure the waters under their jurisdictions against a range of maritime security threats. Therefore, the demand side of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region remains generally high. However, sensitivities and other challenges persist.
- The Quad members' coast guard show considerable variation in terms of size, fleet capacity, organization, mission and service culture, yet are all professional maritime safety and security agencies. This variation must inform the optimization of their cooperative activities.
- As forces that are focused on constabulary function and poorly equipped to engage in state-on-state conflict, coast guard cooperation can be a path toward improving internal security cooperation and maritime governance while minimizing the dilemma associated with selected who to include and exclude.
- Optimum areas for expanded Quad coast guard cooperation are diplomatic coordination, the development of common frameworks and operational standards, the delivery of cooperative capacity-building activities, and joint operations.
- There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to developing maritime governance capacity. Approaches must be tailored to the geographic, political and economic circumstances.
- As they expand their engagement across the region, the Quad coast guards will increasingly conduct joint operations with each other and other Indo-Pacific maritime security forces.
- Quad Coast Guard cooperation will be most effective when it enables regional states to make decisions that are clearly in the own best interest rather than those that appear to be aligning with the Quad members or against any other state.

Actionable Recommendations

- Japan, India and Australia coordinate to facilitate entry of the United States into the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Meeting.
- A Quad coast guard other than the JCG, preferably the ICG, hosts an upcoming iteration of the Global Coast Guard Summit.
- The USCG should invite the JCG, ICG and MBC to send observers to the Southeast Asian Maritime Law Enforcement Initiative (SEAMLEI) Commander's Forum.
- The Quad should establish a maritime governance consultative body chaired by the four heads of coast guards and supported by national interagency representation to coordinate maritime security cooperation.
- The US should disestablish the USCG permanent presence in the Arabian Gulf in order to make more vessels available for duty in the Indo-Pacific.
- Australia should consider providing further resources to the ABF in order for them to be able make a greater contribution to co-operation, including cooperation with the other Quad Coast Guards.
- The Quad coast guards could be a framework to cooperatively develop region-wide standards for maritime security cooperation. Emphasis should be on creating standards that are de facto or in-practice because of their efficiency rather than developing systems that appear exclusionary.
- The JCG and USCG should examine the terms of the SAPPHIRE (Solid Alliance for Peace and Prosperity with Humanity and Integrity on the Rule of law-based Engagement) arrangement and determine which could be replicated to incorporate the ICG and MBC.
- The Quad should establish an Indo-Pacific maritime governance center of excellence (COE). Ideally this would be Quad-sponsored but hosted by a partner nation.
- Cultivate opportunities for cooperative capacity-building with commitment and deliberate selectivity.
- In some cases, it is helpful for the Quad states to focus deliberately on less military aspects of security as some states will resist aspects of Quad activities possibly regarded as confrontational or competitive. In most cases, any additional capacity is helpful toward developing the partner nation's net readiness to address the full range of maritime security threats.
- Representatives of the Quad coast guards, or the other maritime agencies, when necessary, should meet regularly in Indo-Pacific capitals to exchange information regarding the maritime governance capacity need of the host nation and coordinate capacity-building activities.
- Training and readiness projects should focus on improving regional readiness to conduct joint and international maritime security operations.
- The Quad coast guards should all place full-time liaison officers at the Singapore Information Fusion Centre (IFC) and expand human capital support to the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC).

- The Indian Navy should follow the example set by the Singapore Informational Fusion Centre (IFC) and consider invitation international coast guard officers to serve at the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFCIOR).
- Search and Rescue (SAR) operations are a function area ripe for improved regional coordination. The Quad coast guards should coordinate to provide region-wide inter-agency leadership in this area.

INTRODUCTION

The ‘Indo-Pacific’ region has become the most important strategic theater and the center of the ongoing strategic competition between the United States and China. After the 2010s, the US unipolar system was no longer considered stable primarily because of the relative decline of the United States and the assertive rise of China in the wake of the 2008 Global Asian Financial Crisis. Rather than relying on the material capability to ensure its continued global primacy, the United States increasingly focused on consolidating its leadership of a sustained international order. However, China steadily expanded its geo-economic sphere of influence and increasingly challenged the existing international rules and norms. China’s economic influence rapidly grew in a broader Asia not only through trade and investment but also via development financing under the umbrella of the Belt and Road Initiative. China also nurtured its own international institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, which provide it with greater flexibility than offered by the previously established global development institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD Development Assistant Committee.

In parallel with this geo-economic advance, China has exponentially increased in assertiveness in the maritime domain. In the East China Sea, it increasingly probes Japanese and Taiwanese defenses with air patrols, military exercises, and incursions into the Japanese-administered waters around the Senkaku islands. In the South China Sea, China has cemented its military position through land reclamation and the construction of military facilities. When the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Tribunal award was issued under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), China rejected it, advocating its ruling as “null and void.”

By doubling its number of large patrol ships in the last decade and combining several organizations to form the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG), China has assembled more than five hundred surface vessels into the world’s largest coast guard fleet.¹ Augmented by a large and capable maritime militia, the CCG aggressively asserts Chinese sovereignty in these ‘near seas.’ Meanwhile, the Chinese Navy, the world’s largest by hull count, is increasingly active in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.²

China’s assertive behavior has alarmed many in the Indo-Pacific region. In an effort to marshal a coherent response, Japan’s Shinzo Abe administration launched the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) strategy in 2016. The objectives of this strategy included the preservation of maritime security, including sustaining freedom of navigation and overflight. The United States adopted the FOIP terminology in 2017, incorporating the term into its strategic narratives in order

1 *Military Balance 2022*, IISS, London: Routledge, 2022, p. 264.

2 Mallory Shelbourne, “China Has World’s Largest Navy With 355 Ships and Counting, Says Pentagon,” USNI News, 3 Nov 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/11/03/china-has-worlds-largest-navy-with-355-ships-and-counting-says-pentagon>

to emphasize the strategic importance of the region and establish and organizing framework to counter China's growing influence. This drew international attention, and there has been a cascade of the Indo-Pacific strategies, outlooks or visions adopted by regional and extra-regional actors such as ASEAN, the European Union, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, and South Korea. Indo-Pacific coalitions have also been constructed under the banner of the FOIP and the related strategic visions. These include the Quad (the Australia-India-Japan-United States Consultative Group), AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom-United States Security Partnership) and IPEF (the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity).

Among the FOIP-oriented Indo-Pacific coalitions, the one able to show the most strength in response to Chinese maritime activities is the Quad. This group has been increasingly institutionalized since 2017 and the four member states share the view on the emerging challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and the importance of maritime security. As such, it has increasingly facilitated security cooperation among the member states, especially in the maritime arena. One of its early achievements among the partners was establishing routine Australian participation in the Malabar naval exercise. A more recent accomplishment was the creation of the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) in 2022. At the same time, the quadrilateral cooperation of the coast guards remains to be relatively unexplored. Given the importance of coast guards as the primary maritime law enforcement agencies and bodies, they have the most potential to cooperatively address regional maritime govern challenges. As such, this study explores the prospect for and limitations pertaining to cooperation among the Quad coast guards.

This study begins with a review of the Quad's shared objectives, particularly as they apply to FOIP and maritime security. It proceeds to discuss the demand side of the equation by discussing the maritime governance capacity development priorities of Indo-Pacific States. It then evaluates the potential for the Quad coast guards to expand their cooperative activities by evaluating, then comparing, the four coast guards' forces, posture and cooperative activities. The sections set the stage for an analytical evaluation of various areas for expanded cooperation with a specific focus on diplomatic coordination, the development of common frameworks and operational standards, the delivery of cooperative capacity-building activities and the execution of joint operations.

QUAD OBJECTIVES: FOIP AND MARITIME SECURITY

The idea of the Quad has been nurtured over approximately two decades, but its development was never straightforward.³ Its origin traces to the Australia-India-Japan-United States cooperation as the “core” group coordinating the international humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HADR) operations that were launched in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. While this cooperation was ad-hoc, some saw the potential to develop this four-member framework. In 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe created an idea to institutionalize this grouping of four democracies to support the implementation of Foreign Minister Taro Aso’s strategic idea, “the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity.” The logic that the four nations should cooperate to preserve the region’s common good was fully articulated in Abe’s 2008 address to the Indian Parliament entitled the “Confluence of Two Seas.” However, this idea was met by a strong Chinese counter push such that Australia and India became hesitant to proceed out of concern that the grouping would weaken their economic ties with China. As a result, the Quad framework fell by the wayside.⁴

Despite this strategic setback, when the United States and Japan launched their Indo-Pacific visions in 2016 and 2017, the Quad was also resurrected albeit with a cautious mandate. The first Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting took place in September 2019 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The follow-on meetings were organized at the ad-hoc working level, and there was little in way of pre-set agenda. The four member states simply exchanged their strategic views and agreed with broad principles of international order, such as respect for international law and liberal values. In this context, the basic objective of the Quad became relatively clear: to maintain the existing rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and vision to establish a “Free, Open, Inclusive” Indo-Pacific region.⁵ Their common political values made it easier for the four to have a reason to share their strategic perspectives, while they also started to share similar strategic concerns vis-à-vis China. Heightened tensions between India and China over the land border disputes and between Australia

3 See, Jagannath Panda and Ernest Gunasekara-Rockwell, eds., *Quad Plus and Indo-Pacific: The Changing Profile of International Relations* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2021); Kei Koga, “Quad 3.0: Japan, Indo-Pacific and Minilateralism,” *East Asian Policy*, 14(1): 20-38; Garima Mohan and Kristi Govella, “The Future of the Quad and the Emerging Architecture in the Indo-Pacific,” Policy Paper (The German Marshall Fund of the United States), June 2022.

4 David Walton, “Australia and the Quad,” *East Asian Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 1 and Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad,” *Survival*, Vol 50, No 3, 2018.

5 India’s Prime Minister Modi has emphasized the importance of inclusiveness in the Indo-Pacific region, which was basically agreed by other leaders. See International Institute for Strategic Studies, “17th Asia Security Summit: The IISS Shangri-La Dialogue—Keynote Address: Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India,” June 1, 2018, <https://www.iiss.org/-/media/images/dialogues/sld/sld-2018/documents/narendra-modi-sld18.pdf?la=en&hash=522CA08245CC4EC79C601D-C4939171A7170BC9BA>

and China regarding China's influence operations have since drawn the four members closer.⁶ While it can be doubted that geopolitical considerations drove alignment between the four members, they also recognized the strategic value of establishing regional support for the development of public goods, to include maritime governance.⁷ Focusing on so-called "soft security" issues, are important in this respect.⁸

This gradual strategic convergence among the four enabled President Joe Biden to further institutionalize the Quad. The United States hosted the first prime minister-level Quad Summit as a video conference in March 2021, issuing the very first joint statement that aims to create the Indo-Pacific region that is "free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion."⁹ The members agreed to formally regularize the meetings at the senior-official and foreign minister levels and promised to hold future summit meetings. They also established three working groups: the Covid-19 Vaccine Expert Working Group; the Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group; and the Climate Working Group. The Quad functional cooperation expanded through a series of summit meetings in 2021 and 2022. Its constellation of working groups now includes Covid and Global Health; Infrastructure; Climate; People-to-People Exchange and Education; Critical and Emerging Technologies' Cybersecurity; Space; Maritime Domain Awareness; and HADR.¹⁰ Thus, the Quad has become an essential venue for functional cooperation to maintain a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region. In so doing, the four members attempt to shape the environment that could constrain China's behavior, particularly in the maritime domain while also building a more prosperous region.

Despite the maritime vision articulated by Abe and the members' shared concerns regarding Chinese behavior at sea and in promoting seas as areas free of threat from non-state actors, the Quad has been arguably slow in advancing maritime security cooperation, though the four member states have made some milestone achievements in the maritime domain. In 2020, Australia was invited to become a recurring participant in the *Malabar* naval exercise, an annual event that had consistently involved the US, India and Japan since 2014. However, *Malabar* was not formally designated as a Quad event. In fact, it was not until September 2022 that the Quad announced its first agreements specifically in the maritime-related domain — commitments related to maritime

6 Poornima Vijaya, "Australia's Role in the Quad and Its Crumbling Ties with China," Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, 13 Dec 2021, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2870644/australias-role-in-the-quad-and-its-crumbling-ties-with-china/>

7 James Sullivan, "The US Coast Guard: Provide public goods for a free and open Indo-Pacific," PacNet 9, 31 Jan 2023, <https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-9-the-us-coast-guard-provide-public-goods-for-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific>

8 Kate Clayton and Bec Strating, "Australia's Maritime Border Command: Grappling with the Quad to Realize a Free and Open Indo-Pacific" PacNet 5, 17 Jan 2023. <https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-5-australias-maritime-border-command-grappling-with-the-quad-to-realize-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific>

9 The White House, "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: 'The Spirit of the Quad,'" March 12, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>

10 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), "Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders' Summit," September 23, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100238181.pdf>; The White House, "Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders' Tokyo Summit 2022," May 23, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/fact-sheet-quad-leaders-tokyo-summit-2022/>;

domain awareness (MDA) and HADR.

The first of these was the christened Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA). This initiative aims to facilitate MDA capacity building toward states in the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region from 2022 to 2027. The task involves “tracking of ‘dark shipping’ and other tactical level activities, such as rendezvous at sea, as well as improve partners’ ability to respond to climate and humanitarian events and to protect their fisheries.”¹¹ In addition, the Quad promised to promote information sharing with regional actors, including Information Fusion Center-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), the Information Fusion Center (IFC) in Singapore, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, and the Pacific Fusion Center. Regarding HADR, the Quad announced plans to create the Quad Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Mechanism, a reflection of the Quad’s 2004 tsunami-response origins. This mechanism will smoothly coordinate HADR policies among the member states through cooperation between civilian-led relief activities and states that can provide civil defense/military assets. In this way, the Quad will work together with affected and disaster-prone countries with their consent in every phase of disaster response from the “crisis-alert” (including capacity building for crisis preparedness and early warning) to “crisis-response” to “post-crisis-review.”¹²

These initiatives are an encouraging sign that coordination and cooperation among the Quad coast guards can be facilitated. Nevertheless, the Quad has yet to indicate any specific cooperation efforts for coast guards. The only instance of an official Quad readout mentioning coast guards came in May 2022 when the Quad Summit joint statement mentioned “the dangerous use of coast guard vessels” by certain states, inferring China.¹³ The sluggishness of the Quad members to launch the IPMDA and HADR mechanisms and the Quad’s relative silence on coast guards’ cooperation illustrate challenges for such cooperation.

