India-Australia-Indonesia Maritime Partnership:

Shared Challenges, Compelling Opportunities

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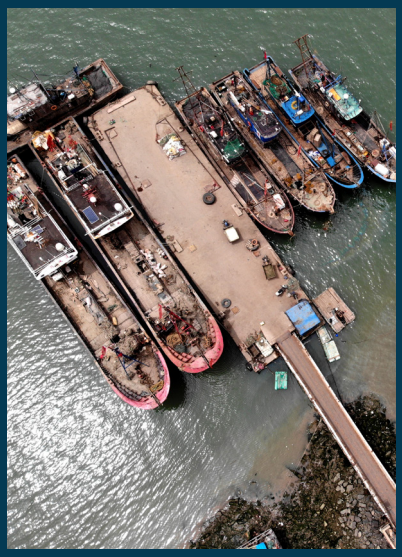
Executive Summary

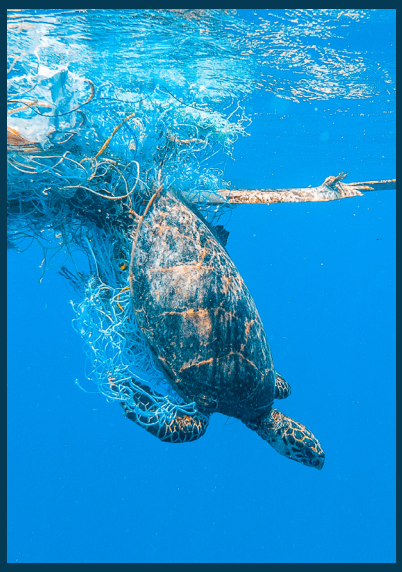
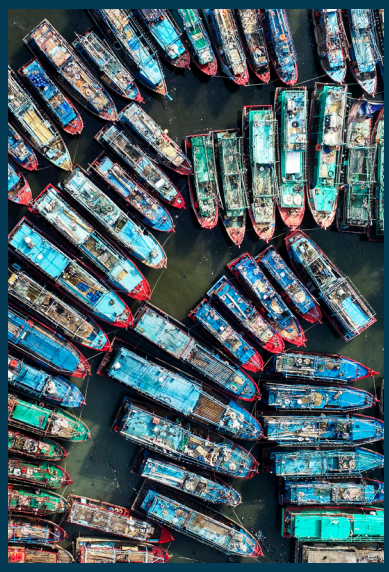
THIS REPORT SEEKS to outline the common maritime security challenges facing India, Australia, and Indonesia, and proposes policy options for strengthening trilateral cooperation to address them. A 2020 study conducted by the authors of this report, titled *Anchoring the Indo-Pacific: The Case for Deeper Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Cooperation*, has argued that the core of their trilateral cooperation should be within the maritime domain, with the Indo-Pacific region as the primary theatre and the three states as anchors. Given the regional uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific, as well as the limitations of existing multilateral institutions and bilateral partnerships, stronger cooperation and alignment between the three nations can boost regional stability and provide strategic benefits for all. Therefore, these countries, and how they interact with one another, are key to the long-term strategic stability of the region.

Findings and Proposals

This report argues that there are short-term operational and long-term strategic and security challenges that India, Australia, and Indonesia must deal with in the maritime domain. Amongst the short-term challenges, the report focuses on those facing the navies and maritime law-enforcement agencies of the three countries: Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, maritime piracy, and grey-zone activities. The long-term focus areas, meanwhile, include climate-induced maritime insecurities and maritime disputes. Taken together, all three countries have shared interests in these maritime security challenges and must collectively confront them.

The report proposes that India, Australia and Indonesia explore cooperation in three pillars: maritime diplomacy, maritime law enforcement, and maritime domain awareness. Each area has subsets within which the three countries have pre-existing modalities (bilaterally or multilaterally) to engage in trilateral cooperation in the future. Specific actionable recommendations under these areas are laid out in the form of short- and long-term goals. For a stable and rules-based order in an open and prosperous Indo-Pacific Region, the three nations must find new ways to deepen their practical conversations and strategic maritime cooperation.



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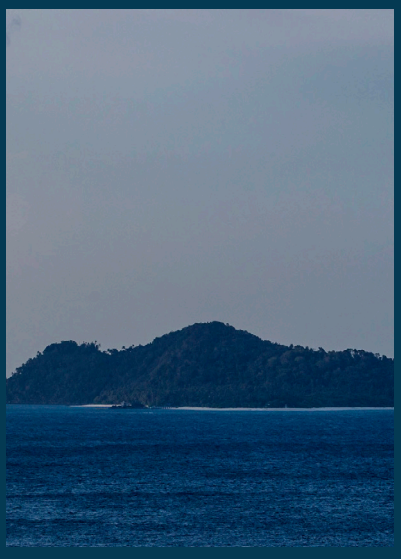
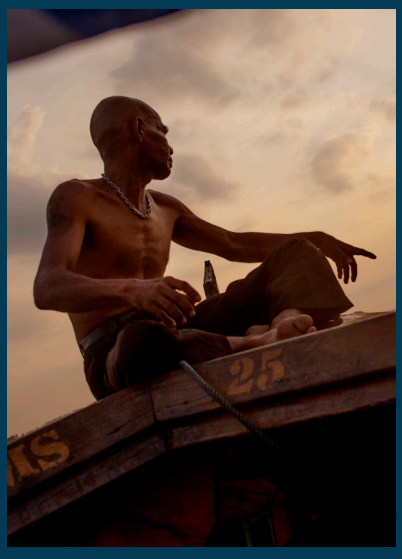

I
Introduction

THE PROSPECT OF FURTHERING cooperation between India, Australia and Indonesia within a trilateral framework is premised on their shared interest in establishing a stable and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific Region. In recent years, this has become increasingly crucial for the prosperity and security of the nations. To this end, the three countries must find a convergence of strategic interests, with their respective sizes and strategic resources complementing one another. Through trilateral trade and investment, the growth of one can serve as a tailwind for the others; at the same time, the security and economic conditions of one will also likely impact the others.

The 2020 study, *Anchoring the Indo-Pacific: The Case for Deeper Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Cooperation*, found that the regional uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific, coupled with the limitations of existing multilateral institutions and bilateral partnerships, necessitates stronger cooperation and alignment between India, Australia, and Indonesia. Such cooperation will not only provide strategic benefits for all three, but also boost regional stability.[1] Further, the findings of the 2020 study suggest the *maritime domain* as the ideal point of strategic convergence between the three countries. Building on this idea, the current report explores the options, opportunities, and challenges of maritime cooperation between India, Australia and Indonesia.

The rest of the report is structured as follows: The second section briefly explains why the three nations should explore a trilateral maritime partnership. The third analyses the shared maritime security challenges these countries must tackle, both short-term and long-term. The fourth section then examines three potential pillars of cooperation—*maritime diplomacy, maritime law enforcement, and maritime domain awareness*. The fifth section summarises the findings and proposes short- and long-term policy options for the countries to consider.

II
The Potential of an India–Australia–Indonesia Maritime Partnership

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE of the Indian and Pacific oceans has given rise to a new wave of great-power politics and their concomitant strategic challenges. Over 90 percent of global trade is conducted through the maritime route, its value having increased from approximately US$6 trillion (tn) to US$20 tn over the last 15 years. Further, more than 60 percent of the world's oil production also moves through sea routes.[2] Strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific thus depends on the ability to reap economic benefits from the oceans and address the challenges in the maritime domain. These challenges are transnational and multi-faceted—amongst them, sea-borne terrorism, piracy, climate change, natural and anthropogenic disasters, and the proliferation of maritime disputes.

Consequently, maritime stability in the Indo-Pacific Region is a shared responsibility of all the seafaring countries. Despite this, the strategic anchors of the Indo-Pacific—India, Australia and Indonesia—often tend to act in silos.

For India, the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision serves to promote its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean. In November 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) at the East Asia Summit (EAS) for a safe, secure and stable maritime domain, drawing on existing regional cooperation mechanisms to focus on seven central pillars: Maritime Security; Maritime Ecology; Maritime Resources; Capacity-Building and Resource Sharing; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport.[3]

Indonesia first turned its attention to the maritime domain and the broader Indo-Pacific in 2014, as part of President Joko Widodo's doctrine of "Global Maritime Fulcrum" (GMF). While the GMF eventually fell out of favour, Indonesia helped draft the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, which features the maritime domain prominently. Under Widodo, the country's approach to the maritime domain has evolved from an aspiration to be an independent strategic force (in his first term), to buck-passing strategic leadership to ASEAN (in his second term)—but it has continued to expand its defence diplomatic activities, with military procurement now higher on the agenda than it was in 2014. However, maritime security challenges remain unresolved, given Indonesia's underdeveloped maritime governance structure and agencies.

> "Strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific depends on the ability to reap economic benefits from the oceans and address the challenges in the maritime domain."

