

REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN THE ANDAMAN SEA: Perspectives from Southeast Asia, India and Beyond



About the Institute of South Asian Studies

The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) is dedicated to research on contemporary South Asia.

It was established in July 2004 as an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. The establishment of ISAS reflects the increasing economic and political importance of South Asia and the strong historical links between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The Institute seeks to promote understanding of this vital region of the world and to communicate knowledge and insights about it to policymakers, the business community, academia and civil society, in Singapore and beyond.

About ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute

The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), an autonomous organisation established by an Act of Parliament in 1968, was renamed ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in August 2015. Its primary objectives are: (1) To be a leading research centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment; (2) To stimulate research and debate within scholarly circles, enhance public awareness of the region and facilitate the search for viable solutions to the varied problems confronting the region; and (3) To nurture a community of scholars interested in the region and to engage in research on the multi-faceted dimensions and issues of stability and security, economic development and political, social and cultural change.

The Institute conducts a range of research programmes; holds conferences, workshops, lectures and seminars; publishes briefs, research journals and books; and generally, provides a range of research support facilities, including a large library collection.

About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a global think tank and school of graduate education offering Master of Science Programmes in Strategic Studies, International Relations, International Political Economy and Asian Studies. Its five Research Centres and two Research Programmes, led by the Executive Deputy Chairman and assisted by the Dean on the academic side, drive the School's research, education and networking activities.

RSIS is consistently ranked among the top regional think tanks by international publications. Analyses and thought pieces by RSIS scholars and researchers are regularly featured in reputable publications, top-tier journals and online platforms. Commissioned reports from RSIS are shared with policymakers and stakeholders and in some cases, these have been used to launch further studies or specific projects with other partner organisations.

ISAS-ISEAS-Yusof Ishak-RSIS Workshop

Regional Security Architecture in the Andaman Sea: Perspectives from Southeast Asia, India and Beyond
April 2022

Authored by Yogesh Joshi, Nishant Rajeev, Hoang Thi Ha, Sinderpal Singh and Ian J Storey

©2022 Institute of South Asian Studies

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, for any reason or by any means, whether re-drawn, enlarged or otherwise altered, without the prior permission in writing from the copyright owner except in cases of brief quotations embodied in articles and reviews.

Cover photographs courtesy of Picryl, International Maritime Organisation Flickr Account and US Pacific Fleet Flickr Account

Printed in Singapore by Oxford Graphics Printers Pte Ltd

Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
#08-06 (Block B)
Singapore 119620
Tel (65) 6516 4239
Fax (65) 6776 7505
URL www.isas.nus.edu.sg

ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 119614
Tel (65) 6778 0955
Fax (65) 6775 6264
URL www.iseas.edu.sg

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
Nanyang Technological University
Block S4, Level B3
50 Nanyang Avenue
Singapore 639798
Tel (65) 6790 6982
URL www.rsis.edu.sg

Regional Security Architecture in the Andaman Sea: Perspectives from Southeast Asia, India and Beyond

Institute of South Asian Studies
ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

April 2022 | Singapore

Yogesh Joshi
Nishant Rajeev
Hoang Thi Ha
Sinderpal Singh
Ian J Storey

Special Report Issue No. 20



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	7
A Brief History of the Andaman Sea in Global Politics	9
Geostrategic Importance of the Andaman Sea for the Major Powers	17
Threat Perceptions and Responses in the Region	24
Economic Significance of the Andaman Basin	31
Avoiding Miscalculations in the Andamans	36
Conclusion	42
Appendix 1: About the Authors	44

Executive Summary

The geopolitical churning in the Indo-Pacific has now spread to its sub-geographies. Analogous to the South China Sea on the Western end of the Straits of Malacca, the Andaman Sea is increasingly becoming a new battleground for maritime influence in the Indian Ocean. Its geographical centrality in the Bay of Bengal and the Eastern Indian Ocean confers the Andaman Sea geopolitical heft. The Andaman Basin makes India a maritime neighbour of several countries of Southeast Asia – Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar and Singapore. The geographical centrality of the Andaman Sea in the Bay of Bengal – sprawling as an arc between the Indian subcontinent and the Indochinese peninsula – is eliciting significant interest from both regional and extra-regional powers for three primary reasons: security, trade and shipping.

Due to this strategic location, China, the United States (US), Japan, Australia and the Andaman Sea's coastal states have begun paying close attention to this critical maritime space. First, the centrality of the Andaman Sea to global shipping and trade passing through one of the busiest sea lines of communication (SLOC) in the Indian Ocean has gained tremendous attention in the geo-economics and geopolitical calculations of both the regional and the extra-regional powers. China aims to use the region to either cut short its dependence on the Straits of Malacca by developing new connectivity hubs in Myanmar or create enough capacities in and around the littorals to avoid domination of the Andaman Sea by a hostile state in the region. However, countries such as India view the Andaman Sea as significant leverage against China's dependence on the SLOC passing through the Straits of Malacca for its economic strangulation in the event of future conflict. Second, such increasing maritime consciousness has forced states such as India and China to beef up their naval presence in and around the Andaman Sea. Third, rising maritime consciousness is increasingly reflected in greater militarisation of the Andaman Sea. Regional and extra-regional powers are developing and deploying more and more naval assets, including submarines. Fourth, even when traditional security, especially naval competition, is increasingly gaining momentum,

Regional and extra-regional powers are developing and deploying more and more naval assets, including submarines.

many of the littoral states are still highly concerned about non-traditional security issues such as piracy, smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism, among others. The region is equally prone to natural disasters and ill-effects of climate change and requires a concerted effort towards environmental security. Lastly, the growing geopolitical churning has also increased the geoeconomics consciousness among the littoral states. India is actively pursuing connectivity and other economic projects with the littoral states to convert the Andaman Sea as a pivot towards Southeast Asia.

This alignment of interest provides a robust template for security and economic cooperation in the Andaman Sea.

As the Andaman Sea gains traction in the geopolitics of the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific, these concerns are set to acquire greater importance in the security policies of the littoral states. India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries have essential security and economic interests in the Andaman Basin. Avoiding great power clash in the Andaman Sea is their fundamental national interest; so is the need for efficient responses to non-traditional security threats. This alignment of interest provides a robust template for security and economic cooperation in the Andaman Sea. For the Andaman Sea to avoid tensions and rivalries witnessed in the South China Sea, it is desirable to explore building some form of cooperative security regime that can ensure maritime security, freedom of navigation and the rule of law while fostering economic opportunities.

This project, coordinated by the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at the Nanyang Technological University, explored several solutions to reduce tensions in this region. The project sought to understand and answer the following questions: What is the economic and security importance of the Andaman Sea for South Asia and Southeast Asia? Who are the primary stakeholders and what are their interests, threat perceptions and capabilities? What is the extent of bilateral cooperation among states in the Andaman Basin? What would be the principles that could guide the formation of a stable and sustainable maritime order in the Andaman Sea? And, finally, how can India and ASEAN further their

cooperation on the Andaman Sea? The workshop allowed discussions and debates among experts drawn from both the Andaman Basin's littoral states and extra-regional powers such as the US and China.

The major conclusions from the workshop were:

1. For the first two decades after the end of the Cold War, the geography of the Andaman Basin escaped the scourge of inter-state conflict, arms races and great power interventions. However, three distinct developments in the last decade have created a sense of turmoil. First, as a general trend, the ongoing Sino-US struggle for hegemony in the Indo-Pacific has forced an understanding of strategic importance to sub-geographies and island territories of this vast oceanic space. The growing strategic heft of the Andaman Sea is first a result of this general dynamic of international politics. Second, China's exponential economic and military rise and its assertive behaviour in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean have unravelled an immensely competitive security dilemma for India. It has forced India to acknowledge the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' military and economic potential. Lastly, a major naval arms race is unfolding in the Andaman Basin. More and more states are acquiring stand-off capabilities such as land and sea-based missile platforms and submarine capabilities. The combined effect of these trends lends a picture where the Andaman Basin may be increasingly prone to deliberate, unintentional and accidental escalation.
2. The geostrategic importance of the Andaman Basin for the emerging strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific fundamentally engenders from its geographical location astride major maritime routes between the Eastern and the Western Indian Ocean. As the region's geopolitics heats up, the SLOC will become increasingly weaponised. States like China that may feel very vulnerable to its dependence on SLOC's passing through the Andaman Sea are either looking to bypass the "Malacca Dilemma" or create capabilities to deny domination of the region by a hostile state. The drive to protect the SLOC is one of the fundamental drivers

The combined effect of these trends lends a picture where the Andaman Basin may be increasingly prone to deliberate, unintentional and accidental escalation.

behind connectivity projects in the Andaman Basin, particularly under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Andaman and Nicobar Islands provide geographical leverage to interdict and dominate the SLOC in the Andaman Basin is also the chief reason why countries like the US, Australia and Japan are showing greater interest in collaborating with India in both defence and connectivity projects in the Islands. India's emerging alliances, particularly with the Quad countries, to use the geography and centrality of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to send deterrent signals to China.

Connectivity between the littoral states and the larger region can also help facilitate investment, trade and tourism.

3. From an economic perspective, the littoral states view the Andaman Sea as an essential yet under-utilised avenue for cooperation and development. The sea holds the potential to unlock opportunities for the sub-region to further economic growth. Unfortunately, due to years of neglect, none of the littoral states have developed these avenues. The two main avenues of potential collaboration and development are exploitation of marine resources and improvement of connectivity in the region. Maritime resources include the oil and gas reserves in the seabed and fishing reserves in the Andaman Sea. Connectivity between the littoral states and the larger region can also help facilitate investment, trade and tourism.
4. Several factors suggest that the Andaman Sea may not necessarily become as contentious as the South China Sea. Firstly, the current situation in the South China Sea emerged primarily because the islands were unoccupied even when the perceptions of the primary stakeholders differed over territorial claims. Second, there has never been any military conflict in the Andaman Sea since World War II and the area has generally remained tranquil and peaceful since then. Finally, the navies of the littoral states of the Andaman Sea regularly partner with each other through bilateral and multilateral exercises and coordinated patrols.

5. While the current geopolitical disposition in the Andaman Sea may not be as dire as the South China Sea, it is necessary to take cognisance of the region's emerging militarisation and security dilemma. Implementing measures to manage the security dilemma and promote stability is required. Several models exist through which stability can be promoted in the Andaman Sea. These include platforms such as ASEAN and its related forums and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Other possible initiatives include confidence-building measures (CBMs) like an Incidents at Sea Agreement or Code for Unintentional Encounters at Sea.

Introduction

The Andaman Sea's pivotal position in the Bay of Bengal also makes it crucial in the context of the energy security of the Southeast and East Asian countries.

The overall security of the Indo-Pacific is the sum of its many parts. The Andaman Sea, separated by the Bay of Bengal by an island chain, connects the Eastern Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean through the Straits of Malacca, and confers upon the Andaman Sea significant geopolitical heft. The Andaman Basin makes India a maritime neighbour of several Southeast Asian countries – Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar and Singapore. The Andaman Sea straddles one of the busiest SLOC, the six and the ten-degree channel, a vital artery of global trade between between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. The Andaman Sea's pivotal position in the Bay of Bengal also makes it crucial in the context of the energy security of the Southeast and East Asian countries. Much of the Middle East's oil and gas exports flow through the waters of the Andaman Sea. However, unlike the South China Sea, this vital maritime space has found little strategic attention among regional powers so far.