Despite broad strategic alignment among the Quad members, divergence among the specific perspectives on and approaches to maritime security challenges have slowed efforts to advance the Quad’s maritime dimensions.¹⁴ One of the primary challenges that the Quad faces is different national interests in the region as indicated in the experience of the Quad collapse in the late 2000s. Even though the current strategic trend shows increasing convergence in the member’s perspectives vis-à-vis China and the Indo-Pacific strategic environment, the members still have different interpretations of the UNCLOS. For example, India’s interpretation of coastal state rights

11 ibid.

12 ibid.

13 The White House, “Quad Joint Leaders’ Statement,” May 24, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/24/quad-joint-leaders-statement/>

14 For more information on these divergences and their implications see, John Bradford, “Evolving Conceptualizations of Maritime Security in Southeast Asia,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 4 Nov 2021, <https://amti.csis.org/evolving-conceptualizations-of-maritime-security-in-southeast-asia/> and John Bradford, “Maritime Security Conceptualizations In Southeast Asia: The Implications Of Convergence And Divergence,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 15 Dec 2021, <https://amti.csis.org/maritime-security-conceptualizations-in-southeast-asia-the-implications-of-convergence-and-divergence/>.

and privileges in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is more akin to China's than the other Quad members. This divergence became clear during the US-India diplomatic conflict that erupted in 2021 after USS *John Paul Jones* (DDG 53) conducted a freedom of navigation operation against India's "excessive" claim.¹⁵ While the logic of cooperating where possible and disagreeing where necessary is driving the Quad agenda, these sorts of friction have slowed progress. Still, these difficulties can be overcome as shown by the commitments to *Malabar*, IPMDA and the HADR mechanism. Considering that the Quad became possible by gradually strengthening bilateral and trilateral cooperation among the member states, we can expect further opportunities to expand Quad maritime security initiatives to implement the FOIP, including expanding cooperation between the Quad coast guards.

15 U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, "7th Fleet conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation," April 7, 2021, <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/2563538/7th-fleet-conducts-freedom-of-navigation-operation/>

THE NEED FOR IMPROVED INDO-PACIFIC MARITIME GOVERNANCE CAPACITY

The free and open elements of the FOIP vision hinge on the good order at sea need to ensure the safe and expeditious movement of vessels and cargo via the region's sea lanes. Coastal states also rely on ocean resources for economic and social prosperity. Therefore, the region's states, and, increasingly, other maritime security stakeholders, are burdened with the requirement to provide maritime governance, the deliberate establishment of common rules regarding the fair use of the sea and the effective enforcement of those rules. This involves both the standards by which states and non-state actors behave in relation to one another and the mechanisms and methods to ensure that all actors behave in conformity with those standards.¹⁶ Therefore, while China is seen by all four members as a problematic actor at sea, the Quad FOIP ambition involves enabling a broader scope of maritime security. The Coast Guard are particularly well-suited to engage in this area.

Many Indo-Pacific coastal states need to acquire the maritime governance capacity to secure the waters under their jurisdictions against a range of maritime security threats. While Chinese assertive behavior at sea is the challenge that is front and center in the Quad members' concern, Indo-Pacific coastal states must simultaneously address face a wide range of additional maritime security threats including terrorism, piracy and armed robbery, illicit trafficking, IUU fishing, environmental crimes, and hazards to navigation.¹⁷ In recognition of these maritime governance capacity shortfalls, the demand side of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region remains generally high.

Generally speaking, the states of Southeast Asia area are open to international assistance to develop this capability so long as this arrangement does not infringe upon their sovereignty sensitivities. Therefore, they tend to prefer assistance in the form of technology transfers and training events. Direct assistance for foreign maritime forces is generally undesirable, except in response to specific issues such as HADR after a natural disaster and search and rescue operations. Only when facing the most direct threats from non-state actors have Southeast Asian states been willing to allow foreign forces to conduct security operations in their jurisdiction and the only meaningful examples of this in recent years have involved the Philippines. In contrast, Pacific islands states, lacking the capacity to even maintain situational awareness, tend to take a more flexible approach and be more open to direct operational involvement of foreign law enforcement

16 John Bradford, "Expanding US-Japan Coast Guard Cooperation Globally, in *Governing the Global Commons: Challenges and Opportunities for US-Japan Cooperation* Kristi Goveella eds, (The German Marshall Fund of the United States), Dec 2022, p. 27.

17 John Bradford and Scott Edwards, "The Evolving Nature of Southeast Asia's Maritime Security Threats," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 16 Nov 2022, <https://amti.csis.org/the-evolving-nature-of-southeast-asias-maritime-security-threats/>

in their waters (for example, via sea rider agreements), so long as it improves maritime governance and the management of their ocean resources. This may be because maritime security is existential to their well-being.

Examples of successful capacity-building activities between the Quad members and coastal states are plentiful. The United States has active maritime security capacity-building programs sponsored by more than dozen different government agencies. That said, in the region Japan has set the pace by making maritime security capacity-building a central element of its regional foreign for more than fifty years.¹⁸ For example, it provided the PCG, Southeast Asia's oldest coast guard, with more than 25 vessels since 2016 and regularly deploys training teams to the Philippines.¹⁹ This work is currently being coordinated by two JCG officers in Manila and supported by both Japanese inter-agency and non-profit actors. The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), which was established in 2005, is responsible for securing Malaysia's vast waters, which covers approximately 574,000 square kilometers.²⁰ The MMEA has also benefited from partner state assistance, such as the provision of two coast guard cutters from Japan in 2017. The Vietnam Coast Guard (VCG), which was established in 1998 and transferred the authority from the Vietnamese army to the government in 2013, also receives external assistance to strengthen its capacity, such as 8 coast guard cutters from Japan from 2015 to 2017. The Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA), which was created in 2014, and other regional maritime security forces have similarly benefited from technology transfers and training projects.

In the Pacific, Australia has been the lead capacity-building partner, providing dozens of patrol boats to regional states and deploying Royal Australian Navy Maritime Surveillance Advisors. An exemplary project is the Australian commitment to assist with the construction of a Maritime Essential Services Centre (MESC) in Lami, Fiji.²¹ This support has recently been enhanced by the deployment of an Australian Defence Vessel (ADV) which will operate in the Pacific region for 250-300 days. It can be used for HADR assistance, capacity building and EEZ patrols.

India provides similar assistance, and at a significant scale and primarily to its Indian Ocean partners, particularly Mauritius. Recently, India built three Fast Patrol Vessels for the Mauritian Coast Guard and in Sep 2021 India handed over a Dornier Patrol aircraft. The Mauritian Coast Guard continues to be commanded by an Indian Navy officer on secondment. Additionally, Mauritius, Seychelles and the Maldives have agreements with India to conduct patrols within their EEZs. The ICG also conducted the *DOSTI* trilateral exercise with Maldives and Sri Lanka in Sep 2021. The ICG

18 John Bradford, "Japanese Naval Activities in Southeast Asian Waters: Building On 50 Years of Maritime Security Capacity Building," *Asian Security*, vol 16, no 1, 2021.

19 Japan Coast Guard, "US-Japan Joint Capacity building to PCG (Summary of results): Dispatch of Mobile Cooperation Team to the Philippines," May 6, 2022, https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/e/topics_archive/article3728.html

20 Thomas Daniel, "[Indo-Pacific Focus] Policy Brief No. 3: Issues Impacting Malaysia's Maritime Security Policies and Postures," JIIA Colum, June 18, 2018, https://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/article_page.php?id=5

21 Prime Minister of Australia, "Enhancing Fiji's Maritime Domain Awareness," 14 July 2022, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/enhancing-fijis-maritime-domain-awareness>

have a permanent detachment in the Maldives along with coastal radar stations which form part of India's coastal radar network.

In cases where the challenges posed by non-state actors such as pirates and terrorism has necessitated international cooperation in Southeast Asia, states have been able to reach some accommodation, but sovereignty is still closely guarded. For example, the coastal states developed the Malacca Straits Patrols in the early 2000s in response to a problematic number of armed robberies at sea, but the arrangement did not include hot pursuit or other extra-territorial rights. Furthermore, it is important to note that these were developed, at least in part, to prevent interference by extra-regional states. Similarly, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia launched trilateral patrols to deal with maritime attacks in their poorly governed areas of the Sulu and Celebes Sea in their tri-border areas but the initiative was not fully operationalized, mainly due to sensitivities over sovereignty.²² The biggest exception to this rule-of-thumb in recent decades has been the Philippines' readiness to receive military support (from, for example, the United States and Singapore) as a part of their campaign against maritime-savvy insurgents in the southern part of their country. However, this is carefully managed and states in Southeast Asia remain closed to this sort of international cooperation unless faced with a particularly dire and immediate threat. No threat reaches that level in the current regional strategic environment.

Maritime governance assistance is imperative to further Indo-Pacific states' prosperity and implement the FOIP visions. However, several issues need to be addressed. First, the current assistance schemes are mainly conducted in a bilateral manner, but this is unlikely to be sustainable given the provider's resource limitations. Second, the Indo-Pacific states have differing perspectives on those capacity-building programs; in addition to sovereignty sensitivities, some states are concerned about excessive dependence on a particular state. Third, most Indo-Pacific states deliberately seek to avoid taking a side in the great power competition between the United States and China. In this sense, they may be hesitant to receive significant assistance from one power since doing so may endanger the relationship with the other. Coastal states may also be careful about international cooperation that is seen as focused on the ability to directly counter Chinese activities. In such situations it may be helpful for the Quad states to focus on less military aspects of military security as, in most cases, any additional capacity helps develop the partner nation's net readiness to deal with the full range of maritime security threats.

Given these issues, it is necessary to further coordinate the Quad capacity-building programs that can empower those coastal states. More specifically, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution, and the combination of bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral efforts should be necessary for each state in the Indo-Pacific region to have various options to strengthen its law-enforcement capabilities. This is a demanding task for Quad coast guards, but such efforts will significantly contribute to

22 Ian Storey, "Trilateral Security Cooperation in the Sulu-Celebes Seas: A Work in Progress," ISEAS Perspective, 27 Aug 2018, p. 1.

achieving the Quad’s strategic objective—to maintain and enhance a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region that is open, free, and inclusive.

THE QUAD COAST GUARDS: FORCES, POSTURE AND COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

United States Coast Guard

With just over 42,000 active-duty service members and 343 patrol and coastal craft (23 of which have a full-load displacement of more than 1,500 tons), the USCG is the world's most established coast guard.²³ It is also the one that maintains the greatest global presence and is regarded as the world's oldest coast guard. As such it is often seen as the arch-typical coast guard and other nations, including those in Southeast Asia, generally established their coast guard to similarly collect tax duties and safeguard their sea trade routes.²⁴

The USCG traces its history to the establishment of the US Revenue-Marine in 1790. Congress tasked this armed service, organized under the Department of the Treasury, to enforce the collection of import tariffs. However, the service quickly gathered additional duties including military-type assignments. When the Quasi-War with France broke out in 1798, Revenue-Marine ships conducted operations together with those of the newly formed US Navy. The Revenue-Marine and its successor services, the Revenue Cutter Service and the USCG, would similarly deploy overseas for every American war including those in the western Pacific: the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Thus, military service and an expeditionary outlook are embedded in the USCG culture.

In response to the seams exposed by the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, Congress created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and placed the USCG in this new department. DHS' mandate and the missions associated with hardening the United States against attacks in its domestic territory led it to place additional focus on US coastal waters, but the service retained its expeditionary culture. While its global presence was reduced for a period, it continued to maintain a squadron of cutters in Bahrain, deploy frontline units to counter-narcotic missions in Latin America, and sends cutters to global diplomatic and capacity-building missions.

As the US pivoted its focus from its early twenty-first century wars in the Middle East and the global war on terror toward engaging the Indo-Pacific and competing with China, USCG similarly shifted. In 2020, then-National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien discussed the Indo-Pacific and pointed to how "efforts of the United States Government, including the United States Coast Guard (USCG) are critical to countering these destabilizing and malign actions" and that "enhancing the

23 *Military Balance* 2022, IISS, p. 238

24 Jay Tarriela, "The Maritime Security Roles of Coast Guards in Southeast Asia," IDSS Paper, 8 Dec 2022, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/idss/ip22076-the-maritime-security-roles-of-coast-guards-in-southeast-asia/#.Y7GTGHYRW5c>

presence of the USCG in the Indo-Pacific ensures the United States will remain the maritime partner of choice in the region.”²⁵ The US Indo-Pacific Strategy released in February 2022 specifically mentions the USCG, one of the few government agencies called out by name in the document.²⁶ It states that the nation will “expand the presence and cooperation of the United States Coast Guard in Southeast and South Asia and the Pacific Islands, with a focus on advising, training, deployment, and capacity building.”²⁷ Indonesian scholar Aristyo Darmawan observes that the US has now placed the USCG at the center of its Indo-Pacific maritime strategy.²⁸

At the 2022 Shangri-La Dialogue, Secretary of Defense Austin expanded on the growing role the USCG would play in the Indo-Pacific. He stated,

In the past year, my belief in the strategic power of partnerships has only deepened, And that’s at the heart of the President’s Indo-Pacific Strategy. Our work together helps ensure that all countries in the region — large and small — have a say in its future. It helps ensure that the status quo can’t be disrupted in ways that harm all of our security. And it helps strengthen our ability to find common solutions to common challenges. That includes tackling the gray-zone actions that chip away at international laws and norms... We’re bringing to bear the full resources of the U.S. government to do so. And that includes unprecedented Coast Guard investments in the Indo-Pacific.”²⁹

The investments he was speaking of at the event were embodied in the room by the presence of USCG Commandant Linda Fagan. The fact that she was the first USCG Commandant to attend Shangri-la Dialogue and the only head of coast guard present testified to the service’s commitment to expanding its engagement in the region.