Australia's vision of the maritime domain, despite some overlap, differs from Indonesia's and India's. Australia has a significant interest in the Indo-Pacific, since the region encompasses almost all of its maritime surrounds. In its "2017 Foreign Policy White Paper," Canberra envisaged the Indo-Pacific Region as "a neighbourhood in which adherence to rules delivers lasting peace, where the rights of all states are respected, and where open markets facilitate the free flow of trade, capital and ideas."[4] The 2020 Defence Strategic Update underscored this maritime focus: "[D]efence planning will focus on [Australia's] immediate region: ranging from the north-eastern Indian Ocean, through maritime and mainland South East Asia to Papua New Guinea and the South West Pacific."[5] Thus, it is vital for Australia to preserve the rules-based order and stability of Southeast Asia and its sea-lanes, through which the bulk of its exports are transported.

Despite these differing maritime priorities and challenges, there are several areas of converging interests between India, Australia, and Indonesia, which can underpin a trilateral maritime cooperation framework. These include the following:

- Freedom of navigation and sustaining the UNCLOS-based maritime order in the Indian Ocean and the broader Pacific;
- The importance of connectivity, the sustainable use of ocean resources, and the collective maritime safety and security; and
- Maritime diplomacy and multilateralism.

The imperative is to operationalise these broad principles into concrete and actionable policies, by identifying shared maritime security challenges and potential areas of cooperation, to strengthen maritime cooperation between the three nations.

III
Shared Maritime Security Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region

THERE ARE SHORT- and long-term maritime security challenges currently facing India, Australia and Indonesia. Short-term challenges, which are daily operational challenges that confront the navies and maritime law-enforcement agencies (MLEA), include IUU fishing, maritime piracy, and grey-zone activities. Long-term challenges include two future strategic issues: climate-induced maritime insecurities and maritime disputes.

SHORT-TERM OPERATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

The Indo-Pacific maritime domain faces numerous and complex maritime security challenges, such as piracy; sea robbery; IUU fishing; human smuggling and trafficking; smuggling of prohibited items (such as narcotics and firearms); and disputed yet porous maritime borders and boundaries.[6] Amongst these, some are more significant than others for the three countries, and consequently, for the different avenues or mechanisms for trilateral cooperation between them.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

Bio-geographically, the Indo-Pacific's warm tropical waters have the highest levels of marine diversity on earth, with the Coral Triangle located at the heart of this ecoregion.[7] Moreover, the region consists of the world's top fishing nations such as Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Since major coastal states also have some of the world's largest EEZs (including Australia and Indonesia), the Indo-Pacific has witnessed rapid growth in marine capture fisheries and is highly prone to IUU fishing. Between 1950 and 2000, the fishing fleets of Asia and Oceania increased their recorded marine catches by 422 percent and 1,218 percent, respectively.[8]

While the Indo-Pacific states have strong laws governing fisheries, their resources remain vulnerable to destructive fishing practices from foreign vessels that overfish and cause environmental harm. Despite international efforts to curb IUU fishing, these fleets have largely evaded national and international regulatory approaches. The South China Sea, Western Pacific, and Atlantic Ocean littorals have long faced the threats of IUU fishing. Recent reports claim that the Indian Ocean accounts for over 14 percent of the global wild-caught fish; however, 30 percent of the assessed stocks are already overfished beyond sustainable limits.[9] The problem is likely to worsen in the future, which will put at risk not only the essential revenue sources of millions of people but also the wider ecosystem.

The perils of IUU fishing are not new to the Indian Ocean. Recent studies highlight that some transnational organised criminal groups also use IUU fishing for other crimes, such as the trafficking of drugs, arms and persons. Indeed, the fishing industry has been linked to crimes such as human trafficking, document fraud, drug trafficking, and tax and customs evasion.[10] With Indian Ocean littoral states struggling with underdeveloped economies and poor governance, many fishers are forced to adopt illegal practices or become involved with criminal organisations.[11] A 2020 study notes that India "provided $277 million in subsidies to its fishers, of which $174 million is believed to contribute to destructive fishing

practices."[12] Similar domestic problems of state capacity in some of Indonesia's coastal areas are correlated with the rise and fall of maritime piracy, in addition to IUU fishing (discussed in later sections).

Furthermore, several external factors also contribute to IUU fishing. Some regional states have regularly witnessed illegal fishers, largely from China, in their waters.[13] The operation of distant fishing fleets in the EEZs of other states has led to strong responses by coastal states, particularly through their maritime law-enforcement agencies. However, when incidents take place in disputed waters, the use of military force to challenge illegal fishers can fuel regional tensions. In recent years, India has also seen an increase in the number of Chinese research and fishing vessels that operate in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). These vessels are likely to be monitoring and surveying the seawater, to help them improve their submarine and deep-sea mining capabilities.[14] Thus, the intersection of state-protected IUU fishing and the deployment of naval assets to the IOR is likely to be one of India's top maritime strategic security concerns. State-supported IUU fishing practices must also be examined by the three countries, especially India and Indonesia, since Chinese fishing fleets, equipped and funded by authorities, frequently traverse the Indian Ocean, the North Natuna Sea, and the South China Sea.

For Australia, the problem of IUU fishing is less acute; however, it still presents a challenge that requires concerted effort through domestic management and international cooperation. In 2018–19, Australia's fisheries and aquaculture industry was worth approximately US$2.2 billion (bn).[15] Australia's Fishing Zone (AFZ) is the world's third largest, with an EEZ comprising an area of approximately 10 million (mn) square kilometres. In this vast zone, IUU fishing activities occur in three main areas: remote Southern Ocean territories for Patagonian toothfish; remote sub-Antarctic territories of Heard and the McDonald Islands in the southern Indian Ocean; and Australia's northern waters, undertaken largely by traditional or small-scale vessels from Southeast Asia.[16] The intensity of illegal fishing in the Arafura-Timor Seas increased markedly during the first half of the last decade, evident in the increase in the number of illegal foreign fishing vessels (mostly, relatively small Indonesian vessels) apprehended in Australia's northern waters.[17] The "2017 Australian Foreign Policy White Paper" recognises the social, economic and food security impact of IUU fishing and overfishing on its neighbours Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, in addition to the direct impact on Australian fish stocks.[18]

The nexus between IUU fishing and other kinds of maritime-borne transnational crime[19] is also reflected in the Australian government's position that IUU fishing is a transnational crime that "threatens Australia's interests and the regional stability on which we depend."[20] According to the "Foreign Policy White Paper," transnational crime is addressed primarily through supporting governance, rule of law, and capacity-building, particularly in Australia's near region. Thus, cooperation with partners on IUU fishing will cover a range of other maritime-borne crimes, such as people smuggling and human trafficking; illicit drugs and counterfeit goods smuggling; and piracy. One recent example of such cooperation is the coordinated maritime patrol on the Indonesia–Australia maritime boundary, "Operation Gannet 5"—conducted in May 2021 under the auspices of the "Maritime Plan of Action," which implements the Indonesia–Australia Joint Declaration on Maritime Cooperation.[21] Operation Gannet 5 promoted cooperation and information exchange, not only on IUU fishing but also on people smuggling and human trafficking.

> "With Indian Ocean littoral states struggling with underdeveloped economies and poor governance, many fishers are forced to adopt illegal practices or become involved with criminal organisations."

International cooperation is an essential component of Australia's strategy to mitigate the incidence of IUU fishing. It works in partnership with other nations to prevent IUU fishing in the South Pacific Ocean and protect fishing stocks such as tuna.[22] In addition to forming partnerships with regional fisheries authorities, Australian bodies have increased public information campaigns in regional states, particularly in Vietnam and Papua New Guinea, informing fishing communities of the international maritime boundaries as well as the consequences of being apprehended.[23] The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) estimates that such campaigns have contributed to a reduction in the number of illegal fishing vessels operating in Australian waters from 367 in financial year (FY) 2005–06 to four in FY 2018–19.[24]

Indonesian maritime policy stakeholders consider IUU fishing the predominant maritime security challenge, along with fisheries crimes such as smuggling and trafficking (of humans, drugs, weapons) by sea.[25] Indeed, an estimated 1,000 foreign vessels conduct IUU fishing in 12 percent of Indonesia's territorial waters each year.[26] In 2012, Indonesia produced approximately 9 mn metric tonnes of fishery products, which generated US$4 billion of export revenues in 2013; fisheries account for 21 percent of Indonesia's agricultural economy and three percent of the GDP.[27] While some estimates suggest that the annual cost of IUU fishing for Indonesia is around US$3 bn a year, the government's estimates place the total annual loss (including lost tariffs and risk of permanent damage to possibly 65 percent of the coral reefs) at US$20 bn.[28]