The Andaman Basin faces both traditional and non-traditional security concerns. As the Andaman Sea gains prominence in the geopolitics of the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific, these concerns are set to acquire greater importance in the security policies of the littoral states. China's economic and military activities in the Bay of Bengal littorals and the response from other countries are transforming the Andaman Sea from a strategic backwater to a consequential maritime space. These activities include connectivity projects, economic development projects (especially under the Chinese-led BRI) and heightened diplomacy and military activity around the Andaman Sea. Such geostrategic churning is taking place against the backdrop of considerable non-traditional security concerns in the region regarding refugee flows, climate change, illegal migration, piracy, unreported, unregulated and illegal fishing and human trafficking; the area is prone to natural disasters. Consequently, coordinating humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) missions have become a central agenda in the foreign policies of many of the Andaman's littoral states.

India and the Southeast countries have essential security and economic interests in the Andaman Basin. Avoiding great power rivalry in the Andaman Sea is in their fundamental national interests. So is the need for efficient responses to non-traditional security threats. This alignment of interest provides a robust template for security and economic cooperation in the Andaman Sea. With the end of the Cold War, India has intensified its engagement with Southeast Asia through the 'Look East' policy. India became a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1996 and ASEAN-India relations were elevated to the Summit-level in 2002 and a Strategic Partnership in 2012. In 2014, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi enhanced his country's engagement with Southeast Asia through his 'Act East' policy. Today, India conducts security dialogues and defence diplomacy activities such as exercises with the Southeast Asian countries. A critical factor that has pushed both India and the Southeast Asian countries towards each other is the growing concern in the region over new challenges to the rules-based order, especially in the maritime sphere and uncertainties about the policies of the US (especially under President Donald Trump), which has been the traditional guarantor of the liberal security order in the region.

Today, India conducts security dialogues and defence diplomacy activities such as exercises with the Southeast Asian countries.

For the Andaman Sea to avoid the sorts of tensions and great power rivalry that has emerged in the South China Sea, it is necessary to explore the building of some form of cooperative security regime that can ensure maritime security, freedom of navigation and the rule of law while fostering economic opportunities. The Southeast Asian countries and India are well positioned to take the initiative on cooperative efforts in the Andaman Sea and pull in other regional like-minded countries like Australia and Japan.

A Brief History of the Andaman Sea in Global Politics

The Andaman Sea is bounded by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to its west and Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to its east.

Two features of the Andaman Sea and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have defined their history. They are geographically centrality to the Bay of Bengal yet isolated by vast expanses of water from the great civilisations that flourished in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Central to the geography of the Bay of Bengal,¹ the Andaman Sea occupies the eastern edge of the Bay of Bengal and the northeastern corner of the larger Indian Ocean region (IOR). The name 'Andaman' derives from 'Handuman', the Malay form of 'Hanuman', the Hindu monkey god.² The Andaman Sea is bounded by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to its west and Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to its east. Indonesia's westernmost island of Sumatra forms the southern boundary of the sea. The Straits of Malacca is located at the southeastern corner of the Andaman Sea. The Straits of Malacca is the primary shipping link between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is almost 1,000 kilometres long and only a little more than 2.5 kilometres at its narrowest point. It flows between Indonesia to its south and Malaysia and Singapore to its north.

The geographical centrality of the Andaman Sea in the Bay of Bengal – sprawling as an arc between the Indian subcontinent and Indochina – has always attracted significant interest from both regional and extra-regional powers for three primary reasons: security, trade and shipping.³ Geography is also a reason for its civilisational remoteness from the Indian subcontinent and Indochina. As one early 20th century description of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands suggests, "kept by Nature to be aloof from the rest of the World", the Islands remain "untouched by the social, economic and political forces that stir

- 1 The Hydrographic Office, Secretary of the Navy, *Bay of Bengal Pilot: Bay of Bengal and the Coasts of India and Siam, including the Nicobar and Andaman Islands* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916).
- 2 F A M Dass, *The Andaman Islands* (Bangalore: Good Shephard Convent Press, 1937), p. 8; and L P Mathur, "A Historical Study of Euro-Asian Interest in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 29, PART II (1967), pp. 56-61.
- 3 David Scott, "Small Island Strategies in the Indo-Pacific by Large Powers", *The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies* 8, No. 1 (WINTER/SPRING 2021), pp. 66-85.

humanity abroad.”⁴ Early mentions of the islands invoke both dread and disgust. In Bodhisattvavadana, Indian merchants had complained to the great Indian King Ashoka of the “Nagas” in the islands “who destroyed their ships and plundered their treasure.”⁵ The Chinese philosopher I-Tsieng, in his writings, christened these islands as “land of the naked”, from which comes the name ‘Nicobar’.⁶ In the pre-colonial times, the Andaman Sea provided both a hunting ground and a refuge for Malay pirates, in the post-colonial period, the islands attracted significant attention from Christian missionaries who aimed to proselytize the indigenous tribes. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as one colonial description put it, were the “Island of impurity and abode of criminals.”⁷

Early mentions of the islands invoke both dread and disgust.

The Andaman Sea and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are mentioned in ancient Chinese, Japanese and Indian texts. According to the Thai archaeologist Boonyarit Chaisawan, the remoteness of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands notwithstanding, during the Common Era between 2nd century BC and 11th century AD, the Andaman Basin along the Thai-Malay Peninsula was a central hub of trading stations for major maritime routes in the Indian Ocean.⁸ Cholas, the great maritime kingdom of Southern India, first established territorial control of the islands following the annexation of Pegu in 1056 AD.⁹ However, the first attempts to formally colonise the islands were made in the mid-18th century by the Danish East India Company to establish a commercial outpost as a pivot to its colonial interests in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ However, inclement living conditions made the Danes abandon the outpost within a couple of years. Another Danish

4 F A M Dass, *The Andaman Islands*, p. 9, op. cit.

5 Ibid, p. 7.

6 Ibid, p. 11.

7 Ibid, p. 9.

8 Boonyarit Chaisawan, “Early Contacts between India and the Andaman Coast in Thailand from the Second Century BCE to Eleventh Century CE”, in Pierre-Yves Manguin, A Mani and Geoff Wade (eds.), *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2011), pp. 83-112.

9 A Meenakshisundarajan, “Rajendra Chola’s naval expedition and the Chola trade with South and East Asia”, in Hermann Kulke, K Kesavapany and Vijay Shakuja (eds.), *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), pp. 168-178.

10 L P Mathur, “A Historical Study of Euro-Asian Interest in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands”, op. cit.

attempt was made in 1769 but it met the same fate as its predecessor. A decade later, the Austrian Crown sponsored William Bolts, a Dutch adventurer, to establish Austrian suzerainty over the islands.¹¹ In 1778, after a treacherous journey of more than two years, Bolts reached the islands and declared them under Austria's occupation. However, Austrian hold over the islands could not be sustained due to a lack of resources and contiguous colonial interests in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. As Bolts withdrew from the islands, the Danish East India Company again took over the islands' administration and established a small guard in the Nicobars.

The primary interest of the British East India Company in the colonisation of the islands was to fortify a harbour for use in naval conflicts as well as an outpost to provide support for merchant shipping in the Bay.

The first survey of the islands and the nearby seas was sponsored by the Governor-General of India, Lord Cornwallis, in 1788.¹² The primary interest of the British East India Company in the colonisation of the islands was to fortify a harbour for use in naval conflicts as well as an outpost to provide support for merchant shipping in the Bay.¹³ Furthermore, such an establishment could help arrest the menace of Malay pirates. The survey conducted under the leadership of Lieutenant Archibald Blair using convicts and prisoners in British possession in India and Southeast Asia resulted in the establishment of Port Cornwallis – a harbour and a refilling station – in 1790.¹⁴

Blair's survey and the establishment of Port Cornwallis had proved the usefulness of the islands as a penal colony.¹⁵ In 1855, the Governor-General of India, Lord Canning, entrusted Henry Hopkinson, Governor of Arakan – until then the primary penal settlement of the East India Company – to prepare a detailed report for the islands' settlement. Hopkinson's report argued that given the islands' location, extent and natural advantages, they should not be left to the command of

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ M V Portman, *The History of our Relations with the Andanamese, Vol. I* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1899).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ For the history of British's efforts to colonise the islands, see E H Man, "On the Andaman Islands and Their Inhabitants", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 14 (1885): pp. 253-72; and M V Portman, "On the Andaman Islands and the Andamanese", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 13, no. 4 (1881): pp. 469-89.

the uncivilised indigenous populations.¹⁶ Hopkinson proposed the formation of a penal colony as a “nucleus” around which further settlement of the islands could be achieved.¹⁷ India’s first war of independence in 1857, or the “mutiny”, as the British called it, provided significant momentum to the proposal to establish the penal colony.

The Crown appointed Dr F J Mouat to head the Andaman Commission to explore establishing a penal colony in the distant islands. The Governor-General of the Straits Settlement took possession of the islands in early 1858. By March 1858, the British Crown started sending convicts to the Cellular Jail or *Kala Pani*, the dreaded penal facility built on the islands. In 1872, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration was raised to Chief Commissionership and came under the purview of the Governor-General of India based in Delhi. In 1921, following Indian nationalist and political leader Mahatma Gandhi’s massive civil disobedience movement, the British Indian government appointed a “committee of enquiry into the state of Indian jails” under Alexander Cardew.¹⁸ The Jail Commission proposed abolishing the penal colony and the complete evacuation of the islands. However, British interests, particularly concerning the islands’ strategic location and the difficulties accompanying repatriation of the local communities, did not complete British withdrawal.

In 1872, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration was raised to Chief Commissionership and came under the purview of the Governor-General of India based in Delhi.

The strategic significance of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was revealed by the Japanese occupation of the islands in March 1942. The islands provided a necessary logistical base for the Japanese military to sustain military operations in Burma and India’s Northeast.¹⁹ In October 1945, the British forces reoccupied these islands and considered turning them into a major naval base in the Indian Ocean. However, in June 1945, with a significant nudge from the last Viceroy of British India, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the islands were deemed part of independent India.

¹⁶ Anderson, *The Indian Uprising*, p. 130, op. cit.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Taylor C Sherman, “From Hell to Paradise? Voluntary Transfer of Convicts to the Andaman Islands, 1921-1940”, *Modern Asian Studies* 43, 2 (2009) pp. 367-388.

¹⁹ Rabin Roychowdhury, *Black Days in Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2004).

The coming of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India's possession was a stroke of historical luck. The geography of these islands is invariably closer to the Southeast Asian countries than the Indian mainland. The flourishing maritime trade, since ancient times, in the Andaman Basin also connected the region economically. Following its victories in Southeast Asia, the Japanese occupation of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands had amply demonstrated that politically too, the fortunes of the Andaman Sea are invariably linked to power politics in Indochina and vice-versa. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Southeast Asia are conjoined twins, even in topography and environment. As Itty Abraham argues, "the 2004 Tsunami made clear in entirely different way, the environmental challenges faced by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have much more in common with Phuket and Aceh than Vizag or Kozhikode."²⁰ On India's part, for most of India's recent history, New Delhi remained oblivious to the immense possibilities accorded by these islands to India's defence and diplomacy. The centrality of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Andaman Sea was lost upon India's civilian leadership, which practiced the policy of "masterly inactivity" in the distant islands.²¹

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands remained a distant outpost, national in the jurisdiction but colonised in political treatment.