Statements resulting from the 2022 US-ASEAN Summit also focused on expanding USCG activities. Biden’s Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell stated the USCG would help countries tackle illegal fishing and provide additional assistance to prevent forced labor in the industry.³⁰ It was also announced that a USCG vessel would be assigned to the region to operate as a ‘training platform,’ provide multinational crewing opportunities and participate in cooperative maritime engagements.³¹

25 US Embassy in Samoa, Statement from National Security Advisor Robert C. O’Brien, 2020

26 Alkonis, The Case for US Coast Guard Cutters in American Samoa, 2022

27 White House, US Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2022

28 Darmawan, Coast guard diplomacy and maritime security in Southeast Asia, 26 Apr 2022 <https://www.policyforum.net/coast-guard-diplomacy-and-maritime-security-in-southeast-asia/>

29 Department of Defense, Remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue, 2022

30 Tomazin, US to deploy coast guard to Indo-Pacific in the face of China’s rise, 2022

31 Phuong, The U.S. Coast Guard in the South China Sea, 2022

Japan Coast Guard

The JCG is also among the world's most capable. Its highly trained 14,350 personnel operate 388 patrol and coastal craft (66 of which have a full-load displacement of more than 1,500 tons).³² The JCG was established as the Maritime Safety Agency (*Kaijo Hoancho*) under the Ministry of Transportation in 1948. Manned mostly with veterans from the recently disestablished Imperial Japanese Navy, the MSA's first mission was to clear Japanese waters of the sea mines laid during World War II, prevent the illicit smuggling of goods and people from the Korean Peninsula, and provide for the safety of Japanese fishing vessels. In 1954, the Maritime Guard Forces, a section of the MSA equipped with former U.S. Navy frigates and landing craft, was spun off to create the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force. As the JMSDF assumed the role of Japan's *de facto* Navy, the MSA remained a coast guard body responsible for law enforcement and maintaining the security of Japanese waters against non-military threats. In order to reconcile the range of the missions it was performing with its international nomenclature, its name was officially revised in English to JCG in April 2000, but the Japanese name remains unchanged. Unlike the USCG, which is considered part of the American Armed Forces, the JCG is a strictly civilian agency, a matter of importance as both a legal status and a source of service culture.

Like the USCG, the JCG has an expeditionary heritage, though it does not maintain a global presence. Its first overseas mission came in 1950 when the Japanese government dispatched JCG minesweepers to support US Navy activities around the Korean peninsula.³³ From the 1960s onward the JCG also deployed ships to Southeast Asia to support Japan's capacity-building activities in the areas of navigation safety and environmental protection. In 1999 JCG's mission in Southeast Asia expanded to include support for the improvement of regional maritime law enforcement capacity, particularly anti-piracy capabilities. These activities now include the deployment of JCG cutters to participate in bilateral and multilateral coast guard exercises and the dispatch of JCG officers as in-resident subject matter experts, liaison officers and attaches.

In the last decade, the JCG has been increasingly called upon to provide expanded guarding operations key to sustaining administrative control over the waters around the Senkaku islands against Chinese presence. However, the JCG is also being called upon to play an important role in realizing Japan's region-wide FOIP vision. For example, in 2017, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stressed the need for the JCG to be further developed since it has significant roles in attaining his objectives and, most importantly, in promoting international cooperation by sharing Japanese values regarding a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law with relevant countries.³⁴ The Overseas Development Assistance White paper of the same year emphasized the JCG's function

32 *Military Balance* 2022, pp. 238, 279.

33 Samuel Porter, "In Dangerous Waters: Japan's Forgotten Minesweeping Operation in the Korean War," *The Asia-Pacific Journal Japan Focus*, Vol 20, Issue 10, No 1, 01 Oct 2022.

34 Tarriela, Japan: From Gunboat Diplomacy to Coast Guard Diplomacy, 2018

as a key stakeholder in realizing initiatives for ensuring peace and stability, all in reference to the dynamism created by Japan's FOIP vision.³⁵ The December 2022 government decision to expand the JCG's budget by about nearly US\$1 billion (a 40% increase) in stages between now and 2027 also reflects a continued commitment to resource the services' growing role.³⁶

Indian Coast Guard

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is one of four branches of the Indian armed service under the control of the Ministry of Defense. Formed in 1978, with only seven vessels, its current manpower strength of 12,600 maintains and operates 136 patrol and coastal craft (28 of which have a full-load displacement of more than 1,500 tons).³⁷ Like the JCG, the ICG is rapidly growing as a force, and its inventory is projected to exceed 200 ships by 2025.³⁸ As such, the ICG plays an important role in providing for the security of economic activities in the Indian Ocean. Unlike the USCG and JCG, the ICG's heritage does not involve an expeditionary outlook or mission. Instead, its peacetime tasks are primarily tied to the security of the Maritime Zones of India (MZI, an area that, per domestic law, covers territorial waters, contiguous zone as well as EEZ, continental shelf, historic waters and the area of India).³⁹ Beyond the EEZ, ICG missions have been mostly limited to HADR and SAR activities in the high sea areas of the Indian Ocean and in support of Indian Ocean's Island states. In recent years a succession of strategy documents and policy initiatives have set the state for the ICG to develop a more expeditionary posture and expand its international engagements.

India's 2015 maritime security strategy, *Ensuring Secure Seas*, a document produced by the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence, features the ICG heavily, recognizing it as a primary instrument of power in the maritime domain, and state that an "increasing role and operational responsibilities are envisaged to be taken up by the Indian Coast Guard and other agencies, as their capabilities and the ambit of coastal security both evolve."⁴⁰ *Ensuring Secure Seas* does not specifically reference the Indo-Pacific and focuses India's cooperative activities on the Indian Ocean, where it sees itself as a 'Net Security Provider.'⁴¹ This regional approach is linked to India's broader engagement with the region under a policy Prime Minister Narendra Modi

35 ODA, White Paper, 2017; See also: Furuya, Japan's Coast Guard Diplomacy through Capacity Building in the Indo-Pacific, 2022

36 Japan Times, "Japan to boost coast guard budget for Senkaku Islands security"; (2022) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/12/16/national/coast-guard-defense-budget/>

37 *Military Balance* 2022, p. 238, 270

38 Pooja Bhatt, "The Indian Coast Guard, the Quad, a freeand open Indo-Pacific," PatNet #2, 10 Jan 2023.

39 ibid and Government of India, The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976, 6[https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/1484?sam handle=123456789/1362](https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/1484?sam%20handle=123456789/1362)

40 Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas*, 2015

41 Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas*, 2015

announced in 2015, referred to as SAGAR – “Security and Growth for All in the Region.”⁴² SAGAR incorporates five core propositions: the need to (1) safeguard the mainland and islands and defend the nation’s interests but with an eye to generate security and prosperity for the region; (2) deepen economic and security cooperation, as well as, help build maritime security capacities of neighbors and island states; (3) promote collective action and cooperation through existing institutions like the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and other regional mechanisms for maritime cooperation; (4) enhance collaboration focusing on sustainable development and, (5) to work together with extra-regional actors holding strong interests and stakes in the region.⁴³ Under the auspices SAGAR, the ICG, working in tandem with the Indian Navy, has been increasingly active in the Indian Ocean.

Prime Minister Modi built on SAGAR when establishing the Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative (IPOI) at the 14th East Asia Summit (EAS) on November 4, 2019.⁴⁴ The IPOI stresses the seeking of ‘partnerships’ that promote free trade and sustainable use of marine resources. It draws on three aspects of India’s Indo-Pacific outlook: purposive partnerships, a pluralistic policy and power promotion. This expanded vision emerged in parallel with an outward expansion of ICG to include increasingly frequent visits to Southeast Asia and the Pacific.⁴⁵ India has been actively looking for partners to cooperatively implement the pillars of IPOI with Australia taking the lead on maritime ecology; France on maritime resources; and the UK agreeing to partner with India for the maritime security pillar. These pillars should be used to further strengthen engagement with the Quad members and other regional states.

India’s relationship with Vietnam is perceived as the most mature among its Southeast Asian and Pacific partners.⁴⁶ India and Vietnam have conducted cooperative maritime activities in a range of areas to include anti-piracy, sea lane security and the exchange of data pertaining to commercial shipping. In 2020 the two governments agreed to hold their first Maritime Security Dialogue, committed to hosting port calls for each other’s naval and coast guard ships at a greater frequency and agreed to increased interaction between the Vietnamese Sea Police and Indian coast guard officials.⁴⁷

42 Schottli, “Security and growth for all in the Indian Ocean” – maritime governance and India’s foreign policy, 2019; de Estrada, Putting the SAGAR vision to the test, 2020.

43 Schottli, “Security and growth for all in the Indian Ocean” – maritime governance and India’s foreign policy, 2019; de Estrada, Putting the SAGAR vision to the test, 2020

44 Panda, The Strategic Imperatives of Modi’s Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative, 2020

45 Brewster, It’s time for a “Quad” of coast guards, 2019; Singh et al., The New India-US Partnership in the Indo-Pacific: Peace, Prosperity and Security, 2018

46 Panda, The Quad Plus and India’s pointed alignment strategy, 2022; Jha & Vinh, India, Vietnam, and the Indo-Pacific, 2020

47 Jha & Vinh, India, Vietnam, and the Indo-Pacific, 2020 Ministry of External Affairs India, India - Vietnam Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People, 2020; Jha & Vinh, India, Vietnam, and the Indo-Pacific, 2020

The Indian Government continued to call on the ICG to do more. For example, in 2022 Defence Minister Singh stated:

the growing regional and global trade in this region has brought forth new challenges. Geopolitical tensions and a clash of strategic interests have led to traditional security challenges. Terrorism, drug trafficking and piracy are some non-traditional challenges in front of us today. The entire region is being affected by these challenges. India, being a responsible maritime power, has a clear interest to create a rules-based, peaceful and stable environment. Such a rule-based environment was essential for both regional and global prosperity. In such a situation, the ICG has a big role to play.⁴⁸

These calls, as well as increasing activities such as port visits to Indonesia and Australia,⁴⁹ point to the expectation that the ICG will become more active in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. More specifically, there have also been calls for the ICG to engage in training provision, the sort of capacity-building activities regularly organized by the other Quad Coast Guard.⁵⁰ A further significant step is the planned India-ASEAN Marine Pollution Response Centre at Chennai, which will be developed by the ICG and will aid in addressing and supplementing regional efforts to deal with marine pollution incidents.⁵¹

Australian Border Force and Maritime Border Command

There is no Australian Coast Guard. Nor is there an Australian maritime law enforcement organization that meets all the criteria normally associated with a coast guard. Instead, Australia employed a multi-jurisdictional approach with multiple agencies and departments coordinating maritime security responsibilities.⁵² From a functional perspective, the responsibility for cooperating with the USCG, JCG and ICG to implement the FOIP, rests with two organizations the Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Maritime Border Command (MBC). As their names imply, both are focused on the immediate approaches to Australian territory. Neither are expeditionary forces; however, they employ a defense-in-depth approach that recognizes that overseas engagement is often the surest path to security closer to home. Therefore, the agencies engage in overseas diplomatic activities and capacity-building projects. They have also deployed ships as far away as India and are investing in larger vessels with this in mind. In addition, the ABF and MBC work

48 Statesmen News Service, Rules-based, open Indo-Pacific essential for global prosperity, 2022

49 Embassy of India in Indonesia, "Indian Coast Guard Ship "VIJIT" MAIDEN VISIT AT SABANG, INDONESIA" (2019), https://www.indianembassyjakarta.gov.in/whats_new?id=eyJpdil6llwZVdSc1JwWE1WGpZY3g5WjFtWXc9PSIsInZh-bHVlIjo1N1ZWbmowWmE2STJzV2N4djIESkpQQT09liwibWFjIjo1NThmYTMyMjQyZTU1ZmU3ZGY3YTliZTRIMGZhNTdkN-2RhNTQ2ZjNIYjViOGU0MzQ2YWY2YTg4MTU5ZDU4NmMwYyJ9

50 Saha, India Calibrates its South China Sea Approach, 2021 and Neil Walker, "Darwin hosts joint ABF/Indian Coast Guard exercises" Border Security Report, 29 Nov 2019. <https://border-security-report.com/darwin-hosts-joint-abf-indian-coast-guard-exercises/>

51 Press Information Bureau India, Raksha Mantri & his Cambodian counterpart co-chair maiden India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting in Siem Reap, 2022

52 Clayton and Strating, 17 Jan 2023.c

complements that of the Royal Australian Navy, an expeditionary force that regularly deploys forces throughout the Indo-Pacific with a mandate that includes constabulary missions in the maritime space. ABF staff are sometimes attached to these naval vessels to support these missions.

The ABF has a workforce of around 5,700 and 10 dedicated vessels, including 1 (ABF Cutter *Ocean Shield*) greater than 1,500 tons.⁵³ It was stood up in 2015 as the operational arm of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), an organization that had been created in the previous year due to the integration of the Department of Immigration and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. Since 2017, the ABF has been under the Department of Home Affairs, a department formed to bring together Australia's federal law enforcement, national and transport security, criminal justice, emergency management, multicultural affairs, immigration and border-related functions and agencies including the former DIBP.⁵⁴ This wide-ranging set of responsibilities dictates that the bulk of ABF personnel focus their daily attention away from the maritime domain.