Furthermore, human and sex trafficking, smuggling of migrants, and forced labour in the IOR are often linked to the fishing industry, either directly or indirectly.[29] Indeed, Southeast Asia is considered "the principal location for trafficking persons for forced labour into the fishing industry."[30] Indonesia, in particular, faces a complex set of IUU fishing-related violations, including those related to the deactivation of vessel monitoring systems (VMS), the use of foreign seafarers, and the prevalence of fishing transhipment at sea.[31] These problems are arguably about international maritime law-enforcement cooperation as well as the state capacity of coastal states. In Indonesia, the fisheries sector has remained a low priority for successive governments, since they saw little value in small-scale fisherfolks and focused instead on partnerships for controlling major vessels and trawlers.[32] However, the steady intersection between economic losses and fisheries crimes has finally compelled the Indonesian government to campaign in regional and global institutions for the inclusion of IUU fishing in the list of transnational organised crimes. Further, Indonesia has also begun to employ more stringent measures, such as the burning or sinking of foreign vessels as a penalty for IUU fishing in its EEZ. While this practice has attracted international censure, it is likely to have met the "necessity test" criteria under Article 73 (1) of the UNCLOS.[33]

Maritime Piracy

Maritime piracy has been a global security problem for decades. Between 1993 and 2014, 97 out of 177 coastal nations experienced at least one piracy incident; 47 states experienced more than 10 incidents; and 13 states more than 100 attacks.[34] Indeed, historically, the Indo-Pacific region has been a hotspot for maritime piracy. Most of the 8,900 pirate attacks that occurred between 1995 and 2017 were in Africa and Asia; within this, the top five most piracy-prone countries are Indonesia, Somalia, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Bangladesh.[35] Recent reports noted a rise in maritime piracy and armed robbery in the first nine months of 2020.[36] In 2020, the west coast of Africa was one of the most vulnerable regions, followed by East and Southeast Asia, South America, and the Indian sub-continent (See Figure 1).[37]

In India, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly exacerbated piracy threats. The Maritime Union of India (MUI) noted: "[T]here is around 26 per cent increase in maritime piracy due to the pandemic. The menace of maritime piracy is a major cause of concern for over two lakh Indian seafarers as India now provides around 9.35 per cent of the global seafarers and ranks third in the list of the largest seafarers supplying nations to the world maritime industry."[38] Indeed, India's trade routes with its top trading partners—many in Southeast Asia and Africa—are particularly vulnerable to maritime piracy. In December 2019, the country introduced the Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, which can pave the way for further bilateral and global cooperation to deal with the challenges and threats of maritime piracy.

Figure 1: IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Map, 2020

Yellow = Attempted Attack; Orange = Boarded; Blue = Fired upon; Red = Hijacked; Purple = Suspicious vessel.
Source: https://www.icc-ccs.org/index.php/piracy-reporting-centre/live-piracy-map/piracy-map-2020.

The Australian government similarly views the threat of piracy as prevalent in Southeast Asia (particularly around the Malacca and Singapore straits), the Indian Ocean, and the Middle East, which can disrupt international maritime trade as well as damage sea/offshore oil and gas infrastructure.[39] In light of the high value of Australian trade moving by sea (approximately US$183.7 bn in exports and US$140.7 bn in imports), addressing the issue of piracy in the Indo-Pacific is of primary interest to Canberra.[40] Since the threat of piracy is seen as emanating outside of Australia's maritime jurisdiction—and the "2016 Defence

White Paper" lists it as one of the several non-state-actor threats to the global commons[41] —management must occur in "close coordination" with international partners.[42]

As of 2009, Australia's focus has been on counter-piracy operations through its participation in the US-led Combined Maritime Forces in the Middle East region and on increasing the number of piracy-related exercises with partner nations. A 2010 International Maritime Bureau (IMB) report found that piracy occurred most in the Gulf of Aden/Red Sea and off the coast of Somalia.[43] However, scholar Andrew Forbes has questioned whether the IMB's definition of "piracy incidents" at that time was too broad, leading to over-reporting of piracy in those areas and under-reporting of piracy in Australia's near region—justifying naval forays in the Middle East.[44] Since then, a 2020 IMB report has found that the actual and attempted piracy incidents were highest around Nigeria (35), Indonesia (26), Singapore Straits (23) and Benin (11). Of the numbers from Indonesia and Singapore Straits, 25 and 22 were actual attacks, respectively, underscoring the need for Australia to focus on its near region to combat piracy acts.[45]

In Indonesian waters, maritime piracy has been a persistent challenge for decades. One study notes that there are more piracy incidents originating from Indonesia than from any other country in the world: 2,150 incidents were reported between 1985 and 2016 with 864 of them against steaming ships, suggesting a higher incidence of organised piracy.[46] Since the mid-2000s, however, the number of attacks has decreased periodically. Stronger cooperation between Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia around the Malacca Straits has certainly helped, as has the wide range of maritime law-enforcement cooperation in the region.

However, the persistent return of maritime piracy and armed robbery indicates a deeper problem. Many scholars have identified *Indonesia's subnational variation of state capacity* as the root cause of the waxing and waning of maritime piracy in the region. Pirate attacks appear to occur in clusters in the proximity of areas with intermediate state capacity along the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Singapore, East Kalimantan, and South Sumatra.[47] Such state capacity allows for collusion between local authorities and pirates, and provides the infrastructure and markets necessary for organised piracy. Other studies note the salience of local electoral cycles in the coastal communities in facilitating pirates to increase their activities to signal their influence, compete with rival actors, and engage in piracy before new actors take office.[48] These observations suggest that eradicating maritime piracy altogether around Indonesian waters will be almost impossible through international cooperation alone. However, stronger collaboration and coordination—as well as capacity-building programmes for Indonesia's Coast Guard—amongst key partners such as India and Australia can help mitigate some of the daily operational challenges surrounding piracy.

Grey-Zone Activities

Grey-zone activities (also known as grey-zone warfare, operations or campaigns) is a blanket term used to refer to coercive actions that fall under the threshold of military aggression. The phrase "grey zone" is also indicative of the fact that the actors are technically civilians, although they might be under military command and engaging in aggressive or dangerous behaviour. Grey-zone operations generate ambiguity and, therefore, uncertainty in the adversary. In the Indo-Pacific, maritime grey-zone campaigns are used to assert claims of sovereignty and sovereign rights in waters of another state.[49] A key example is the use of maritime militia comprising fishers trained, armed and directed by military forces. Other examples include the "cabbage strategy," which involves swarming by layers, starting with fishing fleets in large numbers followed by maritime militia, coast guards and naval vessels; and "salami-slicing," which comprises small and persistent acts of harassment and intimidation until an adversary eventually capitulates.[50]

India, Australia and Indonesia have been increasingly subjected to grey-zone activities in recent years. For India, grey-zone operations became a prominent threat after the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai in 2008.[51] Subsequently, India's maritime establishment was significantly involved in strengthening coastal security measures. According to naval expert Abhijit Singh, "New Delhi has also had to contend with another form of 'grey-zone' tactic that does not involve non-state actors or kinetic attacks. For the past decade, China has been actively deploying the 'three warfares' (3Ws) strategy—media, psychological and legal warfare—to weaken Indian resolve in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region."[52]

Currently, India's grey-zone challenges mostly concern China, particularly regarding the latter's activities in India's EEZs and in the IOR in general. China's recent installation of marine observatories in the EEZs of Pakistan and Maldives, for instance, has a dual purpose: marine scientific research and naval surveillance, to facilitate forays by Chinese SSN and SSBNs.[53]

Former Indian Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh has said that Chinese research vessels and fishing boats have been seen in the Indian EEZ, including near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and they are no longer "isolated incidents."[54] Furthermore, during the ongoing conflict in eastern Ladakh on the Sino-Indian border, China sent its research vessel to the Indian Ocean. Such vessels, as far as India is concerned, could be used to map the ocean floor and assist future submarine operations.[55] Chinese fishing fleets have also been seen operating in the IOR, although this problem so far appears to be less serious. An expanded Chinese naval presence in the IOR is of serious concern to India and has prompted it to modify its previous sensitivities over external naval presence in the

region. Prime Minister Modi has already hinted that India is willing to cooperate with like-minded partner countries in the Indian Ocean, including the United States, Australia, Japan, and France.[56]

Australia has also sustained a wider set of grey-zone operations by China in recent years, although increasingly within the non-maritime sphere. These campaigns, often conducted as information operations or for economic coercion, are designed to undermine Australia's strategic interests by attempting to either sully its international reputation or foment divisions within Australian society. In one instance, in late November 2020, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian tweeted a manipulated image of an Australian soldier holding a knife to an Afghan child's throat, shortly after the release of a report from a public enquiry into the alleged war crimes committed by Australian special forces members in Afghanistan.[57] The spokesperson added that the report "fully exposed the hypocrisy of the human rights and freedom these Western countries are always chanting."[58] Part of the Chinese intent, in this case, was to deflect Australia's criticism of China's human rights record.