For one, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's India wholesomely embraced a continental mindset; the threats from India's continental borders did not allow a maritime consciousness to flourish. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands remained a distant outpost, national in the jurisdiction but colonised in political treatment.²² The presence of the British, as a benign maritime power in the Indian Ocean, also convinced India of the absence of any significant sea-based threat originating in these waters.²³ More importantly, however, was New Delhi's negligence of Southeast Asia in its foreign policy. The major Southeast Asian nations like Malaya, Indonesia and Burma looked

20 Itty Abraham, "India's Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 50, No. 39 (26 September 2015), p. 10.

21 Amit Kumar, "Andaman & Nicobar Islands: Policy of Masterly Inactivity and Benign Neglect to Proactive Development," ICWA, 15 March 2019, https://icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=4309&lid=3200.

22 Anderson, "Entangled struggles", pp. 71-72, op. cit.

23 Yogesh Joshi, "Sailing Through the Cold War: Indian Navy's Quest for a Submarine Arm, 1947-67", *India Review* 17 (5), 2018, pp. 476-504.

upon India for support and as an inspiration in their anti-colonial struggles against the European powers, as was evident during the 1947 Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi.²⁴ The Andaman Sea was the first geographical connection between the newly independent Indian republic and the aspiring states of Southeast Asia. Yet, New Delhi did not avail the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to build upon the natural, historical, cultural and post-colonial connections with the Southeast Asian region.²⁵ The Cold War further strained India's relations with the Southeast Asian nations. In the early 1960s, Indonesia under Sukarno claimed the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as part of the ancient Indonesian empire of Majapahit. It even declared its intentions to reacquire these islands through military force.²⁶ In the 1970s, following the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship, the Southeast Asian countries feared that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands could be used as a naval base by Soviet ships and submarines.²⁷ New Delhi's perception of ASEAN as a front for American interests in the region and its support for communist regimes in Vietnam and Cambodia were equally responsible for the downturn in India's relations with the littoral countries in the Andaman Basin.²⁸ In the 1980s, under the prime ministership of Rajiv Gandhi, India's naval rise and its penchant for interventions in the Indian Ocean engendered fears of an assertive interventionist power in the region.²⁹ During much of the Cold War, therefore, the Andaman Sea either remained neglected geography or, when it invited attention, a site of political disconnect and disagreement between the Indian subcontinent and the Malay peninsula.

The Andaman Sea was the first geographical connection between the newly independent Indian republic and the aspiring states of Southeast Asia.

24 Tan Tai Yong and See Chak Mun (2009), *The Evolution of India-ASEAN Relations*, *India Review*, 8:1, pp. 20-42.

25 C Raja Mohan, "India's Naval Diplomacy: the unfinished transitions", in Anit Mukherjee and C Raja Mohan (eds.) *Indian Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 106-124.

26 David Brewster, "The Relationship between India and Indonesia: An Evolving Security Partnership?", *Asian Survey* 51, No. 2 (March/April 2011), pp. 221-244. Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto, "Indonesia and India: Toward a Convergent Mandala", *India Review* 12, no.3 (2013), pp. 207-224.

27 G V C Naidu, "The Indian Navy and Southeast Asia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 13, no. 1 (June 1991), pp. 72-85.

28 Tan Tai Yong and See Chak Mun, "The Evolution of India-ASEAN Relations", pp. 20-42, op. cit.

29 David Brewster, "India's Defense Strategy and the India-ASEAN Relationship", *India Review* 12, no. 3 (2013), pp. 151-164.

India's embrace of economic globalisation and free trade principles forced it to look at Southeast Asia as a big economic market and source of foreign direct investment.

Over the last 30 years, however, the economic and strategic importance of the Andaman Sea and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have changed fundamentally.³⁰ First, the end of the Cold War eradicated the ideological tensions between Soviet-leaning India and the West-inclined maritime Southeast Asian countries and heralded the 'unipolar moment' of America. If New Delhi saw in the Southeast Asian states potential partners for regionalism and multilateralism, states in the Andaman Basin like Singapore and Indonesia also embraced India as a potential partner in the region and beyond. Second, the winds of globalisation, which swept through Asia, changed the economic character of the Andaman Basin. Given the centrality of the Andaman Sea to major maritime routes in the northern Indian Ocean, the tonnage of global shipping passing through the area rose exponentially.³¹ The coming into effect of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea in the mid-1990s also increased the Andaman Basin's value for the littoral countries as it dramatically expanded the jurisdiction of the littoral states over the resources in the high seas, especially in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in the Andaman Sea. India's embrace of economic globalisation and free trade principles forced it to look at Southeast Asia as a big economic market and source of foreign direct investment. The result of this economic necessity was India's 'Look East' policy unveiled by Prime Minister Narashima Rao in 1991.

The rise in the region's economic and resource profile also focused attention on many non-traditional security challenges confronting the littoral states. Piracy was one of the biggest concerns. Before the Gulf of Somalia emerged as the world's piracy hub, the Andaman Basin and the Straits of Malacca were deemed the "most dangerous waters of the world."³² The first-ever regional multilateral naval dialogue and exercise between the navies of the Andaman Basin (MILAN) occurred in 1995. It brought together the navies of Singapore, Thailand,

30 C Raja Mohan, *Samudramanathan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2012).

31 Gurpreet S Khurana, "The Maritime Dimension of India's Energy Security", *Strategic Analysis* 31, no.4 (2007), pp. 583-601.

32 Adam McCauley, "The Most Dangerous Waters in the World", *Time*, 15 August 2014, <https://time.com/piracy-southeast-asia-malacca-strait/>.

Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka for joint naval exercises off the coast of the Andaman Islands. Since then, this biennial exercise has expanded exponentially; during the 2022 edition, more than 46 navies will gather in the Andaman Basin for the naval dialogue and exercises. The coastal countries in the region also faced home-grown insurgencies, terrorism, human trafficking and natural and environmental disasters. The 2004 tsunami only underlined the common challenges faced by states in the Andaman Basin.

Lastly, for the first two decades after the end of the Cold War, the geography of the Andaman Basin escaped the scourge of interstate conflict, arms races and great power interventions. However, three distinct developments in the last decade have created a sense of turmoil. First, as a general trend, the ongoing Sino-US struggle for hegemony in the Indo-Pacific has forced an understanding of strategic importance to sub-geographies and island territories of this vast oceanic space.³³ The growing strategic heft of the Andaman Sea is first a result of this general dynamic of international politics. Second, China's exponential economic and military rise and its assertive behaviour in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean have unravelled an immensely competitive security dilemma for India.³⁴ It has forced India to acknowledge the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' strategic and economic potential.³⁵ Lastly, a major naval arms race is unfolding in the Andaman Basin. More and more states are acquiring stand-off capabilities such as land- and sea-based missile platforms and submarine capabilities.³⁶ The combined effect of these trends lends a picture where the Andaman Basin may be increasingly prone to deliberate, unintentional and accidental escalation.

The combined effect of these trends lends a picture where the Andaman Basin may be increasingly prone to deliberate, unintentional and accidental escalation.

33 David Scott, "Small Island Strategies in the Indo-Pacific by Large Powers", op. cit.

34 Koh Swee Lean Collin, "China-India Rivalry at Sea: Capability, trends and challenges", *Asian Security* 15, no. 1 (2019), pp. 5-24.

35 Pratinashree Basu, Sohini Bose and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, "Andaman and Nicobar Islands: facilitating India's connectivity in the Bay of Bengal", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 15, no. 3 (2019), pp. 297-316.

36 Saurav Jha, "The Bay of Bengal Naval Arms Race", *The Diplomat*, 30 December 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/the-bay-of-bengal-naval-arms-race/>.

Geostrategic Importance of the Andaman Sea for the Major Powers

In the 21st century, the Straits of Malacca has become vital for global economic growth as it is an important transit point for international shipping.

The importance of the Andaman Basin for the emerging strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific fundamentally arises from its geographical location astride major maritime routes between the Eastern and Western Indian Ocean. It is the shortest shipping route between the oil-producing Gulf countries and the economically dynamic Asian countries. The Straits of Malacca is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.³⁷ Its prominence began to grow in the middle of the Cold War with the rise of the East Asian economies. As the Asian tiger economies of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore galloped, they also became increasingly dependent on the import of raw materials and energy resources. Much of this was accomplished through seaborne trade. For instance, Japan generated nearly 80 per cent of the growth of deep-sea cargo trade between 1965 and 1972. By the mid-1970s, Japan controlled the largest merchant shipping fleet in the world.³⁸ Similar developments occurred in South Korea and Taiwan. After the Cold War, China, Indonesia and India embraced economic globalisation. Their rising economies also became increasingly dependent on open and secure SLOC to sustain their growth. Between 1988 and 2008, the percentage of the seaborne trade accounted for 87 per cent of the growth in the East Asian economies.³⁹ In the 21st century, the Straits of Malacca has become vital for global economic growth as it is an important transit point for international shipping. In 2015, half of the world's total annual seaborne trade tonnage and 70 per cent of Asia's oil imports passed through this crucial waterway. In 2017, a total of 24,446 containerships and 6,711 oil tankers passed through the Straits of Malacca.⁴⁰ The number of oil tankers (also

37 For a background, see Euan Graham, "Maritime Security and Threats to Energy Transportation in Southeast Asia", *The RUSI Journal* 160, no. 2 (2015), pp. 20-31.

38 Amit A Pandya, Rupert Herbert-Burns and Junko Kobayashi, "Maritime Commerce and Security: The Indian Ocean", Stimson Centre Working Paper, February 2011, pp. 34, https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/Section_1_-_Maritime_Commerce_and_Security_The_Indian_Ocean_1.pdf.

39 Amit A Pandya, Rupert Herbert-Burns and Junko Kobayashi. "Maritime Commerce and Security: The Indian Ocean", p. 34, op. cit.

40 Marcus Hand, "Straits of Malacca VLCC traffic doubles in a decade as shipping traffic hits all-time high in 2017", op. cit.

termed Very Large Crude Carriers) has nearly doubled in the last two decades: from 3,163 in 2000 to 6,711 in 2017. Apart from oil, the major commodities carried through the Straits of Malacca are iron ore, grain and coal, among other materials necessary for manufacturing and production. Finally, the arrival of the digital age has also seen the Straits of Malacca become the nest of several pan-global submarine Internet cables. The Southeast Asia-Middle East-Western Europe Submarine Cable Systems (or SEA-ME-WE) pass through the Straits of Malacca. There are currently three such systems: SEA-ME-WE 3, 4 and 5.⁴¹ The latest, which was completed in 2017, is a 20,000-kilometre cable system with capacity of 24 terabits per second.⁴² Apart from these major submarine cables, several minor cables connecting India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with Southeast Asia also pass through the Straits of Malacca.