The MBC is a multi-agency task force answerable to both the Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Department of Defense. Functioning as the primary government maritime law enforcement organization, the MBC is responsible for responding to the civil maritime security threats in Australia's Maritime Domain, an area that includes the offshore areas within Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) but extends to the area bounded by Australia's Security Forces Authority (SFA) Area.

The MBC is led by a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Rear Admiral who is also a sworn ABF Officer, allowing for operational command and control of both ADF and ABF assets. At any time up to 600 ADF personnel may be supporting the MBC via Operation Resolute, its contribution to the whole-of-government effort to protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests. These assets include a range of surface vessels and surveillance assets such as ABF-contracted patrol aircraft and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) P8 maritime patrol aircraft. The surface vessels are typically RAN *Armidale*- and *Cape*-class patrol boats, but large hull vessels are assigned as required. The MBC is not a search and rescue organization, but its assigned assets do respond to emergencies at sea in accordance with international obligations.⁵⁵

From an international engagement perspective, the ABF frequently assumes the duties of an "Australian Coast Guard." For example, the ABR represents Australia in international fora such as the Coast Guard Global Summit and the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM). However, the Commander of the MBC is Australia's Governor for ReCAAP, but ABF serves

53 Australian Border Force Incoming Government Brief, 2022, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/foi/files/2022/fa-220600105-document-released-part-5.PDF>

54 Australian Border Force, "Maritime Border Command Overview," Aug 2021.

55 Australian Border Force, "Maritime Border Command Overview," Aug 2021 and <https://www.defence.gov.au/operations/resolute>.

as the Australian Focal Point.⁵⁶ ABF/MBC units and personnel engage in international cooperation engagements as part of its ‘security in depth’ construct. The most common ways it cooperates with partners include collaborative training and human resource development, coordinated patrols, joint exercises, mutual capacity-building activities, the cross-pollination of best practices and information sharing.⁵⁷ These projects are most active in Indonesia and the Pacific.

Comparing Quad Coast Guard Capacities: Implications for Potential Cooperation

The varied missions, force strengths and orientations of the Quad Coast Guards will have direct implications regarding their capacity to contribute to expanded cooperative activities. They also demonstrate no single Quad coast guard has the overarching capacity to deliver on all cooperative requirements within the region. Key information relevant when considering possibilities is summarized in Figure 1.

First, the Quad coast guard’s political leaders hold different understandings of what cartographically constitutes the Indo-Pacific, as well as different sub-regional priorities. In this regard, the JCG and ICG align the most closely, given they both consider the totality of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, connected by Southeast Asia, to constitute the Indo-Pacific. The USCG and ABF/MBC, on the other hand, consider the Indo-Pacific to begin at the Eastern Indian Ocean, omitting inclusion of the West Indian Ocean. In practice, the Quad coast guard activities reflect different focuses. The USCG has primarily been involved in activities in both the Pacific and Southeast Asia, the JCG in Southeast Asia and Pacific, the ICG in the Indian Ocean, and the ABF in the South Pacific.

56 Australian Border Force, “Maritime Border Command Overview,” Aug 2021 and ReCAAP Focal Points, <https://www.recaap.org/focal-points>

57 Australian Border Force, “Maritime Border Command Overview,” Aug 2021.

Figure 1: Quad Coast Guards Cooperative Capacities

	EEZ (km ²)	Manpower	Vessels >1,500 tons	Expeditionary Posture	Dedicated International Cooperation Personnel
ABF/MBC*	8,505,348	6,300	1	No, but embraces a defense-in-depth approach	Few. Liaison officers and training.
ICG	2,305,143	12,600	28	Minimal, but growing. Focus beginning to expand beyond the Indian Ocean	Very few.
JCG	4,479,388	14,350	66	Indo-Pacific. Deploy from Japan.	Many. Dedicated international training teams, liaison officers, etc.
USCG	11,351,000	42,000	23	Global. Forward operating stations in Guam and Bahrain	Many. Dedicated international training teams, liaison officers, etc.

*Includes 5,700 ABF personnel many of whom are not oriented toward maritime missions. The MBC can source 3 destroyers, 8 frigates and 3 amphibious warships and 12 patrol boats from the RAN as needed. Source: <http://iilss.net/exclusive-economic-zoneeez-map-of-the-world/>, IISS Military Balance 2022, <https://www.abf.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/border-protection/maritime/patrol-vessels>, <https://www.abf.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/border-protection/maritime/patrol-vessels>, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/foi/files/2022/fa-220600105-document-released-part-5.PDF>

Second, the Quad coast guards have varied operational and expeditionary capabilities. Among the four forces, the USCG is the largest in terms of personnel. However, it has one of the smaller inventories of large cutters and stretches that fleets deploying those vessels to protect the world's second-largest EEZ and support the US' global security engagement posture. Plans to deploy more vessels to Guam, a viability cruise that took a fast response cutter from that US territory to Southeast Asia, and the possibility of a new base in American Samoa are positive steps toward expanding presence. It is however unlikely that a large number of vessels will be made available to implement the FOIP.⁵⁸ At present, the USCG cannot even meet its commitments for fisheries patrols in the Pacific without assistance of ships from the US Navy.⁵⁹ One step that might address this shortfall would be to draw down the Coast Guard permanent presence in the Arabian Gulf.⁶⁰

58 Aaron C. Davenport, Michelle D. Ziegler, Susan A. Resetar, Scott Savitz, Katherine Anania, Melissa Bauman, Karishma McDonald, "USCG Project Evergreen V", *Rand Corporation*, 2015 and David Brunnstrom, "U.S. to base Coast Guard cutter in western Pacific in response to China," Reuters, 24 Oct 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-pacific-idUSKBN2782VY>.

59 U.S. Third Fleet Public Affairs "Navy, Coast Guard Begin Oceania Maritime Security Initiative Patrol," 8 July 2021, <https://www.surfpac.navy.mil/Media/News/Article/2722784/navy-coast-guard-begin-oceania-maritime-security-initiative-patrol/>

60 Blake Herzinger, "Reorienting the Coast Guard: A Case For Patrol Forces Indo-Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, 5 Nov 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/reorienting-the-coast-guard-a-case-for-patrol-forces-indo-pacific/>

The JCG is the second largest of the Quad coast guards. Although much of its sizable fleet of large ships is tied down administering control of the contested waters in the East China Sea, it is still able to routinely dispatch vessels on diplomatic, capacity-building and operational missions to Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The ICG does not have a strong history of deploying beyond the Indian Ocean. It is beginning to do so more regularly and is developing greater expeditionary capability, but the future of those is very much in question given an alternate view that it would be more efficient to focus those resources into the Indian Navy. Of the four, the ABF/MCC is the least expeditionary. Despite some white hull diplomacy missions such as the port calls to India, the ABF has very limited operational capability that can be externally oriented. MBC, for example, has been unable to patrol Australia's Sub-Antarctic Islands since 2015, instead relying ABF officers embarked on French vessels.⁶¹ Therefore, plans to improve operational cooperation should not be predicated on anything more than a marginal increase in ship availability.

Third, the different coast guards have varied diplomatic and personnel capacities. Here, the JCG has in recent years arguably made the largest contribution to regional maritime governance capacity.⁶² It has been the most diplomatically active sponsoring regional forums and fostering the development of partner coast guards. It has considerable experience and a continuing commitment to the development of regional human capital through its mobile training teams that respond to regional requests. The USCG has been quickly expanding its role in this sphere – deploying adaptable and responsive deployable teams of Coast Guard personnel for training and USCG port-security experts. While there have been concerns that these take capacity from elsewhere and that there is not sufficient specialized staff with “a knowledge of [host] nations’ languages, cultures, and agencies”,⁶³ the USCG international affairs and attaché programs have been expanding. Conversely, the international footprint of the ABF is extremely small, deploying a network of only eighteen posted officers globally.⁶⁴ The ICG has also been criticized for its lack of international training capacity,⁶⁵ with diplomatic efforts generally restricted to high-level meetings between senior staff.

This variation in international cooperation capacity is not just a matter of resources, but also authorities and responsibilities.⁶⁶ The USCG has a clear mandate for global partnership activities and the US government has been focused on exploiting their capabilities in order to implement their FOIP vision. The US Navy is glad for this role and provide Coast Guard force with operational support when they deploy. The JCG has similar authorities for international cooperation. While its relationship with the JMSDF has been traditionally poor, coordination is improving. In

61 Claire Young, “Eyes on the Prize: Australia, China, and the Antarctic Treaty System”, Lowy Institute, 2021. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/eyes-prize-australia-china-antarctic-treaty-system>

62 John Bradford, “Japan Takes the Lead in Western Pacific Maritime Security” *Asia Policy*, Vol 16, No. 3, April 2021, pp. 85-6.

63 Davenport et al, USCG Project Evergreen V, 2015; Katherine Anania, “A Timely Opportunity for the U.S. Coast Guard to Teach a Man to Protect His Fish”, *RAND*, 2022

64 Australian Border Force Incoming Government Brief, 2022

65 Premesha Saha, “India Calibrates its South China Sea Approach,” ORF Issue Brief No. 477, July, 2021

66 Bhatt, 10 Jan 2023

contrast the relationship between the JCG and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is exceptionally close with many active and retired JCG officer filling JICA positions and JICA sponsoring JCG implementation activities. The ICG has authorities to conduct international partnership activities, but most compete with the Indian Navy, a service populated by officers who question the role for the ICG in maritime security leadership and believe they should be the lead agencies for international engagement in the maritime domain. Such officers often hold meaningful influence with the ICG's parent organization, the Ministry of Defense. The ABF and MBC can conduct international cooperation activities, but these generally are outside its standing mandate and must be additionally funded. For example the Australia-India Joint Declaration on a Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific which formed part of the Australia-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in 2020) included states required to trigger funding for an ABF ship visit to India and further capacity-building cooperation between the two coast guards.

Taken together, these factors have important implications for the potential roles each coast guard can play in cooperative activities. While the USCG can offer operational capacity, due to prioritization concerns planners should look to the USCG to support efforts through the deployment of experts, supporting the development of regional human capital, and the provision of technology-based capacities. In recent years, these efforts have already expanded such that they are outpacing the JCG in countries such as the Philippines where the Japanese efforts previously predominated. At the same time, planners can rely on Japan to retain its leadership functions, sustain past efforts and be available to cooperate both at sea and ashore with other coast guards throughout the Indo-Pacific. Despite the ICG's limited operational and diplomatic capacity, due to its focus on the Indian Ocean, it should be regarded as the key enabler and facilitator of cooperative coast guard activities in the Indian Ocean. An exception to this generally would be with activities in and around Vietnam, where, by virtue of its strong relationship, it may be able to show more leadership. The ICG and JCG might be particularly good partners to team with their Vietnamese counterparts. Among the Quad coast guards, the ABF/MBC have the least capacity to lend to cooperative activities. However, the ABF/MB's history of capacity-building projects and technical engagements do offer a unique strength to potential Quad coast guard cooperative activities especially those in the South Pacific and Indonesia. Such complementary capacities and outlooks demonstrate both the need and opportunities for Quad Coast Guard cooperation in relation to the Indo-Pacific.

AREAS FOR EXPANDED COOPERATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Diplomatic Coordination

As the lead maritime security forces of like-minded nations sharing a similar Indo-Pacific vision, the Quad coast guards should provide mutual support to each other's diplomatic activities. This should be both in Coast Guard-specific diplomatic arenas such as the Global Coast Guard Summit and Heads of Asian Coast Guard Meeting and in forums where the coast guards play supporting roles such as ReCAAP and the ASEAN-affiliated maritime meetings such as the ASEAN/Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Maritime Security Working Group. This coordination would be best directed from the highest levels and be crowned by an annual meeting of the Quad Coast Guard Commanders where they set a multi-year agenda to advance their cooperation toward the implementation of the FOIP vision. The meeting should as much as possible, focus on the details of technical cooperation rather than high-visibility announcement so that outcomes are maximized and politicalization is minimized. This meeting could be a standalone event or streamlined into the commanders' busy schedules by holding it on the sidelines of another meeting. This would be similar to the 2018 meeting of the Quad navy chiefs that took place at the Raisina Dialogue.⁶⁷ Another venue will be the Quad Leaders Meeting, next hosted in Australia.⁶⁸

One of the first priorities for diplomatic coordination among the Quad coast guards would be to enable all four services to enlarge the impact they make via in key forums. To this end, Australia, Japan, and India should coordinate to facilitate entry of the USCG into the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Meeting. This meeting, first hosted by Japan in 2004, has since become the leading venue of regional maritime security cooperation with twenty countries, Hong Kong and ReCAAP as members or associate members.⁶⁹ Bringing the USCG onboard will be a tall order as China will likely object with its most persuasive point centering on the argument that the United States is not an Asian nation. However, such a stance would be clearly contradicted by the fact that France is a member by the virtue of its Indo-Pacific island territories, a geographic circumstance similar to that of the United States. At a minimum, Japan, Australia and India should fight to obtain observer status for the US.

The Quad Coast Guards should also coordinate to strengthen the impacts of their diplomacy via the Coast Guard Global Summit by making that meeting more meaningful. The bi-annual meeting began in 2017 under Japanese leadership and has always been hosted by the JCG. It is

67 Raisina Dialogue, Conference Report, 2018

68 Clayton and Strating, 17 Jan 2023.

69 "The 10th Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting," The Nippon Foundation, September 30, 2014.

an increasingly useful setting for coordinating maritime security activities and would gain more traction as a truly global assembly if the burden of leadership were to start rotating. Other Quad coast guards could assist by hosting upcoming iterations. Among the Quad participants, India would be the ideal partner to step up to host in 2023 or 2025. Not being a “true Coast Guard,” the MBC would carry less weight than the ICG and handing off to the USCG could make the summit less attractive to non-aligned states and those seeking to avoid choices that appear to be aligned with either side of the US-China great power competition.