In another instance in May 2021, China indefinitely suspended the China–Australia Strategic Economic Dialogue and issued warnings of "further damage" to bilateral relations, in response to Australia allowing a Hong Kong democracy activist to migrate to the country.[59] Throughout 2020, China also imposed trade sanctions such as the introduction of temporary anti-dumping tariffs on Australian agricultural products (wine, beef, lamb, cotton, barley, lobster, timber and coal).[60] In the case of beef, Chinese authorities also suspended certain abattoirs from exporting to their country due to issues related to labelling and health certificate requirements.[61] By imposing costs on core Australian industries, the Chinese government aimed to generate domestic pressure on the Australian government to change policies. Several of these tariffs were introduced after Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne, in April 2020, called for an international probe into the origins of COVID-19 and demanded "transparency" from China.[62] In July 2021, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao confirmed that trade measures had been retaliatory, stating, "We will not allow any country to reap benefits from doing business with China while groundlessly accusing and smearing China and undermining China's core interests based on ideology."[63]

While the grey-zone operations are primarily aimed at coercing changes in Australia's strategic posture towards China, their long-term strategic objective has also been to weaken Canberra's alliance with the US. In his comments about retaliatory trade measures, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao added that US farmers had benefited from tariffs on Australian goods. "When a certain country acts as a cat's paw for others, it is the people that pay for misguided government policies."[64]

Maritime grey-zone operations against partners in Australia's proximity can also impact Canberra—for example, operations that obstruct the use of the sea for the passage of ships.[65] Here, Australia is better suited to act as a partner in supporting other states against maritime-borne grey-zone threats in their waters, since mirroring the tactics of other countries is impractical. As Australia National University (ANU) professor Lesley Seebeck highlights, Australia does not have a "spare 'fishing fleet'," even in partnership with other countries, to counter the use of maritime militia in the South China Sea: "We do need to compete at the point of leverage, matching presence with presence."[66]

Indonesia, meanwhile, has been subjected to maritime grey-zone acts through China's mobilisation of illegal fishing fleets, accompanied by maritime law-enforcement vessels, into the EEZs surrounding the Natuna Islands in recent years. The most serious recent episodes occurred between December 2019 to January 2020, in which nearly 60 vessels crossed into Indonesia's EEZ,[67] and before that, three incidents in 2016.[68] Private conversations with Indonesia's maritime law-enforcement officials suggest that China's incursions have never stopped and have only become less publicised. Some argue that China's incursions are "almost seasonal"—every six months or so.

Since Indonesia is not a claimant state to the South China Sea disputes, China's deployment of illegal fishing fleets and other vessels in Indonesian waters seem to be aimed at provoking a dispute with Jakarta, in an attempt to draw it into negotiations and perhaps inadvertently back China's claims. Thus, Indonesia's maritime grey-zone challenge is more than a problem of operational law enforcement. China's maritime incursions are designed to eventually undermine the UNCLOS-based maritime order amongst Southeast Asian states. If Jakarta inadvertently or implicitly acknowledges China's "historic fishing rights" claims in parts of the North Natuna Sea—by entering into ill-conceived fisheries cooperation deals, for example—it can strengthen China's overall claims in the South China Sea and cause Indonesia's delimitation talks with Vietnam and Malaysia to flounder.[69]

For all three states, grey-zone activities in the Indo-Pacific carry a broader risk of miscalculation and conflict escalation. For instance, China's new law allows its maritime law-enforcement authorities to fire on foreign ships in Chinese waters, including disputed ones.[70] While other Indo-Pacific states (e.g., Japan and Vietnam) have also authorised their civilian agencies to use force in a maritime context,[71] they do not present the same threat as China does, since they are not the main perpetrators of grey-zone activities. Further, in the event of escalations, affected states will also include American allies, increasing the risk of US military involvement. Therefore, a significant challenge for Australia, India and Indonesia will be to develop cooperation for countering the impact of grey-zone activities without creating perceptions of containment or provoking retaliatory ire.

Another reason for the three nations to turn their collective attention to grey-zone operations is the effectiveness of those activities in wearing down individual Indo-Pacific militaries, both physically and psychologically. According to Taiwan Defence Minister Yen De-fa, as of October 2020, his country's air force had scrambled 2,972 times against Chinese aircraft at a cost of T$25.5 bn (US$903 mn).[72] Taiwan's navy had similarly conducted 1,223 missions to intercept Chinese military vessels, representing an increase of approximately 400 such missions from the previous year.[73] Other examples of where grey-zone activities have contributed to strategic success include China's control of the Scarborough Shoal since 2012. The challenge for states now is to deter incursions or push back on acts of intimidation in a timely manner, without provoking or escalating conflict. While these examples do not yet impact India, Australia, or Indonesia (directly or immediately), they suggest that the proliferation of dangerous grey-zone tactics could jeopardise regional stability.

To be sure, all three countries acknowledge the risks of grey-zone activities. However, each nation has expressed this concern to varying degrees in its national strategic guidance document. For its part, India's leaders publicly acknowledge the threat of grey-zone activities, even calling for a distinct military command to address such emerging threats.[74] However, formal strategic guidance, such as the updated 2015 Maritime Doctrine, does not mention grey-zone activities, despite their importance to the country.[75]

The Australian government has highlighted the threat posed by grey-zone operations in the recent 2020 Defence Strategic Update: "'[G]rey-zone' is one of a range of terms used to describe activities designed to coerce countries in ways that seek to avoid military conflict. Examples include using para-military forces, militarization of disputed features, exploiting influence, interference operations and the coercive use of trade and economic levers. These tactics are not new. But they are now being used in our immediate region against shared interests in security and stability. They are facilitated by technological developments including cyber warfare."[76] While the document mentions 'grey-zone operations', it fails to specify how partners such as Indonesia or India can fit into a regional response, focusing instead on viewing security through a "muddy lens" of US–China relations.[77]

As with India, Indonesian leaders have not expressly articulated the threat posed by grey-zone activities, despite the country's maritime security challenges and the South China Sea problem. There is currently no official guidance that comments on grey-zone tactics in Indonesia. The "2015 Indonesian Defence White Paper" acknowledges the risks posed by using military assets in disputed waters, which, combined with the tactics used against Indonesia most recently in December 2019 and January 2020, can be seen as covering grey-zone activities. "South China Sea disputes have the potential to become an (open) armed

conflict caused by the parties involved in the South China Sea dispute who often use the military instrument to strengthen their claim, the involvement of countries outside the region in the conflict, and there being no institution or credible international organization in resolving the dispute."[78]

Absent clear strategic guidance on how to address grey-zone operations in a trilateral setting, a critical first step is for the three countries to discuss and develop a shared understanding of the threat posed by grey-zone operations and agree on how to approach them. Fundamental to this shared understanding will be a discussion on how to address such operations, particularly when they are sponsored, overtly or covertly, by a state government.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

While India, Australia and Indonesia grapple with a range of daily maritime security threats, they must also contend with long-term strategic challenges. Climate-induced maritime insecurities and maritime disputes have the potential to change established strategic elements of regional order, including land features and maritime borders, through processes such as the rising of sea levels and coastal erosion. Climate change can also exacerbate short-term maritime security challenges such as IUU fishing. This, in turn, allows some states to use fishing fleets, or exploit the guise of food security, in grey-zone campaigns in the South China Sea. Germanwatch's 2021 report on climate-change-linked extreme weather events found that Indo-Pacific states were significantly impacted. Japan was the fourth-most affected country in 2019 and India the seventh, both experiencing an increase in events such as flooding, heatwaves and cyclones.[79] Subject to seasonal natural disasters (flooding, fires, drought), India, Australia and Indonesia are also likely to face various climate insecurities soon. All three will be impacted by climate-induced maritime insecurities experienced by close partners and neighbouring states.

Climate-Induced Maritime Insecurity

Climate change is a serious concern not only for India, Australia and Indonesia but also for other Indian Ocean littorals and Pacific Island states, which are areas of strategic importance to the three countries. Resource exploitation, habitat degradation, maritime pollution, dumping of plastic debris and other forms of human activities—coupled with the effects of climate change—have contributed to the drastic decline in ocean health and ecosystem in the Bay of Bengal, South China Sea, and waters surrounding the South Pacific Islands. However, despite regional states recognising that climate change poses a significant threat to regional security and prosperity, few have made substantial efforts towards security cooperation or developing new forms of engagement to mitigate the impacts. There is an urgent need for cooperation on climate change, while also

acknowledging the constraints of regional post-pandemic economic recovery (particularly for developing states) as well as the domestic politics in each country.