China's phenomenal economic rise in the 21st century has rendered it highly dependent on the Straits of Malacca. For China, the Straits of Malacca is an important gateway to the Indian Ocean, where it has developed significant interests. China imports a large percentage of its crude oil to support its economic growth. In 2016, almost 80 per cent of China's oil imports passed through the South China Sea via the Straits of Malacca.⁴³ Forty-four per cent of this is imported from the Middle East countries, with Saudi Arabia accounting for 16 per cent of its imports in 2019.⁴⁴ In 2016, 40 per cent of China's seaborne trade passed through the South China Sea, transiting the Straits of Malacca.⁴⁵ In November 2003, Chinese President Hu Jintao termed China's dependence on the Straits of Malacca as the "Malacca Dilemma"

For China, the Straits of Malacca is an important gateway to the Indian Ocean, where it has developed significant interests.

41 "Cable Map", *Telegeography*, <https://www.submarinemap.com/>.

42 "SEA-ME-WE 5", Submarine Cable Networks, <https://www.submarinenetworks.com/systems/asia-europe-africa/smw5>. Also see Paul Mah, "SEA-ME-WE 5 subsea cable completed on schedule", *Data Centre Dynamics*, 3 January, 2017, <https://www.datacenterdynamics.com/en/news/sea-me-we-5-subsea-cable-completed-on-schedule/>.

43 China Power Team, "How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?", China Power, CSIS, 2 August 2017, <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>.

44 "Country Analysis Executive Summary: China", US Energy Information Administration, 30 September 2020, https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/countries_long/China/china.pdf.

45 "How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?", op. cit.

and called for mitigation strategies to negate this vulnerability.⁴⁶ Rising geopolitical tensions between the US and China have only exacerbated Chinese anxieties. Over the years, China has aimed to reduce its dependence on the Straits of Malacca by diversifying its oil import routes.

These projects highlight how the Chinese government has approached the Andaman Sea Basin as a possible solution to its “Malacca Dilemma”.

One such project is the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) which aims to connect China’s Yunnan province with the Kyaukphyu port in the Bay of Bengal.⁴⁷ While the port development and the overall CMEC project have been delayed, China and Myanmar have jointly developed a natural gas pipeline in Kyaukphyu city in Myanmar’s Rakhine State and ends in China’s Yunnan province. The pipeline has been operational since 2013. China National Petroleum Corporation, China’s largest energy company, built the 793-kilometre-long pipeline at the cost of US\$2 billion (S\$2.7 billion).⁴⁸ Another proposal to diversify energy routes to China is to build a waterway across the Isthmus of Kra in the upper south of Thailand, linking the Gulf of Thailand with the Andaman Sea. This proposal, however, has been mired by delays due to financial difficulties and domestic political opposition and currently seems like an unlikely prospect.⁴⁹ These projects highlight how the Chinese government has approached the Andaman Sea Basin as a possible solution to its “Malacca Dilemma”. Hence, not only is the Straits of Malacca a region of importance for China, but its interests are also expanding into the Andaman Sea.

46 Ian Storey, “China’s “Malacca Dilemma””, *China Brief* 6, no. 8 (12 April 2006), <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-malacca-dilemma/>. Also see Marc Lanteigne, “China’s Maritime Security and the ‘Malacca Dilemma’”, *Asian Security*, 4, no. 2 (2008), pp. 143-161. For general background, see David Brewster, “An Indian Ocean dilemma: Sino-Indian rivalry and China’s strategic vulnerability in the Indian Ocean”, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 11, no. 1 (2015), pp. 48-59.

47 Sudha Ramachandran, “The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor: Delays Ahead”, *China Brief* 20, no. 7 (13 April 2020), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-china-myanmar-economic-corridor-delays-ahead/>.

48 Neslihan Topcu, “A Relationship on a Pipeline: China and Myanmar”, *China Currents* 19, no. 3 (12 October 2020), https://www.chinacenter.net/2020/china_currents/19-3/a-relationship-on-a-pipeline-china-and-myanmar/.

49 For background, see Prachi Bhardwaj, “The Kra Canal conundrum”, *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 15, no. 2 (2019), pp. 148-153.; Ian Storey, “Thailand’s Perennial Kra Canal Project: Pros, Cons and Potential Game Changers”, *ISEAS Perspectives* 2019, no. 76 (24 September 2019), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_76.pdf.

Furthermore, through the BRI, China has increased its investments in several countries. On the BRI, one report notes, “To date, more than sixty countries have signed on to projects or indicated an interest in doing so...In total, China has already spent an estimated US\$200 billion (S\$273 billion) on such efforts.”⁵⁰ The report further estimates that “China’s overall expenses over the life of the BRI could reach US\$1.2 trillion (S\$1.6 trillion) to US\$1.3 trillion (S\$1.7 trillion) by 2027, though estimates on total investments vary.”⁵¹ As its investments grow, China will also feel the increasing pressure to protect these investments, many of which are located along the Indian Ocean. This became increasingly evident during the Libyan and Yemeni civil wars when the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) had to undertake evacuation operations of Chinese nationals in the two countries.⁵² Indeed, the Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean follows its investments. The PLAN has been setting up naval bases and investing in ports that can operate as dual-use facilities all around the Indian Ocean. The most overt military facility is the People’s Liberation Army Logistics Support Base in Djibouti. This base is critical given China’s growing investments in Africa under the BRI. However, other civilian port facilities built under the auspices of the BRI are increasingly frequented by the PLAN. Many civilian facilities are operated and controlled by Chinese state-owned enterprises. These include the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka, Gwadar port in Pakistan, Ream Naval Base in Cambodia and the Kyaukphyu Port in Myanmar. These bases operate as logistics facilities for the PLAN during operations in the Indian Ocean. The PLAN’s submarines and surface combatants have made regular stopovers in Sri Lanka and Pakistan since the two

The PLAN has been setting up naval bases and investing in ports that can operate as dual-use facilities all around the Indian Ocean.

50 Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, “China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative”, *Backgrounder*, Council on Foreign Relations, 28 January 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

51 Ibid.

52 Gabe Collins and Andrew S Erickson, “Implications of China’s Military Evacuation of Citizens from Libya”, *China Brief* 11, no. 4 (11 March 2011), <https://jamestown.org/program/implications-of-chinas-military-evacuation-of-citizens-from-libya/>. Also see Adam Taylor, “What Yemen’s Crisis Reveals About China’s Growing Power”, *Washington Post*, 31 March 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/03/31/what-yemens-crisis-reveals-about-chinas-growing-global-power/>.

India has now begun to bolster its position in the Andaman Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, especially with the Quad partners.

countries joined the BRI.⁵³ Access to the Indian Ocean via the Straits of Malacca is crucial for these military deployments and for the defence of China's overseas interests and assets.

China's increasing investments and presence in the Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean create a security dilemma for India. A security dilemma is a pattern of behaviour wherein "attempts by states to look after their security needs tend, regardless of intention, to increase insecurity for others as each interprets its measures as defensive and measures of others as potentially threatening."⁵⁴ Indian policymakers similarly see China's efforts to circumvent its "Malacca Dilemma" as part of a "String of Pearls" strategy to surround India with strategic installations that can be used as military bases in the future. India has now begun to bolster its position in the Andaman Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, especially with the Quad partners. The Indian military has already started upgrading its facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with planned investments of ₹5,000 crore (S\$668 million). Plans are also underway to extend the runways of naval air stations INS Kohassa and INS Baaz to support operations by large aircraft. In January 2019, the Indian Navy commissioned INS Kohassa in the North Andaman Island into a full-fledged naval base.

India's military preparedness is not entirely defensive; the Indian Navy intends to use the forward location of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to employ coercive military power against China's interests in the Straits of Malacca to influence the contest along the Himalayan border. Such coercive strategy was evident during the 2020 Galwan standoff between India and China, when the Indian Air Force deployed 10 Jaguar fighter aircrafts, armed with anti-ship Harpoon missiles,

53 For detailed discussion, see Virginia Marantidou, "Revisiting China's 'String of Pearls' Strategy: Places 'with Chinese Characteristics' and their Security Implications", *Issues & Insights* 14, Pacific Forum CSIS, no. 7 (June 2014), https://pacforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/140624_issuesinsights_vol14no7.pdf. Also see Daniel R Russel and Blake H Berger, "Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative", *Asia Society Policy Institute*, September 2020, https://asiasociety.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Weaponizing%20the%20Belt%20and%20Road%20Initiative_0.pdf.

54 As quoted in David Brewster, "Beyond the 'String of Pearls': is there really a Sino-Indian security dilemma in the Indian Ocean?", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 10, no. 2 (2014), pp. 133-149.

in Car Nicobar airbase in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.⁵⁵ India's emerging security partnerships, particularly with the Quad countries, also aim to use the geography and centrality of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to send deterrent signals to China.⁵⁶ The Malabar naval exercises between the US, Japan, India and Australia, which have grown in size and complexity over the last decade, are held in the Andaman Sea. Furthermore, during the India-China border standoff in 2020, the Indian and US Navy conducted a "cooperative exercise" in the Bay of Bengal. The exercise featured the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier and supporting destroyers and frigates.⁵⁷ For the US Navy, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands provide a strategic basing opportunity. The US access to large naval basing facilities in the Eastern Indian Ocean is limited. The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement signed between India and the US in 2016 created an opportunity for the US to access the bases on these islands. In October 2020, a US military aircraft landed in Port Blair for refueling and logistics support for the first time. Japan has also begun to make investments in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The growing role of these strategic partners of India who are also China's competitors is a cause for serious concern in Beijing. In the future, if India decides to provide the US with regular access to military facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, it will likely intensify China's "Malacca Dilemma" and military competition in the region.

For the US Navy, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands provide a strategic basing opportunity.

Lastly, extra-regional powers such as the US, Japan and Australia have partnered with India to develop connectivity and infrastructure projects to counter China's BRI and other developmental initiatives in the Andaman Basin. In March 2021, Japan and India signed an agreement that cleared the way for Japanese investments of the order of ₹265 crore (\$47 million) in the island to improve its power

55 Udai Rao, "Transforming Andaman & Nicobar Islands", *Deccan Herald*, 22 September 2020, <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/transforming-andaman-nicobar-islands-891582.html>.

56 Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics", *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (Jul 1984): pp. 461-495.

57 Manu Pubby, "Bigger IOR exercise next: Joint Naval Exercise near Andamans as USS Nimitz exits SCS", *The Economic Times*, 21 July 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-considering-options-for-evacuating-americans-from-ukraine-if-russia-invades/articleshow/88150525.cms>.

supply. A Japanese company also constructed an optical fiber cable connecting the Indian port city, Chennai, to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The 2,300-kilometre-long cable project was completed in December 2020.⁵⁸ Previously, all communications to the island chain were undertaken via satellites. This mode, however, was quite unstable. The cable will facilitate high-speed communication services to the island chain. In 2019, Australia’s Foreign Minister Marise Payne also stated that Australia would commit US\$25 million (S\$34 million) to help foster regional economic integration in the IOR and specifically South Asia under the “South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity initiative”.

Most parties have realised that leverage and control over this water body can yield significant advantages in military competition.