The USCG can also use its convening power to expand diplomatic coordination. In April 2022, the U.S. Coast Guard and Philippine Coast Guard co-hosted the eight Southeast Asia Maritime Law Enforcement Initiative (SEAMLEI) Commanders’ Forum gathering Senior leaders and policy makers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam virtually and in-person.⁷⁰ Formerly known as the Gulf of Thailand Initiative but expanded to have a wider geographic mandate, SEAMLEI is a regional forum meant to increase maritime law enforcement cooperation and information-sharing among Southeast Asian nations. Though SEAMLEI funding streams are restricted to supporting certain Southeast Asian states, there is no reason that the Quad members should be send representatives to the Commanders’ forum to assist with coordinating regional efforts. In fact, JCG officers joined GOTI meetings as subject matter experts, so there is precedent to draw upon.

Common Frameworks and Operational Standards

Expanded diplomatic coordination between the Quad coast guards would be an overarching step toward more practical outcomes to implement the FOIP vision. Another valuable contribution that the Quad coast guards could make be to cooperatively develop region-wide standards for maritime security cooperation. Such protocols would enable coast guards region-wide to realize greater efficiencies by pooling resources and complementing each other’s strengths when pursuing similar goals. As the Indo-Pacific’s most significant coast guards and the leaders of regional maritime cooperation, if they do something in the same way among each other and when engaging with other partners, these protocols will become the de facto standards. While it will not be practical to apply the same tools for every relationship, standardization should be pursued whenever possible. These best practices and common standards may also spill over to other state agencies that support maritime security such as fisheries agencies, custom bureaus, maritime police, and navies. Given the splinter multi-agency maritime security systems of many regional states this could be especially important.

70 Lauren Jorgensen, “US, Philippine Coast Guards host maritime law enforcement forum” 6 Apr 2022, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/417992/us-philippine-coast-guards-host-maritime-law-enforcement-forum>

This is not to argue that the Quad should create frameworks and opportunities and then invite partners to be inside or outside of this systems. Indeed, do so would create exactly the sort of political decisions that most states and their coast guards would prefer to avoid. Instead the emphasis should be on norm setting by simply creating the venue or method that provide the most efficient path to reach the desired ends. Hence, the emphasis should be on creating standards that de facto or “by practice”

The four Quad Coast Guards already share strong bilateral relationships tailored to their specific needs. Of these bilateral partnerships, the strongest linkages are between the USCG and JCG. In May 2022, those coast guards launched SAPPHIRE (Solid Alliance for Peace and Prosperity with Humanity and Integrity on the Rule of law-based Engagement), a cooperative program to promote the objectives of their national Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategies. Referred to by Americans as “a perpetual operation,” SAPPHIRE encompasses all annual interactions between the USCG and supports improved maritime governance by establishing operating procedures for combined operations, training and capacity building, and information sharing.⁷¹ The JCG and USCG should examine the terms of this arrangement and determine which could be replicated to incorporate the ICG and MBC. If elements of SAPPHIRE could be quadrilateralized to include all four partners, this would create a new framework for Quad reflective of the FOIP vision originally articulated by Shinzo Abe as the Indo-Pacific’s “Security Diamond.” Expanding elements of SAPPHIRE to include the other Quad members hereby provide standing, standardized frameworks that lower the barriers related to working with third parties and provide templates for building networks of more efficient cooperation. Therefore, this will not only make the Quad coast guards more effective but will have knock effects of expanding the maritime governance capacity of their partners across the region.⁷²

The Quad states should also consider the joint development of an Indo-Pacific maritime governance of center of excellence (COE). A COE is defined by the European Commission as, “a structure where research and technical development is performed of world standard, in terms of measurable scientific production (including training) and/or technological innovation.”⁷³ Specific services that could be provided by an Indo-Pacific maritime governance COE would include storing knowledge; providing classroom space; hosting conferences, seminars, workshops, and tabletop exercises; sponsoring research; organizing field training for disaster-relief partners; and facilitating more substantial interactions between disaster-response providers and other stakeholders. Such

71 “US, Japan Coast Guards Formally Expand Cooperation,” United States Coast Guard, May 19, 2022 and “US, Japan Coast Guards Formally Expand Cooperation,” *Seapower Magazine*, 29 May 2022, <https://seapowermagazine.org/us-japan-coast-guards-formally-expand-cooperation/>

72 John Bradford, “Expanding US-Japan Coast Guard Cooperation Globally,” in *Governing the Global Commons: Challenges and Opportunities for US-Japan Cooperation* Kristi Govella eds. (The German Marshall Fund of the United States), Dec 2022, p. 29-30.

73 “Action for Centres of Excellence with a European Dimension,” European Commission, European Research Area <http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/centres.pdf>.

a COE would be best situated in a location with a significant volume of other activity related to maritime security. Doing so would take advantage of the “critical mass” effect that uses complementary sources of knowledge, know-how, and facilities to combine various knowledge and infrastructure resources. Ideally, the Quad could sponsor the COE in a Southeast Asian host nation, perhaps alongside a training center, such as those in Balagtas and Batam, which is already getting support from the Quad members. If no agreeable partner can be found Kure, Japan location of the Japan Coast Guard Academy, a body that already co-hosts the Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program for mid-career coast guard officers and officials from maritime agencies, could be an ideal location.⁷⁴

Cooperative Capacity-Building Activities

For more than a decade, cooperative capacity-building has been an aspirational goal of the US-Japan Alliance and the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral relationship. The premise is simple enough: Given the shared interest in improving regional states’ maritime capacity but limited resources available to make capacity-building investments, like-minded partners should coordinate their activities to avoid duplication, play to strengths, minimize reliance on weaknesses, and take advantage of opportunities for synergetic outcomes. Given the clear logic, the Quad coast guards should expand their cooperative capacity-building efforts and seek opportunities for all four forces to engage in this management. However, it should also be recognized that implementing cooperative capacity-building projects is much more difficult than it appears at first glance. In fact, a decade of efforts, including many workshops and meetings, has revealed that actual opportunities where cooperative capacity-building would have the multiplicative impacts envisions are fewer than one would first imagine. Once those opportunities are identified, a myriad of legal, bureaucratic, institutional and cultural misalignments reveal themselves and the investments required to overcome the resultant hurdles. As a result of these challenges, despite a numb the only project that the US-Japan-Australia trilateral relationship has completed is an undersea cable connection for Palau. In contrast, the US and Japan have had more successes by focusing on smaller-scale opportunities with Southeast Asian partners.

The Philippines provides the most examples of successful US-Japan cooperative maritime capacity-building activities. Some of these trilateral and multilateral activities have involved the navies, but the coast guards have been exceptionally active. The USCG and JCG regularly arrange invitations to each other when developing capacity-building projects with the Philippine Coast Guard. For example, USCG participation in the first multinational coast guard exercise in Southeast

74 Kentaro Furuya, “The Japan Coast Guard’s Role in Reaslizing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” PacNet 4, 12 Jan 2023, <https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-4-the-japan-coast-guards-role-in-realizing-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific>

Asia, a 2017 event hosted jointly by Japan and the Philippines in Manila.⁷⁵ In 2022, for the first time the USCG and JCG executed a fully cooperative training event involving the PCG.⁷⁶ In this case, the key efficiency is that the USCG and JCG trainers embarked on the same PCG ship at the same time. While one training team exercised with the PCG vessel's "top-side" operational specialists, the other worked with the engineering crew. Therefore, this PCG vessel was able to maximize its training and minimize the time it was unavailable for mission tasking.

According to the coast guard officers and international cooperation specialists involved with the development and implementation of cooperative capacity-building activities in the Philippines, several interlinked factors sum up to explain why it has been the Indo-Pacific nation where cooperative US-Japan initiatives have been the most successful. First, the Philippines government has been a consistently willing partner eager to improve its capability to deal with the wide range of maritime threats that it faces including IUU fishing, smuggling, armed robbery, maritime terrorism, and conflicting international territorial claims. Second, the Philippines officials have been relatively open to hear, consider and react to ideas. This seems to be related to their relatively cosmopolitan nature, open-access bureaucratic system, and strong English language skills throughout the ranks. Third, the US and Japan both have long histories as leading development partners in the Philippines. Finally, the US and Japanese officials have developed a close working relationship. Therefore, both nations have a relatively large presence of specialists in Manila who have meaningful expertise and hold the trust of their hosts.

No other nation in Southeast Asia provides the US and Japan with a mix of traits that yields similar opportunities for cooperative capacity-building activities. This could explain why cooperative capacity-building activities and the multilateralization of bilateral activities has been less frequently realized in other Southeast Asia states. After the Philippines, the Southeast Asian nation where the US and Japan have been most successful in executive cooperative capacity-building activities has been Vietnam. Here, the host-nation system is more rigidly structured, but the national government has been open to capacity-building activities, particularly naval projects, and US Navy and JMSDF officers in Hanoi have closely coordinated. In this case, Vietnam has shown a preference do new types of activities with Japan before it does them with the US. In other Southeast Asian states, the US has also found success bringing European or intra-ASEAN partners to naval exercises.⁷⁷ The Quad members should find success similarly coordinating with the French Navy, which maintains forces in France's Indo-Pacific territories, and the United Kingdom's Royal Navy, which now maintains a permanent presence of forward-deployed offshore patrol vessels for maritime security missions in the Indo-Pacific.

75 John Bradford, "Japan Takes the Lead," pp. 87.

76 Furuya, 12 Jan 2023

77 John Bradford and Greg Adams, "Beyond Bilateralism: Exercising the Maritime Security Network," *Issues & Insights*, Vol 16, No 11, Pacific Forum, 15 June 2016.

Another potential obstacle derives from the differing expeditionary postures of the Quad coast guards and the various forms of capacity that they are poised to deliver. The USCG and JCG both maintain mobile training teams ready to travel directly to top partner nations and can host events on their vessels visiting the region. Examples of training conducted during expeditionary deployments were performed by USCG *Stratton* in Southeast Asia in 2019 and in the South Pacific in 2022.⁷⁸ Commitment to make these sort of activities more frequent was reflected in the US-ASEAN summit statement that stated a USCG vessel would be assigned to the region to operate as a “training platform” and a mobile training team would be similarly forward deployed.⁷⁹ In contrast, the ABF and ICG, will rarely have deploying ships available for this sort of activities. The ABF has an establish program for deploying mobile training teams, but the ICG does not. The ICG might consider developing this community through a “watch-walk-run” course of actions, perhaps partners with the JCG in a host nation such as Vietnam where both Japan and India have close relations.

Despite these challenges, opportunities for combined capacity building are being developed across the region. SEAMLEI, a US-funded initiative that has provided technical assistance, financial support, training and capacity-building to regional maritime law enforcement agencies since 2012 is one line of effort that can be built upon. Other opportunities have been created through the two USCG partially funded training centers in Southeast Asia – one in Balagtas, Philippines and one in Batam, Indonesia. These centers have already by used as venues for capacity-building projects involving other international partners. For example, the UNODC conducted a specialized visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) training course on encounters with migrant vessels for maritime law enforcement officers from Southeast Asian countries at the facility in Batam.⁸⁰ Finally, the Maritime Security Desktop Exercise, an annual event co-organized by the ABF and Indonesia, already includes Japan and India, so it would seem ripe to add the United States and additional Indo-Pacific partners.⁸¹ While these examples are not exhaustive, these venues are particularly promising as they are successful cases that suit the capabilities of the different Quad coast guards - allowing for training teams to be sent for short periods – and include a greater variety of regional states.

To develop an expanded set of cooperative capacity-building activities across the Indo-Pacific the Quad coast guards should consider the positive lessons from successful cases. Most

78 US Coast Guard, “Coast Guard Cutter *Stratton* arrives in Malaysia following training and engagements in Indonesia”, 2019. <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCG/bulletins/2589c3f>; US Coast Guard, “Coast Guard Cutter *Stratton* returns to Alameda following 97-day South Pacific patrol”, 2022. <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCG/bulletins/30fcaa8>

79 Phuong, The U.S. Coast Guard in the South China Sea, 2022

80 “UNODC organizes the first visit, board, search and seizure course in Southeast Asia on encounters with migrant vessels,” UNODC, 2 Dec 2022, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2022/December/unodc-organizes-the-first-visit--board--search-and-seizure-course-in-southeast-asia-on-encounters-with-migrant-vessels.html>