For India, as geostrategist Brahma Chellaney highlights, despite efforts at adaptation, climate change will likely intensify inter-state and intra-state competition over natural resources such as water.[80] Climate-change-linked extreme weather events in the IOR, such as hurricanes, flooding and droughts, will become more frequent, spurring greater migration, particularly amongst poorer communities from the delta and coastal regions to the hinterland as well as across the ocean.[81]

According to recent assessments by the Indian government, the rate of rising sea levels in the North Indian Ocean are comparable to the rate of global sea-level rise of 3.3 mm/year during 1993–2017.[82] Another study finds that, by 2050, nearly 35 million Indians will be exposed to annual flooding, while 21 million Indians will need to internally migrate when the coastal regions they inhabit are permanently inundated by sea-level rise.[83] For lower-middle-income countries such as India, the annual economic losses due to coastal flooding (without adaptation) range from 1.5 to 2 percent of the annual GDP by the end of the century, depending on global average temperature rises.[84] Examining the impact on India's military strategy, Narula finds that rising sea levels render the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guards vulnerable, since the majority of their bases, headquarters, and hospitals are located in high-risk, coastline regions.[85] The disruption to these facilities impacts the readiness of India's defence forces as well as their ability to provide timely humanitarian assistance.[86]

With 85 percent of Australia's population living within 50 km of the coast, climate change will impact the country in economic, social and strategic terms. According to projections by Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, the island continent will experience more frequent and hotter days, rising sea levels, acidifying oceans, and more intense extreme rainfall events.[87] There is also likely to be longer drought periods over southern Australia, decreasing soil moisture from mid-century in the southern regions, and harsher bushfire seasons in southern and eastern Australia.[88] Rising sea levels will threaten coastal communities by intensifying the risks of coastal inundation, storm surge and erosion.[89] With 60,000 km of open coastline, rising sea levels will also significantly impact Australia's infrastructure, particularly transportation and communication, which are located around coastal areas where the majority of the country's population resides.[90]

The availability of Australia's maritime security resources is also directly impacted by climate-change-linked insecurity, with intense natural disasters increasingly drawing on defence resources. During the 2019–20 summer, every state in the country experienced

large-scale fires, an environmental catastrophe resulting in the burning of 10 million hectares of bush, the release of smoke haze, the destruction of small towns, and the death of over one billion animals.[91] In response to the domestic disaster, the government enacted Operation Bushfire Assist 2019–20, the largest-ever mobilisation of the Australian Defence Force (ADF).[92] At its peak, the operation engaged 6,500 ADF personnel and maritime capabilities, including the Navy's Bay class *HMAS Choules* landing ship, the amphibious *HMAS Adelaide* and the *MV Sycamore* training ship.[93] *HMAS Canberra* also remained on standby.[94] Such channelling of resources to control domestic climate disasters will eventually impact Australia's ability to conduct Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief (HADR) operations for maritime neighbours, particularly in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.[95]

Indonesia is likely to face six significant climate insecurities in the future, although the gradual impact has already started. These include a warmer climate and rising sea levels, droughts and food insecurity, energy insecurity and urbanisation, marine resource scarcity, mass migration and internal conflict, and natural disasters.[96] The country is at a high risk of experiencing flooding and droughts, and the pressures of resource and water scarcity, rising domestic demand and urbanisation further undermine Indonesia's food resilience. Moreover, climate change is said to be changing the country's seasonal cycle: already, Indonesia is experiencing its warmest temperature in recent decades. Due to the country's location between the Sunda Shelf (an extension of the Asian landmass) and the Arafura-Sahul Shelf (part of the combined Australian and New Guinean land mass), many of Indonesia's islands are vulnerable to high waves.

> “Climate change is a serious concern not only for India, Australia and Indonesia but also for other Indian Ocean littorals and Pacific Island states, which are areas of strategic importance to the three countries.”

The archipelago's sea levels are also changing. Research has shown that the sea level has risen by 8 mm/year in Indonesia. As a result of the rising sea levels, it has "lost" 24 small islands in just two years (2005–07) and is likely to witness the submergence of nearly 750–1,000 islands by 2050. Since 12 of these islands are Indonesia's outermost islands, this can have long-term implications for the country's maritime boundaries and issues related to

illegal fishing. The problem is exacerbated by extreme weather events induced by climate change, which not only killed at least 60 fishermen in 2010 but have also forced fishing boats to look for fish beyond the country's EEZs, including Australian waters. This could ignite regional tensions at a time when Indonesia's maritime boundaries are not fully delimited. These climate-induced challenges will further strain Indonesia's already depleted strategic resource and under-funded armed forces.

There is potential between the three countries to cooperate on climate change-related issues. However, significant domestic interests hinder such cooperation. Paramount amongst these is the immediacy and impact of COVID-19, which has forced national agendas to focus on relieving the health, social and economic crises brought on by the pandemic. Furthermore, domestic political resistance in all three countries was illustrated during the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) held in Glasgow in October–November 2021. Rather than phasing out coal, India allied with China in advocating for the term "phase-down" to be adopted. Australia, too, has refused to join the pledges to phase out coal and reduce methane emissions, and Indonesia has criticised a deal to end deforestation as "unfair," with the environment minister noting that the nation could not "promise what we can't do." Currently, Australia and Indonesia are the world's two largest coal exporters. India, for its part, is investing in the controversial Carmichael Adani mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin, not far from the Great Barrier Reef.

Some Indo-Pacific militaries and defence ministries have published documents acknowledging the critical "global threat multiplier" effect that climate change will have on regional security. From a security perspective, climate change will act both as a burden multiplier for regional countries' natural resources and socio-politico-economic infrastructure, and as a threat multiplier in their strategic international and domestic environment.[97] Strategic-level guidance across the three bilateral relationships either designates climate change as a "common concern" in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain or agrees to cooperation on protecting the maritime environment.[98] Therefore, the question is not whether climate change will have a significant security impact on India, Australia and Indonesia, but *how* it will impact the shared interests of these countries and in which areas they can work together to mitigate that effects.

There are three main areas where climate change will have security ramifications. First, *maritime environmental and fisheries protection.* Rising sea temperature linked to climate change is already impacting the growth of seagrass and killing coral reefs, crucial sites for certain fish types. An important step in socialising climate change as part of a maritime security agenda is to link declining fish stocks to IUU fishing and food security, as discussed above. Such discussions could lead to the development of regional agreements on managing environmental security, including climate-change-related threats, in the Indian Ocean.[99]

Second are issues related to land, EEZs and migration patterns. The rising tides have impacted the baselines from which EEZs are measured, thus calling into question their legality. More intense weather events also render certain places uninhabitable, impacting migration patterns in the Indo-Pacific.[100] Some suggest that the Australian Navy should help in the mapping of unfinished boundaries and baselines in the region, towards implementing a wider policy of freezing them.[101] Another challenge is the maintenance of low-lying naval bases, impacted by rising sea levels and coastal erosion.

Third, climate change impacts HADR operations due to intensifying weather events and natural disasters. In this context, cooperation between government agencies is already underway. However, India, Australia and Indonesia have yet to develop trilateral HADR engagement in the context of climate change. One important question to ask is whether the three can cooperate under the banner of the Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure launched by India, in building and/or retrofitting infrastructure to withstand disasters.

Maritime Disputes in the Indo-Pacific

Currently, there are no maritime disputes that directly involve all three countries, but bilateral maritime delimitation negotiations are ongoing. For example, Indonesia is in the process of negotiating its maritime boundaries with Australia, following the 2018 Timor Sea Maritime Boundary Treaty between Australia and Timor-Leste. The continental shelf boundaries between India and Indonesia in the Indian Ocean are already established but both have yet to determine their respective EEZs, particularly on the Indonesian border with India, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Any maritime dispute between another country and one of these three, could affect the other two. China's aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea disputes, for example, affect all three countries even as non-claimants. China has repeatedly used fleets conducting illegal fishing and employed maritime law-enforcement and coast-guard vessels to encroach into Indonesia's North Natuna Sea. This behaviour is concerning not only for Jakarta but also for Canberra and New Delhi, since it reorients Jakarta's strategic focus (and thus maritime assets) at the expense of formulating a deeper Indian Ocean strategy, for example.

The situation in the South China Sea has led to anxiety amongst regional countries including India, Australia and Indonesia. While India has been unwilling to participate in joint patrols, or Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) with the US Navy in the South China Sea, it has a presence in the Western Pacific with its multi-mission deployment.[102] India is also concerned about the possibility of the South China Sea problem extending further westwards towards the Eastern Indian Ocean. Indeed, there is a long-term concern that once China

has consolidated its domination of the South China Sea, "it will attempt to do so in the Indian Ocean."[103] For Australia, the militarisation of the South China Sea is a major concern, since the control over certain features can lead to control over important sea-lanes of communication. In strategic circles, uncertainty about the US's ability to enforce the regional order on its own or its resolve to defend its allies has led Canberra to develop strategies of collective order building, reflected in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update.[104] Debate continues as to whether Australia should engage in FONOPs.[105]

Thus, while maritime disputes in the Indo-Pacific do not directly affect all three countries evenly, these disputes are of long-term strategic significance—due to the potential for conflict and, when occurring in areas of maritime passage, the risks they pose to trade.

> "Any maritime dispute between another country and one of these three, could affect the other two. China's aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea disputes, for example, affect all three countries even as non-claimants."