These dynamics highlight how the Andaman Sea is moving from an area of simply economic significance to an arena of geostrategic great power competition. Given its proximity to the Straits of Malacca, the Andaman Sea has always been a sub-geography of considerable interest. However, in recent years, the region has been increasingly militarised because of the existing security dilemma between the region’s major powers. Most parties have realised that leverage and control over this water body can yield significant advantages in military competition.

58 “NEC completes submarine cable system for BSNL connecting Chennai, India and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands”, *News Room, NEC*, 18 December 2020, https://www.nec.com/en/press/202012/global_20201218_01.html.

Threat Perceptions and Responses in the Region

While the Andaman Sea has only recently become an arena for India-China competition, most littoral states have identified long-standing threats emanating locally. The Southeast Asian littoral states of the Andaman Basin have faced non-traditional security threats since the end of the Cold War, including criminal syndicates engaged in piracy, arms and drug smuggling and human trafficking. In recent years, climate change, natural disasters and illegal migration arising from the Rohingya crisis have added to the range of non-traditional threats faced by them. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has exacerbated many of the existing transnational criminal threats. In addition, increasing great-power competition in Southeast and South Asia manifests itself in the increasing militarisation of the region as littoral states acquire greater conventional military capabilities.

Drug trafficking in Southeast Asia has remained a serious transnational and non-traditional security threat. The Golden Triangle region, an area located in the trijunction of the national boundaries of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos, is one of the largest production centres of heroin and methamphetamine. In the 1990s, two-third of the world's opium was cultivated in Southeast Asia. While several Southeast Asian states have made gains in curbing the production of such drugs, Myanmar continues to be an important production center for opium.⁵⁹ Specifically, the Shan State of Myanmar, a part of the Golden Triangle, is known to harbor almost 94 per cent of the drug production in the country. Myanmar's maritime borders around its southern provinces along the Andaman Sea are key shipment points for the export of drugs. These drugs are moved from production centres in Myanmar to the rest of Southeast Asia via the Andaman Sea. Several transshipment points for these drugs are in the Rakhine

Myanmar's maritime borders around its southern provinces along the Andaman Sea are key shipment points for the export of drugs.

59 Ralf Emmers, "International Regime-Building in ASEAN: Cooperation against the Illicit Trafficking and Abuse of Drugs", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 29, no. 3 (December 2007), pp. 506-525. Also see Ralf Emmers, "The threat of transnational crime in Southeast Asia: Drug trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking and sea piracy", *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no. 2, May 2003, pp. 1-11. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/767/76711296006.pdf>.

and Yangon regions of Myanmar, along the Andaman Sea. As noted in one UN report, “In 2017, Yangon accounted for nearly 30 per cent of total crystalline methamphetamine seizures, reflecting substantial maritime flows of the drug shipped from its port or nearby.”⁶⁰ The report further states that “another notable trend is the high proportion of methamphetamine tablet seizures made in Rakhine State, in the western region of the country.”⁶¹ During the COVID-19 pandemic, criminal organisations adapted to new circumstances faster than the state authorities, leading to an increase in drug production and distribution. In 2020, seizures of methamphetamine in the region amounted to approximately 170 tonnes, a 19 per cent increase over the 142 tonnes seized in 2019.⁶²

Maritime sea routes, including those in the Andaman Sea, are regularly used to traffic people across state borders.

Human trafficking and illegal migration are the second major non-traditional security threat for the littoral states in the Andaman Sea. Criminal organisations in Southeast Asia have been trafficking humans illegally across borders and the UN estimates that 200,000 women are trafficked annually in Southeast Asia.⁶³ Maritime sea routes, including those in the Andaman Sea, are regularly used to traffic people across state borders. This situation has been complicated by the steady inflow of refugees from Myanmar’s Rakhine province in the aftermath of the Rohingya crisis. Migrants fleeing the violence have turned up along the coast of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. In June 2020, 94 Rohingya refugees were rescued near Indonesia’s Sumatra Island.⁶⁴ With nearly 100,000 refugees, Malaysia had become the second-

60 “Transnational Organized Crime in Southeast Asia: Evolution, Growth and Impact”, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2019, p. 30, https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2019/SEA_TOCTA_2019_web.pdf.

61 Ibid.

62 Nirmal Ghosh, “Asia’s illegal drug trade thriving even as Covid-19 pandemic batters economies”, *The Straits Times*, 10 June 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/asias-illegal-drug-trade-is-thriving-even-as-pandemic-batters-economies>. Also see “Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest developments and challenges”, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2021, https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2021/Synthetic_Drugs_in_East_and_Southeast_Asia_2021.pdf.

63 Pau Khan Khup Hangzo, “Non-Traditional Security Challenges In The Indian Ocean Region”, in *ASEAN and The Indian Ocean: The Key Maritime Links*, ed. Sam Bateman, Jane Chan, Euan Graham (RSIS POLICY PAPER: Singapore, November 2011), https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PR111101_ASEAN_and_the_Indian_Ocean.pdf.

64 “Scores of Rohingya Rescued from Stranded Boat off Indonesia’s Aceh Province”, *Radio Free Asia*, 24 June 2020, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/indonesia-rohingya-06242020192802.html>.

largest home to Rohingya refugees, most of whom travelled through the Andaman Sea.⁶⁵ The UN notes that “from January 2020 to June 2021, 3,046 Rohingya attempted to cross the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.”⁶⁶ This number has been steadily increasing since 2018. In several instances, countries refused to grant them disembarkation rights and left several refugee boats stranded at sea. As a result, many refugee women were forced by traffickers into sexual exploitation or forced domestic labour. Similarly, men are trafficked on the promise of employment but instead are sold to employers who exploit them for forced labour.

Conventional maritime threats, in comparison, have not registered prominently in the security calculus of the littoral states of the Andaman Sea. During the Cold War, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia faced several land-based threats rather than maritime threats. Thailand and Malaysia were, in particular, concerned about the spread of communism from Vietnam. Their national security posture was against domestic communist insurgencies and securing national borders. Indonesia also faced a domestic terrorist and ethnic insurgency threat. The military in these states ended up supporting autocratic governments and maintaining internal stability. The military’s role in these states continued into the post-Cold War period even as democratic movements gathered steam domestically. In Thailand, the military launched coups in 2006 and 2014 and its primary security focus was to quell unrest in the country. For these reasons, the national security establishments of the Andaman Sea’s littoral states have been dominated by the army. The navy has usually been relegated into a supporting service with limited budgetary allocations. Consequently, maritime security and, by extension, the Andaman Sea region have not figured prominently in the security calculus of these states. However, following China’s actions in the

The navy has usually been relegated into a supporting service with limited budgetary allocations.

65 Krishna N Das, “Dead-end: Rohingya in Malaysia warn against fleeing from Bangladesh”, *Reuters*, 20 November 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-malaysia-idUSKBN1XU0B0>.

66 “Left Adrift at Sea: Dangerous Journeys of Refugees Across the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea”, UN Refugee Agency, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/611e15284.pdf>. Also see Patrick Greenwalt, “FACTSHEET: ROHINGYA REFUGEES”, *United States Commission On International Religious Freedom*, October 2020, <https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-Legislation-Factsheet-Rohingya-Refugee5481.pdf>.

South China Sea, maritime security is emerging as an area of concern. Given scarce maritime resources available, the security establishments of these states have tended to focus on the threats emanating only from the South China Sea. The Andaman Sea has not been perceived as an area of tremendous concern in terms of a conventional threat. Given that the maritime boundaries are mostly settled, most of the Southeast Asian countries view the Andaman Sea as stable geopolitical geography.

The PLAN's submarine forays into the Indian Ocean and specifically the Andaman Sea have increased significantly in the past few years.

The conventional maritime threat emanating from the PLAN in the Andaman Sea has raised concern in the Indian security establishment. China's increasing penetration of the Andaman Basin and the littorals – both economically and militarily – has created severe anxiety in India's security establishment. It is believed that China had set up a strategic surveillance outpost in the Coco Islands. The Coco Islands are located off the coast of Myanmar to the north of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago. Indian officials had raised this concern with their Myanmar counterparts in 2013 but to no avail.⁶⁷ The PLAN's submarine forays into the Indian Ocean and specifically the Andaman Sea have increased significantly in the past few years. In February 2013, the Indian Navy was reported to have detected PLAN submarines off the coast of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands amid growing numbers in the larger Indian Ocean.⁶⁸ By 2016, the Indian Navy reported tracking four Chinese submarines every three months near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.⁶⁹ Recently, the Chinese also sent “undeclared” survey ships into the EEZ of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The survey ship, believed to be Shiyang-1, was spotted in 2019.⁷⁰ Since then, China has also deployed another survey ship, Xiang Yang Hong 03, to the

67 “India takes up with Myanmar reports of China ‘base’ in Coco islands”, *Daily News and Analysis*, 19 November 2013, <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-india-takes-up-with-myanmar-reports-of-china-base-in-coco-islands-1289045>.

68 “China’s ‘String of Pearls’ is closer than you think, red intrusion in Indian waters sends jitters”, *India Today*, 5 April 2013, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/chinese-nuclear-submarines-in-indian-ocean-send-alarm-bells-ringing-157857-2013-04-05>.

69 “With Chinese Submarines Spotted Near Andamans, India Turns To US”, *NDTV*, 2 May 2016, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/wary-of-chinas-indian-ocean-activities-us-india-discuss-anti-submarine-warfare-1401595>.

70 Pranav Kulkarni, “Chinese ‘research’ vessel enters Indian territory near Port Blair in Indian Ocean, driven away by Indian Navy”, *Times Now*, 3 December 2019, <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/chinese-research-vessel-enters-indian-territory-near-port-blair-in-indian-ocean-driven-away-by-indian-navy/522289>.

region. The ship was reportedly operating unmanned underwater gliders to carry out survey activities to collect hydrographic data for improved submarine navigation.⁷¹

Facing such a scenario, India has also strengthened its defences in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. As noted earlier, India is upgrading its military facilities on the island chain. As one media report notes, “plans to expand the current 3,000 feet-long airfield to allow the Navy’s long-range maritime reconnaissance (LRMR) aircraft, the Boeing P-8I Poseidon, which currently operates from Arakkonam, Tamil Nadu, to stage through INS Kohassa. Being able to refuel and rearm at Kohassa, instead of making the three-hour round trip to Arakkonam, would greatly increase the P-8I’s persistence over these waters.”⁷² Parallely, India is also looking to bolster its ageing fleet of submarines. The Indian government recently cleared proposals to acquire six new-generation stealth submarines at the cost of almost US\$7 billion (S\$9.5 billion).⁷³ It is also planning to build a new fleet of attack nuclear submarines.⁷⁴

Parallely, India is also looking to bolster its ageing fleet of submarines.

Several coastal states in the Andaman Sea are in the process of augmenting their underwater capabilities. If Myanmar and Thailand are acquiring new submarines, Malaysia and Indonesia are renewing their aging fleet. Although these are not large in numbers, they represent a growing capability that will affect the stability of free and open waterways in due time. As Collin Koh and Geoffrey Till note in the context of submarine proliferation in Southeast Asia, “If coastguards, aerial and surface naval/military forces can feud in

71 Snehesh Alex Philip, “Satellite catches Chinese survey ship mapping seabed in eastern Indian Ocean”, *The Print*, 22 January 2021, <https://theprint.in/defence/satellite-catches-chinese-survey-ship-mapping-seabed-in-eastern-indian-ocean/590083/>.