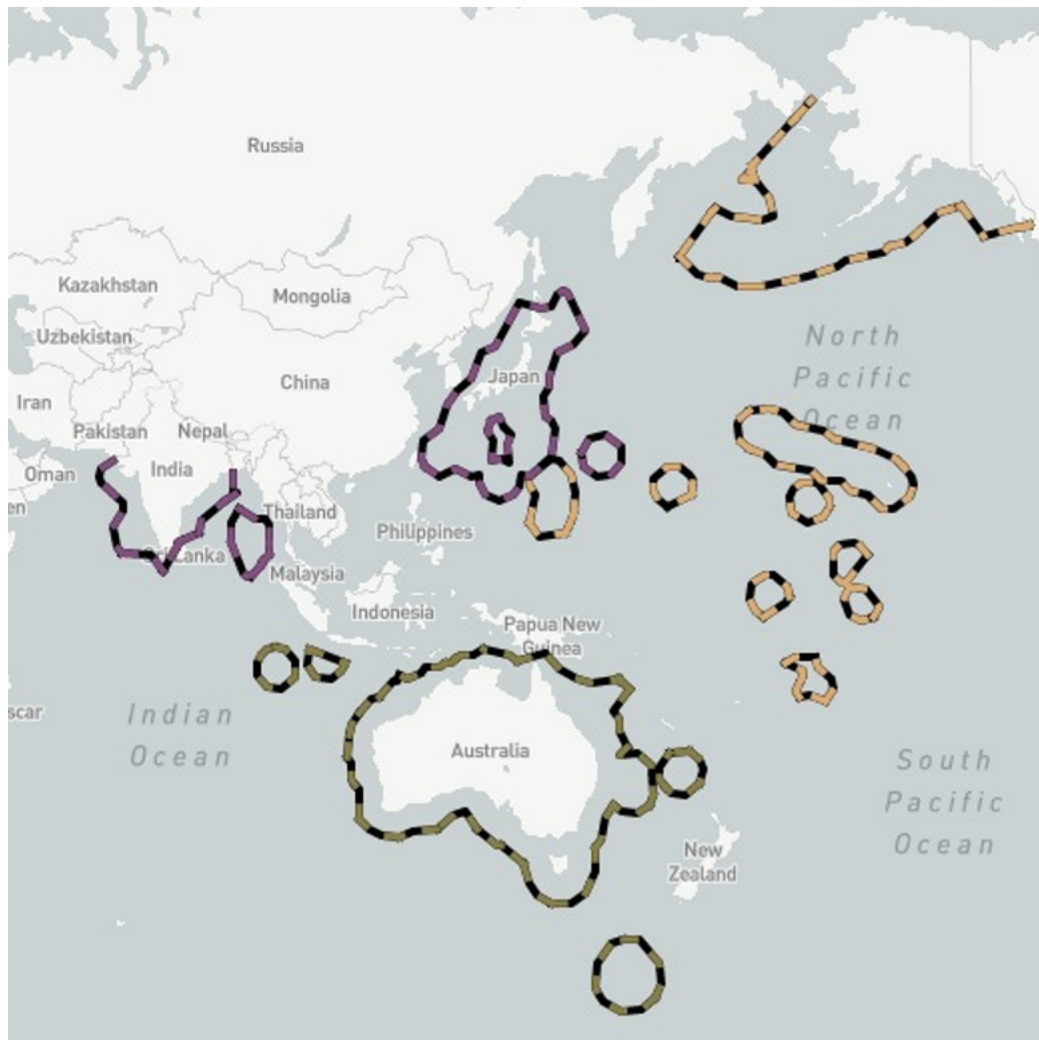
81 Australian Border Force, “Bakamla RI conducts tenth Maritime Security Desktop Exercise (MDSE) .” <https://www.abf.gov.au/newsroom-subsite/Pages/bakamla-ri-conducts-tenth-maritime-security-desktop-exercise-16-06-2021.aspx>

importantly, they must maintain close communications to identify opportunities and develop these activities further. This coordination works best when it primarily takes place in the host nation's capital and is informed by regular contact with the leaders of the host nation's maritime security organizations. The Quad coast guards should prioritize options where they have the strongest presence and highest levels of trust. For the ICG, those partners are the Indian Ocean states, and to a lesser extent, Vietnam. Here they should be on the lookout for gaps that might be filled by other partners, especially the Australians. ABF/MBC may find the most success in identifying opportunities in Indonesia and the Pacific Island states. As Japan and the United States expand their interaction in the Pacific, they may want to team up with each other or find options to complement Australian activities. Still, expectations should be tempered. As previously explained, opportunities may be few, and the labor costs involved with coordination may sometimes outweigh the savings and relative benefits gained. Opportunities must be cultivated with commitment and deliberate selectivity.

Joint and International Operations

As the USCG, JCG and ICG expand their expeditionary posture and the ABF also invests in vessels capable of greater distances, their forces will have more opportunities to provide additive capacity to maritime security operations. These operations could be on the high seas or conducted by invitation of a third-party coastal state in waters under its jurisdiction. They could also be in waters under the jurisdiction of the other Quad states, the huge portion of the Indo-Pacific shown in Figure 2. This is not to argue for all four coast guards to expand the expeditionary posture, but to recognize that as more Quad coast guard ships operate in the Indo-Pacific, operational cooperative can improve the efficiency of those deployments.

Figure 2: Exclusive Economic Zones of the Quad Members



Source: CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative. <https://amti.csis.org/maritime-claims-map/>

Among the Quad Coast Guards, the USCG and JCG have the strongest history of close operability coordination. In 2010, they signed a memorandum of cooperation to promote cooperation between the Participants and to exploit opportunities that exist for combined operations, professional exchanges and information sharing and exchange.” This laid the foundations for improved interoperability and mutual support and their relationship such they now conduct operations in the other’s waters, exemplified by JCG vessels’ involvement in joint counter-narcotics operations around Guam.⁸² Interoperability has also been improved through activities such as interception drills near the Ogasawara Islands in 2021,⁸³ cooperative deployments in the

⁸² “US, Japan Coast Guards Conduct Joint Counter-narcotics Exercise in the Pacific,” U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, June 10, 2022 and Bradford, “Expanding US-Japan Coast Guard Cooperation Globally.”

⁸³ US Coast Guard, “U.S., Japan Coast Guards train together in East China Sea,” (2021) [online] <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCG/bulletins/2ee8342>

East China Sea, as well as at-sea replenishment by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.⁸⁴

Other Quad coast guards do have some experience conducting joint or coordinated operations with each other, but this is more limited. The JCG has a similar MOUs with the ICG and ABF. Since 2006, the JCG and ICG have held the annual *Sahyog-Kaijin* exercise, which alternates between India and Japan every year and now includes Sri Lanka and Maldives as observers. While regularized interaction outside of this venue has been limited, it is an important marker regarding growing interoperability in that bilateral relationship. The ICG does not have a similar MOU with its Australian partners, but an ABF ship visited India for the first time in 2017 and ICG ships visited Darwin in 2018 and 2019, suggesting *ad hoc* joint operations could be expanded on.⁸⁵ The USCG-ABF relationship is similar. There has been a newly announced seagoing officer exchange program – allowing one ABF marine unit officer to serve among units in the US, and a USCG officer to deploy with the ABF – but other activities have been relatively *ad hoc*.⁸⁶ Furthermore, while the USCG and ABF have conducted an inter-operability exercise,⁸⁷ there have traditionally been more cases of USCG-Royal Australian Navy joint exercises than those conducted with the ABF.⁸⁸ As such, much of the joint operations remain limited but there has been a growth in activity. Reviewing specific historic cases of cooperative and joint operations can also suggest the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements and prospects for improvement.

Alondra Rainbow - Anti-Piracy and Information Sharing

On 22 October 1992, the Japanese-owned *Alondra Rainbow* departed Kuala Tanjung, Indonesia, bound for Japan, but was immediately seized by armed criminals. On 29 October the crew was set adrift in inflatable life rafts aboard which they floated for eleven days before being rescued by Thai fishermen. The story was closely followed by the Japanese media, and the JCG and the Japan Shipowner's Association both issued public appeals for information. Two weeks later the vessel, now disguised as *Mega Rama* under a Belize flag, was discovered by the ICG. On 16 November an Indian Navy vessel fired on her engines after which the vessel caught fire and 15 Indonesians were

84 Dzirhan Mahadzahir, "U.S. Coast Guard Continues to Expand Presence in the Western Pacific," United States Naval Institute, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/09/03/u-s-coast-guard-continues-to-expand-presence-in-the-western-pacific>

85 Indian Coast Guard, "Memorandum of Understanding," https://indiancoastguard.gov.in/content/1732_3_MoU.aspx; Australian High Commission India, "Australian Border Force vessel visits India" (2017), <https://india.embassy.gov.au/ndli/pa08a17.html>

86 "U.S. Coast Guard, Australia to Begin Officer Exchange Program" *Seapower Magazine*, (2022) <https://seapowermagazine.org/u-s-coast-guard-australia-to-begin-officer-exchange-program/?print=print>

87 Australian Border Force, "Australian Border Force and United States Coast Guard train in Australia's north" (2022) [online] <https://www.abf.gov.au/newsroom-subsite/Pages/australian-border-force-united-states-coast-guard-train-australias-north-11-04-2022.aspx>; Australian Border Force, "ABF and US Coast Guard train in Far North Queensland," 2022, <https://www.abf.gov.au/newsroom-subsite/Pages/ABF-and-US-Coast-Guard-train-in-Far-North-Queensland.aspx>

88 See, for example, US Coast Guard, "U.S. Coast Guard cutter engages in maritime training with Royal Australian Navy," (2021) [online] <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCG/bulletins/2f1a30c>

detained.⁸⁹ While the incident ended well the fact that the ships went two weeks without detection was troubling. The *Alondra Rainbow* incident became a direct factor triggering Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi to expand the expeditionary role of the JCG and advance efforts to improve regional anti-piracy coordination that eventually resulted in, among other things, the establishment of ReCAAP. Today, maritime domain awareness technology and information sharing regimes have progressed such that it is quite unlikely the ship would have gone undetected for so long, and jurisdictional handoffs are commonly executed between headquarters. If the *Alondra Rainbow* case were to happen today there would also likely be considerable exchange of information taking place at regional information nodes such as the ReCAAP information sharing center, Singapore Information Fusion Centre (IFC) and the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFCIOR). The IFC has historically been manned by international liaison officers (ILOs) drawn from navies but is expanding to include Coast Guard officers. The Australian ILO is already a RAN officer representing the ABF and the USCG attaché in Singapore is accredited to the IFC; it would be wise for the JCG, ICG and USCG to similarly assign officers. The IFCIOR ‘aims to engage with partner nations and multi-national maritime constructs to develop comprehensive MDA and share information on vessels of interest hosted by the Indian Navy but should consider the value of adding a coast guard dimension as did the IFC.’⁹⁰

Malaysian Airlines 370 and Air Asia Flight 8501 – Search and Rescue

In 2014 the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight 370 (MH370) over the Indian Ocean and the crash of Air Asia flight 8501 into the Java Sea triggered two of the most complex maritime operations in recent years. Both search and rescue events involved a large coalition of multinational and interagency forces assembling under coordination mechanisms developed quickly in an *ad hoc* manner. While the basic protocols for coordination are in place, both cases revealed inefficiencies that have yet to be rectified. During the MH370 response a lack of coordination meant that the work was done by essentially three separate efforts between Royal Malaysian Navy, the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF), and the civilian aviation authorities, with, according to many involved, the most effective planning done by the RMAF. In contrast, the Indonesian Navy took the lead in the search for Air Asia 8501, contributed the bulk of the search assets and establishing an inter-agency and international coordination hub on Kalimantan. However, regional military have been hesitant to focus on the development and execution of the sort of conferences and exercises needed to advantage of regional SAR capacity because they prioritize national defense missions sorts of operations.

89 Takai, “Suppression of Modern Piracy,” pp. 43-4 and John Bradford, “Japanese Anti-Piracy Initiatives in Southeast Asia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol 26, no 3, pp 489-92.

90 Ministry of Defence India, Raksha Mantri Inaugurates Information Fusion Centre, 2018 and Brewster et al. New options for trilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, 2021.

Given increasing pressure for regional navies to develop their combat readiness and other skills needed to provide for national defense, it would be sensible for Indo-Pacific states to resource and prioritize their coast guards' readiness to take the lead in SAR operations. This is an excellent area for the Quad coast guards to demonstrate the value of common frameworks and operational standards. The International Aeronautical and Maritime SAR Manual (IAMSAR Manual) provides the standard procedures for SAR operations at sea but this manual does not provide guidance for the cooperation of international combined SAR operations involving multiple nations. Therefore the Quad Coast Guards could develop a common SAR manual for use by Indo-Pacific inter-agency forces that includes specific practical information such as contact information and control frequencies. While similar documents are in place, to some extent, in national SAR control stations, they are not readily available on other watch floors, nor the bridges of many ships. Exercising procedures, capturing lessons and improving protocols will not only improve SAR readiness but have valuable knock efforts by creating habits of cooperation, building relationships, and tightening the bonds between the various agencies and individuals responsible for safety at sea.

MT *New Diamond* Disaster

On 3 September 2020, the very large crude carrier MT *New Diamond* caught fire off the coast of Sri Lanka. An irresponsible response by the ship's captain and crew exacerbated the situation and set the stage for a mega-disaster. A remarkable joint international mission involving the Sri Lanka Navy, Sri Lanka Air Force, Sri Lanka Cost Guard, the Indian Navy, and Indian Coast Guards prevented a mega-disaster. After a week of active efforts, the fire was extinguished and only a small amount of petroleum, believed to be fuel from the diesel tanks, had been released into the sea. The ship was destroyed but remained afloat and was later towed to the UAE.⁹¹ Some have called it the most successful at-sea firefighting effort of all time. While the operation was remarkable, the forces involved benefited from the fact that the ship was in a relatively accessible position and there was already a temporary ban on fishing activities at the time.⁹² The forces involved benefitted from cooperative histories that enabled their interoperability. Had the fire started further from a concentration of response forces or had the response forces been less well-trained, it is highly unlikely that a massive fuel release would have been prevented.

As regional states are expanding their coast guard and the Quad coast guards deploy more vessels further afield, it is increasingly likely that the forces will be available to respond in a wider geographic area. Yet, it is unlikely that an offshore response would be so capably executed if it

91 "10 Week Saga of Burnt-Out Tanker New Diamond Ends in UAE," *The Maritime Executive*, 9 Nov 2020, <https://maritime-executive.com/article/10-week-saga-of-burnt-out-tanker-new-diamond-ends-in-uae>

92 Chanka Jayasinghe, "MT New Diamond fire: Sri Lanka forwards Rs 3.4 bn claim to Greek shipping company," *Economynext*, 9 Apr 2021, <https://economynext.com/mt-new-diamond-fire-sri-lanka-forwards-rs-3-4-bn-claim-to-greek-shipping-company-80654/>

involves “out of area deployers” since they will not enjoy the same level of cooperative readiness as was displayed in response to the *New Diamond* disaster. Therefore, the Quad coast guards emphasize initiatives to prepare for these sorts of short-notice joint and international operations. An important step would be the development of the common frameworks and operational standards that enable interoperability and raise readiness across multiple fleets. Training individuals and units will also be important to improve readiness. Specifically, India could share the lessons learned from the response efforts and the other Quad coast guards could provide similar teaching points. Preparing forces for these sorts of joint and international missions could be a central object of an Indo-Pacific maritime security center of excellence.