IV
Crafting Maritime Cooperation Between India, Australia, and Indonesia

BASED ON THE PRECEDING analysis of the shared maritime security challenges, India, Australia and Indonesia should explore cooperation in three major areas: maritime diplomacy, maritime law enforcement, and maritime domain awareness (MDA).

MARITIME DIPLOMACY

In the context of regional leadership and their foreign policy conduct, the three share a form of "middle power diplomacy" and can be perceived as regional partners championing diplomacy over coercive means, rather than countries attempting to create a sphere of influence. The three can form a force as a regional security provider, specifically in dealing with non-traditional security issues, and continue efforts to prevent domination by any one country.

Bilateral Engagement: Balancing Each Side of the Triangle

For any trilateral cooperation to be successful in the long run, it is essential that the bilateral relations have a solid foundation to overcome any trust deficit. As noted in the 2020 report by the authors, "Indonesia–Australian ties have grown but are still punctured by occasional crises driven by domestic politics. India–Indonesia ties are the least developed, despite a Strategic Partnership Agreement between the two … India–Australia relations are perhaps the most promising."[106]

On the bilateral front, there has been significant progress in recent years, especially when it comes to the maritime component of the relationship. Being primarily maritime nations, all three are directly at the receiving end of the threats outlined above. Indeed, the vision statements India has inked with Australia and Indonesia prominently feature maritime cooperation. These statements and upgraded strategic agreements provide clarity about the priorities within bilateral cooperation and their accompanying plans of action set clear activities for deepening that cooperation. These activities could partially overcome the trust deficit between states by strengthening bilateral ties between agencies during times of diplomatic estrangement. A primary example of this is the relationship established between the Australian Federal Police and the Indonesian National Police after the 2002 Bali Bombings, which endured despite perennial bouts of diplomatic tension between Canberra and Jakarta.

India–Australia maritime cooperation has grown in recent years, including in defence exercises.[107] The past five years have seen bilateral ties on an upward trajectory, with increased bilateral naval exercises, high-level strategic dialogues, military exchanges and training, operational coordination, and some defence technology cooperation. During the first virtual summit between Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Scott Morrison in June 2020, the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement was signed and a shared vision for maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific announced.[108] The two countries have also signed an arrangement to increase collaboration on defence science and technology research.

In the Australian Government's budget, released on 6 October 2020, US$45.3 million was allotted to take forward the Australia–India Strategic Comprehensive Partnership. Australia now has a Liaison Officer stationed at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC–IOR) in Gurgaon, New Delhi. The Oceania division has just been created in the Ministry of External Affairs of India, which is expected to focus on Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Island countries, with Australia likely becoming its primary focus. The country is also keen to work alongside and partner with India in its IPOI. These developments provide an ideal departure point for India and Australia to further discuss shared interests in the Pacific Islands, particularly in the context of climate change.

India and Australia have also collaborated on maritime security through working-level exchanges, trilateral dialogues (the India-Australia-France and India-Australia-Japan trilateral meetings, for instance), Quad dialogues, and on the side-lines of various international forums and summits.[109] The two have frequently welcomed each other's vessels,[110] and have been participating in AUSINDEX, a major biennial bilateral exercise since 2015. AUSINDEX 2019 saw Indian and Australian navies working through a set of increasingly complex activities and scenarios involving command and control, communications, and maritime manoeuvre.[111]

Since Prime Minister Modi's visit in May 2018, India and Indonesia, too, have been working on improving defence and maritime cooperation, and have decided to hold annual summits along with ministerial and working groups. Further, the two nations have agreed to conduct regular defence interactions and have adopted the "Shared Vision on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between India and Indonesia." The latest iteration of bilateral naval exercises between the two, conducted in 2019, included a wide range of high-end manoeuvres and exercises.[112] Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto visited New Delhi in late July 2020 for a meeting with Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and the two agreed to take defence ties to the "next level of deliverables." It remains to be seen whether any of these rhetorical displays translate into concrete policies and deliverable outcomes.

In the context of Australia–Indonesia bilateral relations, Australia's "2016 Defence White Paper" articulated the need for forging better maritime cooperation: "Australia and Indonesia share maritime borders and enduring interests in the security and stability of Southeast Asia ... We have a mutual and abiding interest in the security and stability of the maritime domains that we share ..." [113] The 2015 joint communiqué from the third "Australia–Indonesia Foreign and Defence Ministers 2+2 Dialogue" notes: "As respectively the world's only island continent and the world's largest archipelagic state, located at the fulcrum of the Pacific and Indian oceans, Australia and Indonesia aspire to a secure maritime domain in which people, trade and the environment flourish."[114] Maritime ties deepened further in 2017, with Australia and Indonesia signing the Joint Declaration on Maritime Cooperation.

Existing diplomatic instruments such as the Australia–Indonesian Joint Declaration on Maritime Cooperation's Plan of Action, which implements the 2017 Joint Declaration, contain provisions to encourage such shared understandings. The Declaration supports enhanced dialogue on maritime interests, including the priority areas, namely, navy-to-navy talks, regular bilateral discussion of maritime issues to build shared understanding and explore areas of common interest; and increased engagement through trilateral, minilateral and multilateral mechanisms on maritime issues.[115] During Prime Minister Morrison's 2018 visit to Jakarta, the two countries agreed that the bilateral relationship should be elevated to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," focusing on maritime cooperation and Indo-Pacific peace and stability in the highlighted areas of cooperation.[116]

Elevating Trilateral Diplomacy

Since India, Australia and Indonesia already interact and cooperate on platforms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) or the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), there is potential that trilateral cooperation could be seen as duplicating the work of emerging minilaterals, resulting in nothing more than a "talking shop." However, this is an oversimplification and overlooks the advantages of the proposed trilateral. Currently, there are no three countries of an emerging or middle power status that have a greater stake and ability to contribute to Indian Ocean maritime security together. Unlike existing discussions with multiple participants, trilateral diplomacy will be focused and actionable, even if incrementally so.

The emerging trilateral diplomatic culture is a source of optimism in this context. The three countries have already engaged in trilateral dialogues and cooperative initiatives. Interactions under the trilateral framework are nascent for the time being but gradually growing even if limited to senior officials (See Table 1).[117]

Table 1: Official Milestones under the Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Framework

Year	Meeting
November 2019	The third Indonesia–Australian–India Senior Officials' Strategic Dialogue, New Delhi, India
September 2018	The second Indonesia–Australia–India Senior Officials' Strategic Dialogue, Canberra, Australia
November 2017	The first Indonesia–Australia–India Senior Officials' Strategic Dialogue, Bogor, Indonesia

These interactions between officials, including between their staff members, help build institutional ties and the confidence to discuss challenging issues such as grey-zone operations. The exchange of information could lead to a shared understanding of the Indo-Pacific's most pressing climate-change-related insecurities and the risks of escalating maritime disputes.

Other recent notable meetings include the trilateral maritime security workshop in 2019, and the virtual meeting of the foreign and defence ministers in September 2020. Australian High Commissioner to India Barry O'Farrell, during his speech at India's National Defence College in April 2020, noted that the three countries should identify new ways in which they can collaborate to become the "best possible custodians of the Indian Ocean." The focus on maritime security was scheduled to continue at the Foreign Ministers Meeting of India–Australia–Indonesia on the margins of the annual Raisina Dialogue during April 2021 in New Delhi. While the pandemic has delayed the meeting, attempts continue to be made in arranging for it.

In the current circumstances, greater trilateral engagement can begin on the side-lines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) talks.[118] In particular, the focus of such talks should be joint patrols, joint exercises in the Eastern Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to deal with issues of IUU fishing, maritime piracy, peacekeeping, counterterrorism, piracy, and HADR. There is scope for defence talks, to share experiences and lessons learned in engaging armed forces to deal with climate-change-related insecurities, either domestically or as part of regional assistance. Further, the naval heads of the three countries can also outline national measures and map out how some of the successful national measures can be replicated in the trilateral context.[119]

In the long term, this report proposes, the trilateral meetings can aim for the development of higher-level agreements that provide specific areas of cooperation. These are missing in the existing strategic-level documents. Inspiration for items on plans of action can be found in other jurisdictions. One important building block for trilateral cooperation for climate change is the "Australian Department of Foreign Affairs' 2019 Climate Change Action Strategy" (2020–25). It outlines the government's response to climate change through development assistance and, consistent with the "2016 Foreign Policy White Paper," has a focus on the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and South Asia.[120]

Coordination within Multilateral Forums

Diplomatically, all three countries have coordinated and collaborated on maritime security and cooperation as part of ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the EAS, the ADMM-Plus, and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF). They have also collaborated on IUU fishing

and maritime transnational crimes since 1994 at ASEAN Region Forum (ARF) meetings, and on human trafficking and maritime terrorism since 1997 through the IORA,[121] a platform that can be used to make more substantial contributions in future and will become increasingly important for regional maritime security. In particular, Jakarta's influence within the IORA is underappreciated by regional states, perhaps even by Indonesia itself. It has the potential to become a major force in association, the modest beginnings of which were demonstrated during Indonesia's chairmanship of the IORA (2015–17), when Jakarta was able to organise the group's first-ever leaders' summit in March 2017. Keeping this in mind, India and Australia should encourage Indonesia to play a more active role in the IORA and a greater coordinating role amongst the member countries. The only challenge is ensuring that Indonesia's consistent focus, energy, and resources are devoted to the IOR, relative to Southeast and Northeast Asia.