72 Ajai Shukla, “New naval base in Andamans boosts military posture in Indian Ocean”, *Business Standard*, 26 January 2019, https://www.business-standard.com/article/defence/new-naval-base-in-andamans-boosts-military-posture-in-indian-ocean-119012501573_1.html.

73 Rajat Pandit, “India clears decks for long-pending mega project to build six new-gen stealth submarines”, *The Times of India*, 4 June 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-clears-decks-for-long-pending-mega-project-to-build-six-new-gen-stealth-submarines/articleshow/83228646.cms>.

74 “Navy’s indigenous nuclear attack submarines to be 95 percent ‘Made in India’”, *The Economic Times*, 13 June 2021, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/first-three-indigenous-nuclear-attack-submarines-to-be-95-percent-made-in-india/articleshow/83481403.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

those numerous standoffs seen so far to be happening in the East and South China Seas, for instance, it may only be a matter of time before submarines become more actively involved as ‘backup’ or a form of ‘recessed deterrence’—essentially presenting a greater range of escalatory options for the protagonists. Were this to happen, those attendant risks of inadvertent use of force would clearly increase.”⁷⁵ The Malaysian Navy currently operates two submarines and Singapore operates four. Indonesia signed a US\$1 billion (S\$1.3 billion) deal to acquire three Type-209/1400 diesel-electric submarines in 2012.⁷⁶ Thailand, also announced plans to acquire submarines from China,⁷⁷ although economic constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Thai government to trim these plans.⁷⁸ Likewise, other arms acquisitions in the region could be hampered by the pandemic-induced economic crisis. Two important implications follow. First, insufficient investment in acquiring the right platforms to support maritime domain awareness and interdiction of criminal elements at sea can exacerbate the existing non-traditional security threats. Second, while Southeast Asia will be part of an arms race, it will likely lag behind other Asian powers due to lack of funding and capacity, especially in acquiring and developing larger submarine fleets.

India considers itself a net-security provider for the region, working collaboratively with regional states.

There is ample room for collaboration between the littoral states of the Andaman Sea in tackling non-traditional security threats like transnational crime, illegal migration and disaster relief. India considers itself a net-security provider for the region, working collaboratively with regional states. Thailand and Singapore would prefer to act as a conduit for dialogue between the great powers in the region and this allows an opportunity for the regional states to work together by initiating a dialogue on security issues in the Andaman Sea and

75 Geoffrey Till and Colin Koh, “Conclusion”, in *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two: Submarine Issues for Small and Medium Navies*, ed. Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

76 Koh Swee Lean Collin, “Indonesia’s New Submarines: Impact on Regional Naval Balance”, *RSIS Commentaries*, 27 January 2012, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CO12021.pdf>.

77 Termsak Chalermphanupap, “To Deter Malaysia: Thai Navy’s Submarine Acquisition Faces New Opposition”, *ISEAS Perspectives 2020*, no. 101 (9 September 2020), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_101.pdf.

78 “Thailand delays China submarines buy amid public outrage”, *Reuters*, 31 August 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-china-defence-idUSKBN25R1JN>.

exploring areas of collaboration. Maritime domain awareness (MDA) is one such issue where the littoral states of the Andaman Sea can collaborate especially since Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia face several hurdles in achieving effective MDA. Overlapping inter-agency jurisdictions, turf wars and disjointed bureaucratic structures hinder efforts to develop effective collaboration models. Enhancing inter-agency and regional collaboration to develop capabilities for MDA to combat non-traditional security threats can be a first step in realising a better framework for cooperation in the Andaman Sea.⁷⁹

It is apparent that while non-traditional security threats remain a central focus of the Southeast Asian states, India is more focused on the emerging competition with China. The Sino-Indian naval competition will likely drive greater militarisation of the Andaman Sea as each side works to gain a competitive edge. As traditional and non-traditional security threats intersect, the prospects of positive-sum cooperation in the region will be reduced, especially between India and China.

Overlapping inter-agency jurisdictions, turf wars and disjointed bureaucratic structures hinder efforts to develop effective collaboration models.

⁷⁹ Colin Koh, "Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)", *RSIS Event Report*, 24 January 2019, https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ER190425_Maritime-Domain-Awareness.pdf. Also see Peter Chalk, "Augmenting maritime domain awareness in Southeast Asia", Special Report, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, December 2019, https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/2019-12/SR%20150%20Maritime%20domain%20awareness_1.pdf?VersionId=oSJhesxFRumNPbVt1hYfriTfiQD36K5.

Economic Significance of the Andaman Basin

The two main avenues of potential collaboration and development are the exploitation of maritime resources and improvement of connectivity in the region.

From an economic perspective, the littoral states view the Andaman Sea as an essential yet under-utilised avenue for cooperation and development. The sea holds the potential to unlock opportunities for the sub-region to further economic growth. Unfortunately, due to years of neglect, none of the littoral states have developed these avenues. The two main avenues of potential collaboration and development are the exploitation of maritime resources and improvement of connectivity in the region. Maritime resources include the oil and gas reserves in the seabed and fishing reserves in the Andaman Sea. Connectivity between the littoral states and the larger region can also help facilitate investment, trade and tourism. In recent years, the littoral states have increasingly focused on the region's economic potential.

Natural gas reserves in the Andaman Sea are essential sources of revenue for the littoral states. Myanmar has a significant stake in natural gas reserves that generate nearly US\$2 billion (S\$2.7 billion) in revenue annually. Myanmar has sought to develop several offshore natural gas blocs for economic exploitation in partnership with foreign companies.⁸⁰ However, they continue to remain underdeveloped. The existing major offshore gas projects include the Yadana Project, Yetagon Project, Shwe Project and the Zawtika Project. Seventy-five per cent of this natural gas is exported to Thailand and China.⁸¹ Gas exports to Thailand account for nearly US\$1 billion (S\$1.3 billion) to US\$1.4 billion (S\$1.9 billion) in revenue, while exports to China account for another US\$1 billion (S\$1.3 billion). Malaysia also has a stake in offshore oil and gas fields in the Andaman Sea. Malaysia's state energy firm Petronas has been operating the Yetagon project since 2003.⁸² In 2020, Indian state-owned oil producer, Oil India, also began exploring oil and gas in the sea.⁸³

80 Joseph Schatz, "Myanmar's oil and gas boom fuels services scramble", *Nikkei Asia Review*, 15 May 2020, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Myanmar-s-oil-and-gas-boom-fuels-services-scramble2>.

81 "Oil and Gas", Burma-Country Commercial Guide, International Trade Administration, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/burma-oil-and-gas>.

82 "Malaysia's Petronas declares force majeure at Myanmar gas field", *Reuters*, 2 April 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/malaysia-petronas-myanmar-idUSL1N2LV0KG>.

83 "Oil India begins exploration for oil and gas in Andaman sea", *Mint*, 8 October 2020, <https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/oil-india-begins-exploration-for-oil-and-gas-in-andaman-sea-11602161914612.html>.

Fisheries are the second vital resource in the Andaman Sea. India has been looking to exploit this under-developed resource in recent years. One media report stated that “oceanic waters around the Andaman Islands are rich fishing grounds, specifically for tuna and tuna-like fish, for which the projected exploitable potential is around 65,000 tonnes as against a figure of the current exploitation below 1,000 tonnes per annum.”⁸⁴ For Myanmar, it is estimated that fisheries in the Andaman Sea contribute US\$500 million (S\$683 million) to its economy.

Improving connectivity, both within and to the Andaman Sea, is the second avenue to exploit the region’s economic potential. Intra-regional connectivity can foster better people-to-people exchanges and boost tourism, thereby generating revenue for the countries in the region. Connectivity will further help develop trade links between the local markets of the region. Astride critical shipping lanes, the ports in the Andaman Sea can also help link inland regions in Southeast Asia, China and India to maritime trade routes. It will reduce the time and costs of transporting goods and resources. In line with this objective, several investments in port infrastructure in the region are also underway.⁸⁵

Improving connectivity, both within and to the Andaman Sea, is the second avenue to exploit the region’s economic potential.

Myanmar is heavily reliant on maritime trade for its economy. From October 2019 to September 2020, the country earned over US\$10.4 billion (S\$14.2 billion) from exports while its imports were valued at US\$15.5 billion (S\$21.1 billion).⁸⁶ Approximately 80 per cent of Myanmar’s trade is done through the maritime route. For this reason, Myanmar has been investing in its port infrastructure along the Andaman Sea. As noted earlier, China is developing one of two deep seaports in Myanmar, including the Kyaukpyu port. The second deep-sea port being developed in Myanmar is the Dawei deep-sea port

84 “Steps to develop tuna fisheries in Andaman”, *The Hindu*, 7 July 2017, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/steps-to-develop-tuna-fisheries-in-andaman/article19227232.ece>.

85 Pratinashree Basu, Sohini Bose and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, “Andaman and Nicobar Islands: facilitating India’s connectivity in the Bay of Bengal”, op. cit.

86 “Myanmar’s maritime trade reaches about US\$26bil in FY 2019-2020”, *The Star*, 14 October 2020, <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2020/10/14/myanmar039s-maritime-trade-reaches-about-us26bil-in-fy-2019-2020>.

at an estimated cost of US\$8.5 billion (S\$11.6 billion).⁸⁷ The project, however, will likely face delays as Myanmar recently cancelled the project with the Thai developer.⁸⁸ India has also been engaged in port development to facilitate maritime connectivity in Myanmar. India has been developing the Sittwe port as part of the Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project to connect its Northeastern region to the Bay of Bengal.⁸⁹

India's nonchalance began to shift when the Indian government set up the Andaman and Nicobar Tri-services Command on the island chain.

Apart from investment in ports in Myanmar, India has considered plans to develop port facilities on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. For many years, the islands did not figure greatly in Indian economic or maritime considerations, even under India's 'Look East' policy. India's nonchalance began to shift when the Indian government set up the Andaman and Nicobar Tri-services Command on the island chain. Since then, the Indian government has focused on improving the island chain's infrastructure. In 2015, the government announced a ₹10,000 crore (S\$1.7 billion) plan to develop the islands into the country's first maritime hub. The project aims to develop the infrastructure necessary for a maritime hub and other facilities needed for its functioning, such as telecommunications, electricity and water. As a marker of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands increasing importance in India's strategic discourse, Prime Minister Modi visited the islands in December 2018 for the first time. During his visit, he inaugurated several development projects on connectivity, energy and tourism, signalling an end to the islands' isolation. In August 2020, the government announced plans to develop a transshipment port at the Great Nicobar Island.⁹⁰

87 Daniel Schearf, "Burma's \$8.5 Billion Port Project Facing Hurdles", *Voice of America*, 11 July 2013, <https://www.voanews.com/a/burma-deep-sea-dawei-thailand-port-industrial-zone-development-local-opposition-finamnc/1699969.html>.

88 "Myanmar cancels Thai investment in controversial mega-port", *The Straits Times*, 18 January 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/myanmar-cancels-thai-investment-in-controversial-mega-port>.