CONCLUSION

Increased cooperation among coast guards is a logical next step for the Quad to advance its FOIP agenda. Coast Guards activities are in high demand throughout the region since most coastal states lack sufficient maritime governance capacity to answer a range of dangerous threats to their national security and the well-being of their nautical economic sector. However, the devil will be in the details as the Quad coast guards are quite diverse in terms of their legal structures, nation mandates, resources, force postures, strengths and weakness. These differences must be accounted for to optimize the outcome of any cooperative venture. Priority areas for cooperation should be diplomatic coordination, the development of common frameworks and operational standards, the delivery of cooperative capacity-building activities and the execution of joint operations. In order to be successful, every cooperative initiative will have to be tailored to the specific situation and partners involved. As an exhaustive evaluation of all of the opportunities would be impossible, the Quad coast guards' experts must remain in close contact and engaged with their regional partners. Only through close coordination that is enabled by senior leaders and adroitly tailored to specific circumstances will the Quad coasts be able to successfully cooperate toward the implementation of the shared national visions for a "free, open and inclusive" Indo-Pacific.

APPENDIX

EXPERT COMMENTARIES ON THE PROSPECTS FOR QUAD COAST GUARD COOPERATION

In November 2022, YCAPS invited experts on each of the four Quad coast guards to draft commentaries regarding their evaluation of the potential opportunities for Quad coast guard cooperation. These papers were published by Pacific Forum and are included as an appendix to this report for reference.

PacNet #2 – The Indian Coast Guard, the Quad, a free and open Indo-Pacific

While the four states of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or “Quad”) maintain separate organizations responsible for military and non-military missions at sea, no two delineate those organizations’ responsibilities the same way. This fact notwithstanding, Quad countries stand to gain much by exploring new areas of cooperation between their maritime law enforcement agencies.

The Quad brings together four like-minded democratic countries—India, Japan, Australia and the US—who share similar visions for a free, open, prosperous, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. Geographically, the four countries effectively bound the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Politically, all four countries already have established respective comprehensive security and economic partnerships and 2+2-level dialogues to discuss cooperation on military and economic issues. Militarily, the four states participate in several major exercises and a series of smaller activities, while Japan and Australia maintain alliances with the United States. These deepening relationships provide an ideal foundation for extending their security cooperation to their maritime law enforcement agencies.

The Indian Coast Guard is the fourth arm of the Indian military controlled by India’s Ministry of Defense. [The Indian Coast Guard Act](#) was enacted on Aug. 18, 1978 to institutionalize India’s maritime security force and safeguard India’s maritime holdings as delineated in the 1976 [Maritime Zones of India Act](#). It has grown from seven surface platforms in 1978 into a lean-yet-formidable force with 158 ships and 70 aircraft in its inventory in 2022, and is seeking to expand further. The ICG’s role has widened as well, expanding from its initial remit of countering seaborne smuggling activities to now addressing a wide range of maritime issues and challenges.

Delhi’s primary objective in creating a coast guard was to undertake peacetime tasks of ensuring the security of its maritime holdings. The [enshrined duties](#) of the ICG include enforcement of maritime zones and safety of artificial islands, and security of offshore terminals, installations and other structures. The ICG is responsible for protecting and assisting distressed mariners, environmental preservation, and control of marine pollution. It can also be called upon to support the Indian Navy during wartime. The ICG also participates in both domestic and international training opportunities.

Operating an average of 40 vessels on patrol at any given time, the ICG covers an area of approximately [55 million square kilometers](#) (21 million square miles). The organization’s assets are [widely distributed](#) along the Indian coast, allowing pan-India littoral presence (including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands) and quick dispatch in case of distress, which it regularly has occasion to prove as it conducts humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in the Indian Ocean region.

At the regional and international institutional level, ICG has enhanced its ties with counterparts of

other partner nations. Intending to institutionalize this cooperation, the ICG has [signed MoUs](#) with various countries to address threats in the maritime domain in a collaborative manner.

As India's premier maritime law enforcement agency, the ICG provides an appropriate forum and foundation upon which to strengthen the diplomatic relations between the Quad nations. With broad expertise in protection of sea lines of communication (SLOCs), pollution response, search and rescue, boarding operations, protecting aquatic species, and so on coast guards have any number of potential areas for interaction and cooperation.

The ICG and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) have [signed a memorandum of understanding](#) and already conduct bilateral exercises. Established in 1948, the Japan Coast Guard has a huge fleet of more than 350 technologically advanced vessels. Cooperation between the two can further be developed by increasing the frequency of joint training exercises in areas of mutual concern such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. As the Indian Ocean hosts increasing numbers of foreign oceanographic research vessels, as do waters around Japan, both coast guards would benefit from sharing resources, best practices, and observations to address any unusual behavior exhibited by these vessels within and outside their respective EEZs.

Though Australia lacks an organization formally named a "coast guard," India and Australia's Maritime Border Command can cooperate on issues in their shared region. As MBC operates specialized equipment and oil spill remediation measures, this partnership would be a valuable skills exchange in addition to providing increased environmental security. The IOR is an area of heavy maritime traffic and that traffic results in higher frequency of marine pollution due to oil spills, accidents, and other environmental damage. The two countries might also explore formalizing agreements on conservation of marine resources, preventing illegal activities in protected areas, and countering illegal exploration of natural resources. Similar to Australia, India has several marine protected areas where knowledge sharing and best practices could be exchanged between the two organizations. Increasing the frequency of cross-training would create a knowledge-sharing platform and increase mutual understanding.

USCG is one of the eight uniformed services of the United States and sits within the US Department of Homeland Security. It has largest fleet of ships and aircraft amongst the four Quad nations, and its mandate extends beyond US domestic waters into international waters. It has state-of-the-art technology equipment that makes it one of the most advanced coast guard in the world, providing a valuable opportunity for the ICG to learn and adopt best practices. While a USCG cutter made the service's [maiden visit to India](#) in the summer of 2022, the two coast guards do not have an MoU formalizing their relationship or detailing a plan for cooperation.

Dr Pooja Bhatt (poojabhatt.jnu@gmail.com) is a maritime researcher and currently working as a consultant at the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The views mentioned here are the author's own and do not reflect the position of MEA or any other government organization.

This PacNet was developed as a part of a workshop on potential cooperation among Quad coast

guards to implement the FOIP vision organized by YCAPS. The papers were edited by John Bradford (RSIS) and Blake Herzinger (AEI).

PacNet #4 – The Japan Coast Guard’s role in realizing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific

Originally responsible primarily for maintaining good order and the safety of life at sea in domestic waters, the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) has expanded its commitment to international duties to cultivate external relationships and much-needed capacity building in neighboring states. While they began in the 1970s, these international activities have, in recent years, become essential functions in realizing Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). The JCG’s broad spectrum of capabilities and engagements makes it indispensable across all elements of Tokyo’s broader regional strategy, and its deepening partnership with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) is amplifying its impact.

Several states have adopted the Indo-Pacific as a geographic and policy concept in pursuing their national interests. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo first articulated Japan’s FOIP concept at the TICAD VI meeting in Kenya in 2016. The Abe administration considered it vital to connect Asia to Africa in order to link accelerating Asian economies with Africa’s rich resources. Washington published its own FOIP strategy in 2017. ASEAN then followed with its “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” in 2019, setting out its views on this concept, in line with the shared understanding among member states. In a similar vein, the EU created a Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

The government of Japan views its FOIP as the best way to reinforce the rules-based international order it relies upon and connecting itself to Africa as an attractive prospect for ensuring its economic future. Within this concept are three pillars—promotion and establishment of the rule of law and freedom of navigation, free trade and the pursuit of economic prosperity, and commitment to peace and stability.

Under the first pillar of its FOIP vision, the Japanese government commits itself to enhancing and advancing cooperation with like-minded states which share the principles of the rule of law and freedom of navigation. Tokyo’s work in providing quality infrastructure makes up its FOIP’s second pillar, including ports, railways, and roads physically creating the connection between Africa and Asia. Tokyo’s emphasis on building comprehensive trade agreements also falls under the strategy’s second pillar. Within the third pillar, the government invests considerably in capacity building, with particular emphasis upon maritime law enforcement and maritime domain awareness. Japan’s efforts also include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations, counter-piracy and counter-terrorism operations, and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The JCG expends considerable effort in strengthening the relationships among maritime law enforcement agencies (MLEA) in the Indo-Pacific and beyond to advance the rule of law and freedom of navigation. For example, JCG launched the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum in 2000. Consisting of mature coast guard agencies in the north Pacific region, the forum aims to foster operational interactions and convenes exercises to deepen mutual understanding. Then, Subsequently, the JCG launched the Head of the Asian Coast Guard Agencies’ Meeting (HACGAM) in 2004, creating a forum

to discuss the construction and development of critical operational capabilities in MLEAs in Asia. Lastly, the Coast Guard Global Summit was launched in 2017. This international framework for coast guard agencies exists to foster a global approach to shared challenges at sea as well as develop the members' respective workforces. These dialogues knit together coast guard agencies at the regional and global levels, building confidence and mutual understanding.

Capacity building is another way Tokyo seeks to implement its regional vision. To implement its commitment to peace and stability, enhancing the capability of regional states to maintain good order in their own waters is essential. In this regard, the JCG has been active for nearly half a century, beginning with hydrographic surveys to support partners and expanding its works to include environmental protection and law enforcement efforts. The JCG carefully structures its assistance in most cases to support the recipient states' abilities to secure their own waterspace, rather than intervening directly or by deploying Japanese assets abroad. This is not to say that the JCG is not active outside the Japanese exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Operationally, the JCG dispatches its assets abroad annually for counter-piracy patrols and for combined exercises with regional counterparts. In 2022, the JCG dispatched the 5,300-ton cutter Mizuho for counter-piracy patrolling and exercises, including an oil spill response exercise with Indonesia and the Philippines.

Using education to advance partnerships and improve policy formulation, the JCG and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) launched the Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program in 2015. The significance of the program was highlighted when Prime Minister Abe addressed in his speech at the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly that students of MSP learn and share the principle that "the maritime order is a matter of the rule of law and one that is rule-based." Through the study of international law and international relations, students deepen their understanding of the legal framework and how international order and stability are maintained at sea.

Furthermore, the Japanese government enhances the capability of MLEAs in the Indo-Pacific region by donating patrol ships. This concept has evolved over the course of years—at its outset, Tokyo hesitated to even provide patrol ships with bullet-proof windows to avoid the perception of providing military equipment. But by 2006, the government decided to change its policy and began providing more capable patrol ships, with the first going to Indonesia under a grant aid scheme. Tokyo subsequently donated patrol ships to Djibouti and Vietnam in 2015, the Philippines in 2016, Malaysia in 2017, and Sri Lanka in 2018.

The enhanced relationship between the JCG and the USCG further strengthens attempts to realize and advance Tokyo's FOIP concept. The two coast guards signed a key memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2010 which established an expectation of comprehensive cooperation between the two but was not overly detailed. Both coast guards recognized that in order further to strengthen the cooperative relationship, concrete shared objectives were necessary in areas like operations and exercises, professional exchanges, academic instruction, and capacity building. Thus, on May 18, 2022, JCG and the USCG signed SAPPHIRE (Solid Alliance for Peace and Prosperity

with Humanity and Integrity on the Rule-of-law based Engagement), an annex to the 2010 MOU.

The first combined exercise conducted under the auspices of both documents took place just after the SAPPHIRE signature ceremony in San Francisco on May 20, 2022. The JCG's training ship, PL21 Kojima, joined a combined exercise focused on maritime search and rescue and communication. Following that event, PLH21 Mizuho was dispatched to participate in a counter-narcotics exercise off the coast of Guam. A real-world maritime emergency interrupted the exercise, and the participating American and Japanese assets conducted combined search and rescue operations. What began as an exercise quickly became a proof of concept, in which US and Japanese assets cooperated to save lives. Following this, in July of 2022, a combined Japan-US team conducted the first combined capacity-building program in Manila for the Philippines Coast Guard. JCG dispatched its Mobile Cooperation Team, and the combined JCG-USCG instructors led exercises such as towing, fire-fighting, and high-speed boat operations.

As Japan-US relations continue to strengthen, the more cooperative relationship between the two coast guards provides another layer to the security architecture, which leads to a more secure and stable sea. In addition, the JCG and USCG confirm and jointly disseminate those shared values, such as the rule of law and freedom of navigation, through joint operations and capacity building.

The JCG's power goes far beyond the strength of its platforms and their capabilities. Its outreach and international engagements, combined with the provision of critical capacity building, reinforce the rules-based order of the Indo-Pacific. Its normative strength is magnified by these activities, as well as by its deepening relationship with the USCG, which has created a strong bilateral tie that will multiply the efforts of both across the Indo-Pacific. The JCG's success in pushing forward the Japanese FOIP agenda is a model for use across the region, highlighting that cooperation and support are a powerful attractive force that draws in new partners and creates positive ties.

Capt. Kentaro Furuya (JCG) (*k-furuya@grips.ac.jp*) is an adjunct professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) and professor at the Japan Coast Guard Academy.

This PacNet was developed as a part of a workshop on potential cooperation among Quad coast guards to implement the FOIP vision organized by YCAPS. The papers were edited by John Bradford (RSIS) and Blake Herzinger (AEI).

PacNet #5 – Australia’s Maritime Border Command: Grappling with the Quad to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific

As the four members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (“Quad”) work to determine how the arrangement might best contribute to Indo-Pacific security, coast guard collaboration could be a key tool. Australia can play a role in focusing the Quad on the delivery of public goods in maritime security, but it will require significant reorientation of its own maritime security organizations.

Australia is a vast maritime state. The Australian Fishing Zone (as its Exclusive Economic Zone is known) is the world’s third largest, covering over 8 million square kilometers (3 million square miles). It reaches the Indian, Pacific, and Southern Oceans and multiple seas. Australia is also the world’s [fifth-largest](#) shipping nation if judged according to cargo shipped and kilometers traveled. As a middle-sized state with a population of around 25 million, the sheer size of this jurisdiction presents Australia with a challenge in protecting its vital sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and preventing, identifying, and prosecuting maritime crimes.