After the trilateral meeting of the defence ministers and the naval heads on the side-lines of the ADMM Plus, a next step can be trilateral dialogues and workshops under the IORA. The three nations can organise special meetings or summits to discuss sustainable fishing techniques and reduce IUU fishing. Further, India and Indonesia can conduct workshops to help other underdeveloped littorals that do not have the domestic legislation required to effectively counter IUU fishing. There is room to broaden the IORA's initiatives to enhance maritime safety and improve maritime security by aligning domestic IUU fishing efforts with regional norms and institutions.[122]

Under the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, India can initiate talks on coastal shipping and cruise tourism with Indonesia. This will support Indonesia's efforts to further mainstream IUU fishing agenda at the ASEAN level. At the 29th ASEAN Summit in September 2016, President Widodo noted that IUU fishing was a source of conflict amongst member states and that the existing ASEAN mechanisms were inadequate for solving the problem.[123] For now, Indonesia continues to focus on regional cooperation in the fight against IUU fishing and has even co-chaired two ARF workshops on the issue.

Efforts from India and Indonesia can also lead to a wider collaboration with Australia. For example, the "Regional Plan of Action (RPOA) to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices including Combating IUU Fishing in the Region," greenlighted by the fisheries ministers of 11 countries in May 2007, is jointly chaired by Australia and Indonesia, with the secretariat being based in Jakarta. The RPOA seeks to enhance the overall level of fisheries management and governance in Southeast Asia, with an emphasis on preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing.[124] It is a voluntary instrument and is officially recognised at the ministerial level of participating countries; however, it is neither a treaty nor legally binding. Australia and Indonesia also co-chair the Bali Process, which focuses on people smuggling, trafficking in persons, and related transnational crime. Given the connection between IUU fishing and

transnational crime, as discussed in previous sections, the Bali Process, of which India is a member, is another multilateral forum that can be used to tackle IUU-fishing-related modern-day slavery and trafficking.

Under the auspices of the IORA and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), an Indian Ocean Environmental Security Forum can be organised to bring together military officers and civilian officials from the IOR island nations and littorals as well as from Eastern African countries for discussions on climate change and environmental security. This will be akin to the US–Indo Pacific Command-sponsored Pacific Environment Security Forum. Under the banner of the IONS, the navies of the island countries can receive training to address climate-related risks at sea. The Bay of Bengal is emerging as an important maritime theatre and forms an important interest area for India, Australia as well as Indonesia. The three nations can form a working group on IUU fishing and disaster relief in the Pacific Islands Forum. India and Indonesia can also discuss mechanisms and areas to work together in the Bay of Bengal to ensure maritime safety and security, including the protection of marine life and resources.

> “India, Australia and Indonesia interact and cooperate on platforms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). There is potential that trilateral cooperation could be seen as duplicating the work of emerging minilaterals, resulting in nothing more than a “talking shop.”

Naval Confidence-Building and Cooperation

Given the challenges of maritime disputes discussed above, naval vessels from regional and extra-regional states can draw suspicion, impeding cooperation and exacerbating strategic concerns. The perception of “power projection and territorial expansion” associated with navies can thus be an additional challenge, as it might create a false impression of naval alliances or coalition-building against a third party.[125] On difficult issues such as grey-zone activities, the difficulties of naval cooperation might even be more pronounced and moving too

soon might further perceptions of targeting particular states. Thus, despite the imperative to act quickly, it will take some time to foster trilateral grey-zone naval cooperation. Given the already strong bilateral navy engagement between Australia–Indonesia, Indonesia–India, and Australia–India, it is preferable to gradually introduce common elements of grey-zone discussions into existing activities between each bilateral pair.[126] A suitable space for doing this might be during navy-to-navy talks or at professional military education institutions. Particularly during COVID-19 restrictions, activities such as coordinated patrols and virtual desktop exercises are also ideal for maintaining relationships between personnel while introducing grey-zone themes.

Currently, the Indian Navy faces several internal limitations. While it is now more networked and technologically enabled, it continues to suffer from budgetary constraints, negatively impacting India's future force planning and capability development. Further, the Indian Navy struggles with coordination and building synergies between various stakeholders. There is some precedence for naval cooperation involving India, but thus far mostly on a smaller scale, particularly when it comes to anti-piracy operations. These issues are further compounded in the context of naval cooperation to deal with the strategic challenges posed by China. Some scholars note that sustained dialogue would be required, involving India's various partners, to formulate an effective division of labour and burden-sharing for monitoring China's naval activities in the Indo-Pacific.[127] Overall, India seems ready, if not keen, to partner with other maritime powers in maintaining security in the Indian Ocean and the broader Indo-Pacific—and Indonesia and Australia should welcome this position.

Since Indonesia has been wary of joining any FONOP or joint patrols in the disputed waters of the South China Sea, India and Australia can contribute to its capacity-building by offering to supply or strengthen patrol boats, frigates or vessels, under cooperative joint ventures. The heads of the Indian and Australian navies can meet to develop training exercises for the Indonesian Navy. Further, the navies of the three countries can hold training exercises on HADR, Search and Rescue (SAR), and disaster management. Officer exchange programmes and training programmes for low-level officers can also be rolled out in the naval colleges of Madras and Goa, the Australian Command and Staff College in Canberra, and the Indonesian Navy's Command and Staff College (SESKOAL). Language training can be provided at these institutions: at SESKOAL, Indonesian language courses for Indian and Australian Naval officers stationed in Indonesia; in the Indian and Australian defence institutions, English language courses for Indonesian naval and coast guard officers.

MARITIME LAW ENFORCEMENT

In the context of maritime law enforcement, there are two important areas of cooperation between India, Australia and Indonesia. First, "white hull diplomacy," or civil maritime security

cooperation, comprising diplomatic avenues for the coast guard from the three countries to collaborate, coordinate, and cooperate on a wide range of shared challenges. Second, coast guard capacity-building, including a wide range of exercises, education, training, and asset-development initiatives to improve the operational proficiency and capability of the coast guards from the three countries to help them work together in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain. Currently, there is no trilateral framework for maritime law enforcement. While both Australia and Indonesia have jointly endorsed greater maritime cooperation with India at the Australia–Indonesia 2+2 Meeting in 2019, the following sections argue that the potential for cooperation largely exists within each side of the triangle: the bilateral ties between India and Indonesia, Australia and Indonesia, and India and Australia.

'White Hull Diplomacy' and Engagement

"White hull diplomacy," or civil maritime security cooperation and engagement, essentially takes place between the maritime law-enforcement or coast-guard agencies of two countries or more, to collectively address non-traditional security threats in the maritime domain.[128] In addition to daily operational goals, regular and institutionalised engagements between the coast guards of India, Australia and Indonesia can help reduce regional tension and strengthen the civil maritime Indo-Pacific security community. One of the key features of such interactions is the focus on non-threatening, "less politicised" challenges, such as SAR, law enforcement, maritime pollution, or HADR, since coast guard vessels tend to be lightly armed; have smaller crews; have relatively less tonnage; and are primarily concerned with social, resource and environmental security threats. [129] White hull diplomacy, in other words, is both an operational security tool and a strategic confidence-building mechanism.