89 "India, Myanmar working to operationalise Sittwe port in early 2021", *The Hindustan Times*, 1 October 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-myanmar-working-to-operation-alise-sittwe-port-in-early-2021/story-JdJWJeb4nL6Gtw9PAFx11M.html>.

90 Attribution: Sohini Bose and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, "The Andaman and Nicobar Islands: Indian Territory, Regional Potential", *ORF Issue Brief No. 495*, September 2021, https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ORF_IssueBrief_495_AndamanNicobar-1.pdf.

Finally, improving subregional connectivity is also seen as a necessary means to exploit the potential of the Andaman Sea. During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Indonesia in May 2018, India and Indonesia promulgated the "Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific". As a result of this vision, the two countries established a Joint Task Force to explore avenues of cooperation. The Task Force identified six areas of cooperation, "namely, trade and investment, infrastructure development in Sabang, connectivity development, marine and fishery, tourism and exchange of culture, science and technology."⁹¹ India is currently developing the Sabang Port in Sumatra.⁹² The two countries have also facilitated exchanges between Sumatra island and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to discuss investment opportunities.⁹³ Currently, most of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands commodities are imported from mainland India, much further away than Sumatra. Meanwhile, most of Sumatra's fisheries exports – an important source of income for the local people – are to Japan. While Japan has made some investments in developing infrastructure in the province, existing infrastructure and fisheries resources remain underdeveloped. Developing infrastructure to boost connectivity between the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Sumatra, including through a dedicated air transport link, will help link local markets on both sides and promote two-way trade and tourism. Furthermore, the expansion of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT) to include the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can significantly boost the Andaman Sea's connectivity and economic development.

Finally, investing in tourism can also help improve connectivity within the region. In 2017, the island received 487,229 tourists, but only

Developing infrastructure to boost connectivity between the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Sumatra, including through a dedicated air transport link, will help link local markets on both sides and promote two-way trade and tourism.

91 Vibhanshu Shekhar, "The Sabang And Aceh-Andamans Initiatives: Beyond Base, Access And Balancing", National Maritime Foundation, 20 August 2020.

92 Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Eyeing Southeast Asia, India builds port in Indonesia", *The Economic Times*, 20 March 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/eyeing-southeast-asia-india-builds-port-in-indonesia/articleshow/68490478.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

93 Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Andaman-Aceh connectivity key to unlocking India-Indonesia biz potential", *The Economic Times*, 25 November 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/andaman-aceh-connectivity-key-to-unlocking-india-indonesia-biz-potential/articleshow/72227338.cms?from=mdr>.

The Indian government is also making substantial investments in acquiring ships to connect both ports on the Indian peninsular to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and connect the islands within the archipelago.

15,310 were foreigners.⁹⁴ There are several reasons why the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been unable to exploit the full economic potential of the tourism sector. One of the overriding factors has been that the islands are not connected to any of the Andaman Sea's littoral states directly by air or sea. Travelling to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands requires commuters to travel via New Delhi or Mumbai. The absence of connectivity makes the cost of travel prohibitively high. Currently, connectivity proposals are being explored with Thailand and Indonesia. The Thai government is keen on connecting the Port of Ranong with the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and as noted above, Indonesia is looking to connect Sumatra with the island chain. Plans to improve intra-island connectivity can also help boost tourism. The Indian government is developing multiple airstrips across the island chain. In March 2021, the Indian government announced that it would set up four water aerodromes in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Two bridges and a national highway have been constructed to boost connectivity between the North and Middle Andamans.⁹⁵ The Indian government is also making substantial investments in acquiring ships to connect both ports on the Indian peninsular to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and connect the islands within the archipelago.⁹⁶

94 "4 lakh tourists visit Andamans every year; 15,000 of them foreigners", *Business Standard*, 25 November 2018, https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/4-lakh-tourists-visit-andamans-every-year-15-000-of-them-foreigners-118112500163_1.html#:~:text=4%20lakh%20tourists%20visit%20Andamans%20every%20year%3B%2015%2C000%20of%20them%20foreigners,-Press%20Trust%20of&text=In%202016%2C%20as%20many%20as,union%20territory%2C%20the%20data%20said.

95 Pratinashree Basu, Sohini Bose and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, "Andaman and Nicobar Islands: facilitating India's connectivity in the Bay of Bengal", op. cit. Also see "Andaman And Nicobar Presentation And Economy Growth Report", Andaman And Nicobar Islands, Indian Brand Equity Foundation, last modified 14 February 2022, <https://www.ibef.org/states/andaman-and-nicobar-presentation>.

96 Rajat Arora, "Modi government's Rs 10,000 crore plan to transform Andaman and Nicobar islands", *The Economic Times*, 26 September 2015, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/modi-governments-rs-10000-crore-plan-to-transform-andaman-and-nicobar-islands/articleshow/49111067.cms?from=mdr>.

Avoiding Miscalculations in the Andamans

Although the prospect of conflict in the Andaman Sea is not high and the sea remains tranquil, there is potential for miscalculation leading to an escalation of tensions. Like the South China Sea, the Andaman Sea can become a permanent theatre of geopolitical contestation between the Indo-Pacific's major naval powers. The emerging geopolitics of the Andaman Sea does share some similarities with the conflict in the South China Sea. Firstly, both regions have major geoeconomics and geostrategic significance, given their proximity to important SLOC, especially their continuity with the Straits of Malacca. As noted earlier, the Straits of Malacca is arguably the world's most important shipping route. Furthermore, the Andaman Sea and the South China Sea are close to the Sunda and Lombok Straits. If the Straits of Malacca is closed, these straits are seen as alternate trade routes. China is developing the Kyaukphyu port, a part of the China-Myanmar-Economic-Corridor, as an alternate trading route to circumvent the "Malacca Dilemma".

Like the South China Sea, the Andaman Sea can become a permanent theatre of geopolitical contestation between the Indo-Pacific's major naval powers.

The second reason the Andaman Basin bears a resemblance to the South China Sea is the rising level of militarisation. China has built runways jetties and deployed surface-to-air missiles on many features in the South China Sea. Furthermore, the PLAN regularly patrols and confronts ships near the disputed features. China's actions are being contested by American, Vietnamese and Philippine navies as they seek to challenge China's illegal claims. The ongoing confrontation has led to several military standoffs between China, the US and other claimants in the South China Sea. China's militarisation of the artificial islands and the US military's efforts to assert its freedom of navigation rights has evoked the possibility of unintentional and accidental escalation. As for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India has also made significant investments to improve its military position in the island chain. The region frequently hosts the Malabar naval exercises comprising the Quad naval powers. Apart from the Malabar naval exercises, the Indian Navy also conducts its exercises with partner countries in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. These exercises are gaining steam as the PLAN makes significant inroads into the

Indian Ocean and the Andaman Sea. Thus, the possibility of a military confrontation between Indian and Chinese forces in the Andaman Sea is not unlikely in the years to come.

Despite these similarities, several factors suggest that the Andaman Sea may not necessarily become as contentious as the South China Sea.

Despite these similarities, several factors suggest that the Andaman Sea may not necessarily become as contentious as the South China Sea. Firstly, the current situation in the South China Sea is complicated and complex due to overlapping territorial and jurisdictional claims of different littoral states over the features and relevant maritime zones in the South China Sea. Most islands were clearly in control of the British colonial empire and were transferred to their respective countries upon independence. In addition, most maritime boundaries have also been demarcated between the coastal states. Hence, there is no equivalent of China's nine-dash line, which makes broad jurisdictional claims in the South China Sea, in the Andaman Sea. India, Thailand and Indonesia demarcated their continental shelf in the 1970s. The only outstanding issue is the demarcation of the EEZ between India and Indonesia in the Andaman Sea.

Secondly, in the South China Sea, China used force against Vietnam in the 1970s and 1980s to occupy several islands and engaged in a military skirmish with the Philippines to occupy Mischief Reef in 1995. Finally, the navies of the littoral states of the Andaman Sea regularly partner with each other through bilateral and multilateral exercises and coordinated patrols. Many of these cooperative mechanisms have a long history. The Indian Navy began hosting the MILAN naval exercise in 1995, alongside the navies of Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The exercise has since grown, and the 2018 edition saw the participation of 17 nations.⁹⁷ Today, the Indian Navy holds bilateral exercises with the Singapore Navy (SIMBEX – Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise) and the Indonesian Navy (Samudra Shakti), and trilaterally with the Singaporean and Thai navies in the Singapore, India, Thailand Maritime Exercise (in short, SITMEX). The Indian Navy also conducts regular coordinated patrols in the Indian Ocean with the Thai and Indonesian navies. These cooperative mechanisms are non-existent in the South China Sea.

⁹⁷ "History", About MILAN, MILAN 2022, last modified 14 February 2022, <https://www.in-milan.in/HistoryofMILAN.aspx>.

While the current geopolitical disposition in the Andaman Sea may not be as dire as the South China Sea, it is necessary to take cognisance of the region's emerging militarisation and security dilemma. Implementing measures to manage the security dilemma and promote stability is required. These can reduce the probability of miscalculation and conflict in a geography that is crucial for the global economy. Several models exist through which stability can be promoted in the Andaman Sea. These include platforms such as ASEAN and its related forums and BIMSTEC. Other possible measures include confidence-building measures like an Incidents at Sea Agreement or Code for Unintentional Encounters at Sea.

The first approach is based on normative power and a web of institutional engagements. ASEAN itself grew as an institution out of incremental change where both an identity and norms of behaviour were socialised. These norms were both legal-rational and socio-cultural and have helped closely bind the ASEAN members.⁹⁸ Furthermore, they have been transposed to other sub-regional bodies that grew out of ASEAN like the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+). Both India and China are already members of several ASEAN forums such as the EAS, ARF and ADMM+. The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific also views the Asia-Pacific and the IOR as "a closely integrated and interconnected region, with ASEAN playing a central and strategic role". Issues in the Andaman Sea can be brought to these forums where solutions can be discussed, and norms developed to govern state behaviour in the region. The 2011 East Asia Summit Declaration on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations or a similar ASEAN arrangement can be replicated in the case of the Andaman Sea. Another set of norms that can be used in the Andaman Sea is the "Indian Ocean Zone of Peace" adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1971, of which India is a signatory.

Issues in the Andaman Sea can be brought to these forums where solutions can be discussed, and norms developed to govern state behaviour in the region.

The second approach is based on the concept of economic interdependence. This approach posits that growing economic

⁹⁸ This section is a summary from Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 14-79.

Promoting connectivity between the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar can help facilitate intra-regional trade and people-to-people contacts.

interdependence will constrain belligerent behaviour of states as they would prefer economic growth and stability over war and instability. Platforms like BIMSTEC and the IMTGT could be used to foster economic connectivity. These platforms can include Indonesia and Malaysia or India respectively. Alternatively, the Andaman Sea could also be made a focus area within ASEAN's initiatives that focus on connectivity. Promoting connectivity between the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar can help facilitate intra-regional trade and people-to-people contacts. As a first step, the littoral states of the Andaman Sea can submit draft proposals to improve connectivity to identify gaps and misperceptions. Although India and Indonesia have taken steps in this direction, the approach needs to be expanded to encompass the larger sub-region.