While a number of maritime states have in recent years released [maritime security strategies](#), Australia has no such comprehensive or holistic approach. Instead, there are two broad lenses for understanding [maritime security in Australia](#): conventional or military approaches to national security that have maritime dimensions and civil maritime security to prevent and deter illegal activity at sea. While these domains overlap, they also reflect two different views of maritime security.

Whilst Australia has a [Volunteer Coast Guard](#), the Australian government’s version of the “coast guard” is a multi-jurisdictional approach in which various agencies and departments have maritime security responsibilities. This reflects the complexity of modern maritime threats and geography, Australia’s federal political system, and the vast range of engaged government and non-government stakeholders. In 2020, Australian Border Force (ABF) released a multi-agency [Guide to Australian Maritime Security Arrangements](#) (GAMSA) highlighting this complexity. Housed within the recently constructed Home Affairs Department, the Australian Border Force (ABF) coordinates border law enforcement agencies and customs services. Within the ABF, a multi-agency task force called the Maritime Border Command (MBC) is the de facto coast guard. While led by Home Affairs, the MBC is commanded by a Rear Admiral and supported with capabilities from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the ABF. The MBC works alongside Australian Federal Police (AFP), the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (the lead agency for maritime safety, search, and rescue) to fulfil civil maritime security responsibilities.

For the past two decades, the most politically salient issue for Australia’s MBC has been the handling of unauthorized maritime arrivals, especially following the [Tampa incident](#) in 2001. This “[securitized](#)” the issue of asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat. In opposition, the Labor Party in 2002 [proposed an Australian Coast Guard](#), arguing that the national borders were “at risk from people smugglers, gun runners, drug smugglers, illegal fishing and, of course, terrorists” due to a

lack of effective border policing capacity. While this policy did not eventuate, a key role of the MBC is to contribute to Operation Sovereign Borders, an ADF-led operation aimed at stopping maritime arrivals of asylum seekers.

The [MBC](#) works alongside the ADF in its operations, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on international maritime security arrangements, but its international posture remains minimal. The Royal Australian Navy lead most international cooperation, and to a lesser extent, the AFP. There have been [efforts](#) to bring more of a “whole-of-government” approach to Australian maritime security issues, however, joining up the different services of the ADF remains a challenge in itself, let alone ensuring seamless cooperation among multiple agencies. For example, the recent [Indo-Pacific Endeavour](#)—the Defence Force’s major flagship regional engagement program—had an Australian Border Force participant but remained an ADF-focused program with its own set of hard and soft power priorities. While there are some international ABF capacity-building activities in areas such as [legal and policy responses](#) and co-chairing (with Indonesia) the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, international cooperation of Australia’s civilian agencies within minilateral groupings will likely continue primarily through such ADF-led activities.

Broadly speaking, grappling with maritime crime is a common interest among states across the Indo-Pacific. As many of these crimes are transnational in nature, Australia has an interest in working with other states to prevent and deter illegal activity from occurring in its maritime jurisdiction, as well as assisting other states in ensuring they are well-equipped to govern their own maritime areas.

Quad coast guard collaboration is already happening at the bilateral level. In April 2022, the Australian Border Force and the United States Coast Guard “conducted a [joint interoperability exercise](#)” in Queensland, Australia. In 2020, Australia and India signed a [Joint Declaration](#) on a Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which includes “coast guard cooperation.”

Better cooperation within the Quad framework might be advanced through a meeting of Quad coast guards and like agencies on the sidelines of the Quad Leaders Meeting, next hosted by Australia. A Quad coast guard meeting could help to solidify cross-departmental collaboration between the four states and bring it out of the meeting rooms and into the seas.

Jurisdictional complexities may present a challenge for greater Quad cooperation, as cross-departmental confusion could blur the lines on who is responsible for what. The Indian Coast Guard operates under the Ministry of Defence, the USCG is under the Department of Homeland Security, and the Japan Coast Guard reports to the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. The differing nature and reporting structure of each coast guard will necessitate detailed clarification of their various roles and responsibilities among the Quad partners.

The domestic focus of the MBC poses some issues as well. Rear Admiral Jones at the 2022 Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM), for instance, [spoke on people smuggling](#) while

avoiding questions about China and strategic competition in the Pacific. At the same time, focusing on issues of domestic concern for Indo-Pacific states, such as deterring and prosecuting maritime crime, can help alleviate concerns that the Quad is only a response to China's rise. The Quad 1.0 had its foundations in public goods delivery following the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. For the Quad 2.0, a series of working groups [continue to outline](#) a clear interest in non-traditional security issues.

This focus on so-called “soft” security issues plays an important narrative function for the Quad in enabling it to maintain a key role in Indo-Pacific security architecture, while countering perceptions that it is a containment strategy against China. But constraining China's rising power is a motivating factor, especially for previous Australian coalition governments which had increasingly rejected a “[pragmatic](#)” foreign policy approach based on good relations with both the United States and China. While the aims of the Quad may not be entirely clear, the group's ability to collaborate externally with regional partners to provide tangible benefits will underpin its success, and address counter-narratives that it is an exclusive grouping of self-interested regional powers.

So far, maritime security collaboration between Quad states has [manifested](#) in the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness. The [2022 AUSMIN Joint Statement](#) builds upon coast guard collaboration and maritime domain awareness in the region, committing to enhancing the Pacific Maritime Security Program and “further collaboration” with the Quad on the IPMDA.

Australia's border command, in all its iterations, has been responsible for Australian MDA. The Australian Maritime Identification System, in conjunction with the [Maritime Safety and Security Information System](#), will play a key role in maritime domain awareness at the southern end of the Indo-Pacific. Australia also has experience in delivering surveillance capabilities to regional parties through the Pacific Patrol Boat Program, which has delivered [22 patrol vessels](#) to Pacific Island states.

As RAN Commodore (ret.) [Sam Bateman once observed](#), the use of white hulls in maritime security cooperation is potentially less provocative than warships. Coast guard collaboration could be a platform to ensure that the Quad becomes a minilateral that is working collaboratively and meaningfully in the region, able to counter concerns that it is solely focused on constraining China and does not serve the region whose fundamental order it seeks to shape. While Chinese grey zone activities are blurring the lines between military and civil domains, the Quad still stands to benefit by shifting toward a coast guard-led approach to maritime security. If Australia wants to be at the forefront of that cooperation, it will require significant work within the MBC to accommodate such an approach. Next year's Quad meeting in Sydney will be a key opportunity for convincing the region of the Quad's utility, which does not leave Canberra much time to make these adjustments. But, with concerted and focused effort, Australia could (and should) emerge as a leader in Quad maritime security efforts in 2023.

Kate Clayton (k.clayton@latrobe.edu.au) is a Research Officer at La Trobe Asia and International Relations graduate research student.

Dr. Bec Strating (b.strating@latrobe.edu.au) is the Director of La Trobe Asia and an Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations in the Department of Politics, Media and Philosophy at La Trobe University, Melbourne.

This PacNet was developed as a part of a workshop on potential cooperation among Quad coast guards to implement the FOIP vision organized by YCAPS. The papers were edited by John Bradford (RSIS) and Blake Herzinger (AEI).

PacNet #9 – The US Coast Guard: Provide public goods for a free and open Indo-Pacific

Ask a member of any coast guard in the world for their organization’s mission statement, and each time you will get a different answer. Even more troubling, ask coast guard members *within* a single coast guard, and answers will be no less diverse. Part of this stems from the coast guard’s [multi-mission nature](#). It also stems from debates regarding the geographic bounds of these missions, ranging from those [constrained](#) within an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to blue water operations. Part of this also stems from the [many organizations](#) that can be labelled a “coast guard.”

Growing risks inherent in the renewed multi-polarity of the world require a more definitive answer. In this multi-polar environment, there has been a rise in [gray zone activities](#), which increase the [importance of coast guard](#) capabilities to counter this problem. These capabilities, however, will not reach their full potential without an overall mission statement stating the purpose to which they will be leveraged.

The central mission for Coast Guards around the world should be the *cooperative provision of public goods to uphold the rule of law*. This leverages their multi-mission humanitarian nature, identifies their role in national security strategies, and drives cross-coast guard partnerships.

The impact of public goods on the character and definition of the rules-based order, a system now under [significant challenge](#) for the first time since the Cold War, is of critical importance. Successful provision of public goods can [determine](#) national choices. Public goods provision also focuses stakeholders on shared activity instead of reliance on dominant players. Their provision can [decide the difference](#) between acceptance of the rule of law, or acceptance of the rule of a dominant hegemon.

Potential strategies deployed by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (“Quad”) powers—Japan, the United States, India, Australia—to support the free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) provide opportunities to examine this mission for global coast guards. The FOIP is a cooperative approach to defend the rule of law. Coast guard engagements across the Quad members offer potential to advance this goal, but not without agreement on their overarching mission priority.

Competing public goods providers

The cooperative underpinning of the FOIP strategy was a feature from the very beginning. Japan’s free and open Indo-Pacific strategy was introduced in 2016 by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo as a vehicle to [cooperatively](#) “meet challenges to the maritime rules based order.” The United States saw it in a similar vein, “to engage like-minded nations in economic, security, and political governance partnerships.” The Quad Joint Leaders statement issued in May 2022 [echoed these sentiments](#), describing governance as a central public good.

China has also [noted needs](#) in this area, stating that “accompanying traditional challenges are the long-term “insufficient supply” of regional marine governance public products such as “marine environmental protection, channel safety, maritime search and rescue, and fishery resource protection.” It argues for a hub-and-spokes model with some nations taking a more dominant role, [noting](#) “in maintaining world peace and development, major countries have a special responsibility to play an exemplary role in providing international public goods and providing positive energy for global governance.” Beijing sees itself as the potential leading provider of these public goods, particularly in the maritime domain, [arguing](#) China is the primary “defender of the international order, a contributor to global governance and a provider of international public goods.”

A rules-based order requires not just the existence of rules, but also their egalitarian application and enforcement. This enforcement is important for the preservation of the order, but is also a critical [source of legitimacy](#) for the regimes themselves ([irrespective](#) of their style or theory of governance, some academics argue). Many countries in the Indo-Pacific lack state capacity to enforce a maritime rules-based order. These may therefore default either to provision of enforcement goods (and their concomitant rules, whether applied equally or not) by one dominant regional hegemon (i.e. the Chinese hub-and-spoke model with a focus on centralization and bilateralism), or one where they partner with like-minded nations (such as the Quad, and/or other regional groupings).

Cooperative provision of public goods, working in partnership with domestic governments, enhances domestic regime legitimacy and strengthens the rules being enforced. China understands the importance of partnership within the narrative and has begun using these terms extensively in diplomatic speeches and [media](#). The United States has also significantly increased its focus on [partnerships](#) in the Indo-Pacific.

When it comes to their status as providers of public goods, Quad powers possess significant narrative advantages. “Centralization” and “control” are key watchwords for policy in authoritarian systems, not “distributed responsibility” and “capacity-building.” This has the potential to hamstring authoritarian regimes across a range of policy areas, but specifically in narratives around partnership-driven, rules-based orders. That contrast is highlighted in the way the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) interact, with a strong history of joint operations that has been extended through recent bilateral agreements such as [SAPPHIRE](#) (Solid Alliance for Peace and Prosperity with Humanity and Integrity on the Rule-of-Law Based Engagement—joint counter-narcotics exercises between the Japan and United States coast guards). This partnership extends to [other activities](#) such as joint drug interdiction and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing patrols; and to multilateral activities with other regional powers inclusive of the [Philippines](#) and [Vietnam](#).

The USCG has a wider array of [partnerships](#) across more mission types than any other US service or department. The [International Port Security Program](#) (IPSP) encourages and promotes best practices to enhance global supply chain integrity. Ship rider agreements, which permit the USCG to act on the behalf of a signatory country to observe and board vessels suspected of violating laws

and regulations, are [increasingly popular](#) with states seeking deeper partnership with the United States. The [2023 US Coast Guard budget](#) funds additional deployments of National Security Cutters and deployable specialized forces that support partner nation law enforcement. This is a broad base of initiatives and partnerships on which to build.

The absence of overarching strategy

The *nature* of strategy development within the USCG, however, inhibits its ability to lead a partnership-driven public goods provision strategy designed to strengthen the existing rules-based order.

The service has well-developed, long-range planning tools and programs inclusive of the [launch](#) and [development](#) of Project Evergreen, charged with building strategic foresight across the USCG. Its approach since its founding in 2003, however, suffers from two issues consistently. First, many of the USCG's issue-specific strategies, including [Arctic](#), its Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing ([IUUF](#)), and its [Cybersecurity](#) strategies provide detailed analysis of the issues at hand, but fail to place those issues into the context of the service's overall mission. Second, broader strategies, such as the recently released 2022-2026 [Coast Guard Strategic Plan](#), focus on tactics to address current implementation shortfalls. The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan's three pillars (workforce, competitive edge, and mission excellence) are not linked to strategic objectives (such as, perhaps, cooperative provision of public goods to uphold the rule of law). This fixation on work plans and tasks, divorced from an overarching definition the service's strategic objectives, leads to a myopic view of operations and holds the service back from achieving wider effects.

Provision of public goods, including the impartial enforcement of governance, underpin a world based on the rule of law. A global society pursuing public goods provision leverages the [power of networks](#), where each connection strengthens the next. It does so in a way that centralized authoritarian systems cannot replicate given that they are not built for shared, reciprocal responsibilities.

The humanitarian multi-mission nature of coast guards make them ideal candidates to lead in this space. This should begin with the US'—and its Quad partners'—coast guards placing the collaborative provision of public goods at the core of their mission, as a first step to defend the rules based order in a multi-polar world.

James R. Sullivan (sullivanj@dkiapcss.edu) is a Non-Resident WSD-Handa Fellow at Pacific Forum.