The final approach adopts CBMs between India, China and the littoral states to decrease the risk of confrontations at sea. CBMs can be defined as "including both constraints on the locations, deployment, training, and exercises of forces, and measures to increase 'transparency' of forces' capabilities and purposes."⁹⁹ While the whole swathe of CBMs mentioned in the above definition may not apply to the Andaman Sea, some suggested measures can help mitigate conflict. The first is between the littoral states of the Andaman Sea. Upgrading the existing framework of coordinated patrols between the littoral states to combined or joint patrols can build trust while combating transnational crime. Furthermore, the current patrols can be elevated to a multilateral framework. Currently, India conducts coordinated patrols with Indonesia¹⁰⁰ and Thailand¹⁰¹ in a bilateral setting. Coordination mechanisms to handle HADR are another promising avenue for cooperation between littoral states in the region. Currently, no formal mechanism exists for this approach.

99 James M Garrett, "Confidence-building-measures: Foundation for stability in Europe", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 15, no. 3 (1992), p. 283; Russ Swinnerton, "Confidence-building measures at sea: The challenges ahead in Southeast Asia", *The Pacific Review* 8, no. 2 (1995), pp. 327-343.

100 "Indian naval ship undertaking coordinated patrol with Indonesian vessel", *Business Standard*, 24 November 2021, https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/indian-naval-ship-undertaking-coordinated-patrol-with-indonesian-vessel-121112301353_1.html.

101 Elizabeth Roche, "Navies of India, Thailand begin three-day coordinated patrol", *Mint*, 12 November 2021, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/navies-of-india-thailand-begin-three-day-coordinated-patrol-11636729764027.html>.

CBMs between India and China in the maritime domain are also required to prevent tensions. The Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) is an arrangement that sets out several 'rules of the road' to prevent encounters at sea escalating into a crisis between different navies in the region. CUES was adopted by the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) in April 2014 and has been regularly implemented by most navies operating in the area.¹⁰² However, the arrangement is voluntary and non-binding. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium can adopt such a mechanism to prevent dangerous and unplanned manoeuvres at sea. If not, a bilateral framework between Indian and Chinese navies can be worked out to regulate naval encounters. The other closely related model that can be adopted is the Incidents at Sea Agreement between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Like CUES, this agreement set out rules for communicating at sea between the US and Soviet navies, placed restrictions on the manoeuvring of naval vessels and opened communication channels between the two governments. Establishing hotlines between the Indian and Chinese navies or ministries of defence can help establish a clear line of communication to deescalate a situation in case a confrontation occurs. India already operates hotlines at both the military commanders and at the foreign ministers' level with China to help deescalate standoffs along its land borders.

Establishing hotlines between the Indian and Chinese navies or ministries of defence can help establish a clear line of communication to deescalate a situation in case a confrontation occurs.

CBMs do suffer from some shortcomings that may blunt their effectiveness. Territorial sovereignty continues to be a sensitive subject in India and Southeast Asia. Hence, upgrading to joint/combined patrols may not garner the political capital required to see the proposal through. During the negotiation of the Malacca Straits Patrol and the Trilateral Maritime Patrols initiative in the Sulu-Celebes Seas, sensitivities over sovereignty were a key concern for the participating nations.¹⁰³ India is also sensitive about the waters around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and only judiciously grants access

¹⁰² Sam Bateman, "CUES and coast guards", East Asia Forum, 7 October 2016, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/10/07/cues-and-coast-guards/>.

¹⁰³ Ian Storey, "Trilateral Security Cooperation in the Sulu-Celebes Seas: A Work in Progress", *ISEAS Perspective* 2018, No. 48 (27 August 2018), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2018_48@50.pdf. Also see Collin Koh, "The Malacca Strait Patrols: Finding Common Ground", *RSIS Commentary*, 20 April 2016, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co16091-the-malacca-strait-patrols-finding-common-ground/#.YbQ2ffBzOR>.

to the islands under its reciprocal logistics agreements with friendly countries. Therefore, the existing coordinated patrols mechanism may be sufficient to address non-traditional security concerns. However, as noted earlier, cooperation on MDA and regional intelligence sharing can be a path to take cooperation forward.

India inherently views most of China's actions in the area with suspicion.

The trust deficit between India and China is perhaps the biggest obstacle to effective CBMs in the region. India inherently views most of China's actions in the area with suspicion. Furthermore, the Indian establishment is sceptical of CBMs as an approach to mitigate conflict with China. The CBMs that are currently in place, such as hotlines, have not proven to work. Despite these measures, 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives along the India-China land border in a violent clash with Chinese troops in 2020. The Indian establishment has also noted the Chinese attempts to water-down several CBMs during their negotiations, including the CUES arrangement negotiated at the WPNS. Hence, successfully implementing CBMs between India and China in the Andaman Sea appears an uphill task.

Conclusion

For most of independent India's history, New Delhi remained oblivious to the immense possibilities accorded by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to India's defence and diplomacy. The centrality of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Andaman Sea was lost upon India's civilian leadership, which practised the policy of "masterly inactivity" in the distant islands. Similarly, the Southeast Asian states of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia faced several land-based threats rather than maritime threats. Thailand and Malaysia were concerned about the spread of communism from Vietnam. Similarly, Indonesia faced a domestic terrorist and ethnic insurgency threat. Thus, conventional maritime threats have not registered prominently in the security calculus of the littoral states of the Andaman Sea. Their national security postures were directed against domestic insurgencies and securing national borders. Over the last 30 years, however, the economic and strategic importance of the Andaman Sea and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have changed fundamentally in the eyes of the political and bureaucratic elite. The Andaman Sea's pivotal position in the Bay of Bengal made it crucial in the context of energy security of the Southeast and East Asian countries in the globalised post-Cold War era.

Over the last 30 years, however, the economic and strategic importance of the Andaman Sea and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have changed fundamentally in the eyes of the political and bureaucratic elite.

Due to its strategic location, both China and the US and the Andaman Sea's coastal states have begun paying close attention to this critical maritime space. Driven by the notion of the "Malacca Dilemma", China has been increasing both economic and military activities in the Bay of Bengal littorals. China's actions have invited a response from India and its Quad partners and the Southeast Asian littoral states, setting up a potential for the region's militarisation. These developments are occurring on top of several non-traditional security threats that continue to plague the Andaman Basin. These threats include criminal syndicates engaged in piracy, arms and drug smuggling and human trafficking. In recent years, climate change, natural disasters and illegal migration arising from the Rohingya crisis have also registered in the threat matrix of the littoral states. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has exacerbated many of the existing transnational criminal

threats. Despite its geostrategic importance, the Andaman Sea remains an under-utilised avenue for cooperation and development between littoral states. The sea hosts substantial amounts of maritime resources, including the oil and gas reserves in the seabed and fishing reserves in its waters. Connectivity between the littoral states and the larger region can also help facilitate investment, trade and tourism. In recent years, regional governments have begun to focus on exploiting its economic potential.

Although militarisation of the region has increased, there are several reasons to be optimistic.

In the context of its renewed strategic and economic importance, a cooperative security regime that ensures maritime security, freedom of navigation and the rule of law while fostering economic opportunities can go a long way in promoting long-term stability in the region. Although militarisation of the region has increased, there are several reasons to be optimistic. Historical legacies of conflict between the littoral states are absent and cooperation rather than conflict has been the norm between regional navies. Building on this context, implementing CBMs, fostering economic interdependence and institutionalising norms of peaceful co-existence and resolution of disputes can help build a stable and sustainable regional order in the Andaman Sea.

Appendix 1

About the Authors

Dr Yogesh Joshi is a Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Singapore. Before joining ISAS, Dr Joshi was a MacArthur and Stanton Nuclear Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, United States. He is also an alumnus of the Summer Workshop on the Analysis of Military Operations and Strategy, Columbia University and the International Nuclear History Boot Camp, Woodrow Wilson Centre. He has a doctorate in International Politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Dr Joshi is the co-author of three books: *India and Nuclear Asia: Forces, Doctrines and Dangers* (Georgetown University Press, 2018); *Asia's Emerging Balance of Power: The U.S. 'Pivot' and Indian Foreign Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); and *India's Nuclear Policy: A Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2018). His research has been published in *Survival*, *Asian Security*, *India Review*, *U.S. Naval War College Review*, *International Affairs*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, *Asia Policy*, *International History Review* and *Harvard Asia Quarterly*.

Dr Joshi's research focuses on contemporary Indian foreign and national security policy, with an emphasis on Indo-Pacific's balance of power, the evolution of India's military power and its approach to the use of force in international relations.

Mr Nishant Rajeev is a Research Analyst at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Singapore. Before joining ISAS, Nishant worked in a public affairs firm in New Delhi where he focused on the Indian government's cyber, drone and automotive policies, as well as projects on police reform and child rights. His articles have been published on the websites of *The Diplomat*, *National Interest* and *Pragati*.

Mr Rajeev earned his Master of Science (Strategic Studies) from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree from the RNS Institute of Technology and a Graduate Certificate in Public Policy from the Takshashila Institution, both based in Bangalore, India.

Ms Hoang Thi Ha is the Lead Researcher for Political-Security Affairs at the ASEAN Studies Centre of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Ms Hoang joined the ASEAN Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam in 2004. She then moved on to work at the ASEAN Secretariat for nine years, with her last post being Assistant Director, Head of the Political Cooperation Division.

Ms Hoang holds an MA in International Relations from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. Her research focus areas are political-security issues in ASEAN, including the South China Sea disputes and ASEAN cooperation on human rights; ASEAN's external relations with the major powers; ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific discourse; and ASEAN's institutional building.

Dr Sinderpal Singh is a Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the South Asia Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His research interests include the international relations of South Asia with a special focus on Indian foreign policy. Before joining RSIS, Dr Singh was a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies in the National University of Singapore (NUS), and a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in NUS.

Dr Singh has published articles in *India Review*, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* and *Pacific Affairs*; his single-authored book is entitled *India in South Asia: Domestic Identity Politics and Foreign Policy from Nehru to the BJP* (Routledge 2013; paperback version, 2015). He has also contributed book chapters on aspects of India's Northeast, specifically in relation to India-ASEAN land connectivity. He is presently in the final stages of completing an edited book on the 'Modi Doctrine' in Indian foreign policy as well as a book-length manuscript examining 'Indian' constructions of the Indian Ocean region from the colonial period till the present.

Dr Singh received his PhD from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, his MA from the Australian National University and his BA from NUS.

Dr Ian Storey is a Senior Fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. At ISEAS, he specialises in regional security issues with a focus on Southeast Asia's relations with the major powers and maritime security, especially the South China Sea dispute. He is the co-editor of the ISEAS academic journal, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. Prior to joining ISEAS, he held academic positions at the Daniel K Inouye Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Hawaii and Deakin University, Australia.

Dr Storey obtained his PhD from the City University of Hong Kong, his MA from the International University of Japan and his BA from the University of Hull, England.

Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
#08-06 (Block B)
Singapore 119620
Tel (65) 6516 4239
Fax (65) 6776 7505
URL www.isas.nus.edu.sg

ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 119614
Tel (65) 6778 0955
Fax (65) 6775 6264
URL www.iseas.edu.sg

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
Nanyang Technological University
Block S4, Level B3
50 Nanyang Avenue
Singapore 639798
Tel (65) 6790 6982
URL www.rsis.edu.sg