Since the 2016 Indonesia–India Summit, maritime security and cooperation has been a prominent feature of the bilateral relationship.[130] Both countries acknowledge the need for increasing mutual capacity-building in SAR operations; establishing single points of contact to promote coast guard cooperation; and ensuring regular consultations, coordinated patrols, and joint exercises.[131] Numerous Indian vessels have visited Indonesia's shores since the mid-2000s, with recent engagements focusing on the Indonesian Coast Guard (BAKAMLA).[132] In 2020, the BAKAMLA and the Indian Coast Guard further signed an MoU that highlights "engagements in the domains of maritime law enforcement, maritime search and rescue, and marine pollution response. This is likely to entail exchange of information towards combating transnational maritime crimes, facilitation of coordinated search and rescue operations at sea and conduct of capacity-and capability-building activities."[133]

India and Indonesia have also undertaken coordinated patrols. The IND-INDO CORPAT dates to early 2002. Initially created to quell piracy and help tackle the separatist movement in Aceh, it has conducted 34 joint coordinated patrols as of 2020. However,

critics have noted the patrols' "low-level" nature (vessels and aircraft operated remain the same) and limited interoperability (command-and-control structures and units operate within respective maritime boundaries).[134]

The Australian Border Force (ABF) established cooperation agreements with the BAKAMLA in 2017 (extended in 2020).[135] Both agencies have also held five coordinated patrols along the Indonesia–Australia border to curb IUU fishing, people smuggling and human trafficking, transnational maritime crimes, as well as to promote greater maritime environmental protection. The fifth iteration of the patrols in May 2021, dubbed "Operation Gannet 5," included an MDA workshop.[136] In June 2021, the Indian Coast Guard joined a Maritime Security Desktop Exercise co-hosted by BAKAMLA and ABF, aimed at deepening officers' understanding of combating maritime security incidents according to international law and, as expressly stated by the commander of Australia's Maritime Border Command, supporting "long and enduring professional relationships with like-minded colleagues in our region and beyond."[137]

In terms of multilateral engagement, India, Australia and Indonesia participated in Combined Maritime Forces' 150, 151, and 152 operations that encompass the Arabian Gulf, the Suez Canal, and the Eastern Indian Ocean.[138] These operational experiences and opportunities, however, remain limited. Indeed, while regular multilateral naval exercises already exist in the Indo-Pacific Region—such as the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) or the Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) exercises—a similar venue to institutionalise regional coast guard cooperation has yet to take shape.[139]

There are several multilateral forums available for regional coast guards—including those in which India, Australia and Indonesia are members—to interact with one another. The Japan-initiated Heads of Asian Coast Guards Agencies Meetings (HACGAM), established in 2004, for example, has allowed all three states to discuss a wide range of maritime law-enforcement problems from smuggling to environmental protection, while exploring capacity-building initiatives to address them.[140]

This provides an important forum for 20 senior coast guard officials to meet annually for discussing civil maritime security issues and building trust amongst member states.[141] The HACGAM now focuses on SAR, marine environmental protection, preventing and controlling unlawful acts at sea, and capacity-building. Recent discussions have included topics such as the need for partnerships between coast guard agencies to deal with illegal poachers and the prevalence of IUU fishing.[142] The Coast Guard Global Summit, a new mechanism organised in 2018 and 2019, can also perhaps become an additional mechanism for further trilateral white hull diplomacy within multilateral settings.[143] These institutions remain relatively underdeveloped.

Another multilateral venue that can evolve to be an important strategic forum in future is the ASEAN Coast Guard Forum. The 5th ASEAN Maritime Forum in Danang (Vietnam), held in 2014, discussed the establishment of an ASEAN Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) as a platform for cooperation and coordination amongst the ASEAN Coast Guards and MLEAs.[144] The BAKAMLA has been eager to push for it, since such a forum can solidify its international recognition as the "sole representative" of Indonesia's MLEA and further secure its own domestic and bureaucratic standing vis-à-vis other MLEAs. Moreover, once the ACGF materialises, it can be expanded along the lines of the ADMM Plus to involve ASEAN's dialogue partners, which will include India and Australia. The forum is also interested in improving regional MDA and information sharing (discussed below).[145]

Coast Guard Capacity-Building

Based on the existing maritime security challenges, this report argues that coast guards should be at the forefront of maritime cooperation between India, Australia and Indonesia. It must be noted that the scope of operations for coast guards is well defined, albeit limited: they are organisationally (and operationally) optimised for lower-intensity operations, requiring no high-end war-fighting capabilities. Their focus on maritime constabulary operations requires a skill set associated with individual and unit-level operations, which use small, fast craft and ensure effective enforcement of civil regulatory frameworks.[146] Further, coast guards of regional littoral states are still in different stages of development and capabilities, which prevents the establishment of fully functional regional collaboration, cooperation, and interoperability to deal with the existing range of threats.

Of the three countries, Indonesia's BAKAMLA is perhaps the "youngest" and most underdeveloped coast guard. One fundamental challenge for BAKAMLA is the lack of adequate resources: with just 10 vessels, the agency is currently at 30 percent of its ideal maritime law-enforcement capacity. Thus, Australia and India are in a stronger position to support and provide various coast guard capacity-building programmes for Indonesia, particularly in terms of equipment procurement. Most of the existing programmes are located within each of the bilateral ties between the three nations. While all three participated in a unified capacity-building programme in 2019 called the "Trilateral Indian Ocean Maritime Security Workshop," no overarching trilateral framework has yet been formulated.[147]

Within the India–Indonesia bilateral, the 2001 Defence Cooperation Agreement mandated both states to regularly share information, exercises, education, and training as well as collaborate in the areas of defence technology, human resources, and operational capabilities. This was followed by a decision in 2005 to increase additional maritime security training and education opportunities. However, it remains unclear whether such capacity-building programmes have been fully resourced and operationalised, since the focus remains on the

coordinated patrol.[148] Analysts attribute the stagnation of education and exercise between the two coast guards to their varying positions within their states' executive structures.[149]

Meanwhile, Australia–India joint exercises and training programmes are increasingly promising in recent years, despite being described earlier as a "significant gap in Indian Ocean exercises."[150] In 2019, ICGS Shaurya and its 110 officers and sailors participated in a joint exercise with HMAS Bathurst, the ABF's Maritime Border Command, and the ADF's Northern Command in Darwin. The exercises revolved around SAR; Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS); pollution response; and cross-deck exercises.[151] Indonesia–Australia joint exercises and training have also shown promise. The annual Gannet patrols mentioned earlier function as joint exercises for the BAKAMLA and ABF (as well as other maritime law-enforcement agencies). It should be noted, however, that the scale and intensity of Indonesia–Australia coast guard engagement is minuscule compared to the wider military-to-military engagement programme.

Multilaterally, India, Australia and Indonesia have participated in numerous joint exercises and training events. All three participated in the 2018–19 Search and Rescue Communication Exercises (SARCOMEX)[152] and the Singaporean Navy's Maritime Information Sharing Exercise in 2017, 2018 and 2019.[153] These multilateral venues highlight the possibility that India, Australia and Indonesia do not yet need to develop their own coast guard capacity-building programmes, especially since they lack the strategic appetite and resources to create a concrete trilateral maritime framework. Instead, they can rely on existing regional initiatives, such as those developed by Japan over the past two decades.

In 2004, Japan developed the Asian Maritime Security Initiative and hosted 16 regional countries to discuss regional piracy. In 2005, the high-profile hijacking of a Japanese tugboat in Southeast Asian waters provided the catalyst for Japan to develop and fund the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) in collaboration with the Government of Singapore, which now works in close contact with the Regional Cooperation Agreement against Piracy and Armed Robbery (ReCAAP),[154] established in 2006. The ReCAAP's information-sharing centre is currently hosted in Singapore. India, Australia and Indonesia have most frequently "trained together" on maritime law enforcement under various exercises and programmes held by ReCAAP, although Indonesia has remained an observer. The three states have organised or co-hosted several capacity-building workshops under the ReCAAP in recent years[155] as well as participated in the Focal Point Senior Officers' Meeting, later renamed the "Capacity Building Senior Officers' Meeting."

For now, India, Australia and Indonesia can rely on pre-existing capacity-building initiatives for regional coast guards as a stop-gap measure. The exercises and engagement actors discussed here can not only strengthen the operational readiness of their coast guards in dealing with a wide range of challenges, but also help the three nations to form habits of cooperation and encourage familiarity between agencies both within the countries and across.

> “Based on current maritime security challenges, this report argues that coast guards should be at the forefront of maritime cooperation between India, Australia, and Indonesia.”

MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS

Maritime Domain Awareness is one of the prerequisites of effective maritime governance—and therefore the potential lynchpin of maritime cooperation between India, Australia and Indonesia. MDA simply refers to activities that lead to a shared picture and interpretation of everything connected to the maritime domain.[156] It involves “finding the ships and submarines of friends and foes, understanding the entire supply chain of cargoes, identifying people aboard vessels, understanding the infrastructures within or astride the maritime domain, and identifying anomalies and potential threats in all these areas.”[157]

The challenges of forming a common MDA between the three countries—and the region in general—stems partly from the difficulties surrounding the nature and type of information necessary to form wider MDA.[158] First, reporting on incidents at sea, which might include piracy or IUU fishing, can lead to different ideas about the maritime domain. Second, there are difficulties in recording and sharing movements at sea, particularly of ships and vessels provided by tracking systems such as the Automatic Identification System and the Long-Range Identification and Tracking System. Third, there are issues around sharing and exchanging sensitive data such as data from criminal investigations or intelligence operations.

Since these challenges hinder effective maritime governance, India, Australia and Indonesia must find a common strategic framework and operational picture on MDA. In this context, there are three areas of potential cooperation. First, all three countries should make efforts to develop a shared strategic picture of the maritime domain that they need to secure and govern, as well as the underlying security challenges. Second, they should make efforts to develop a common operating picture of the

maritime domain, including information-sharing. Third, all three countries will benefit from a bottom-up understanding of the maritime domain by engaging with and receiving input from Track-2 initiatives including forums, universities, think tanks and research institutions working on maritime security challenges.

Shared Strategic Picture

For India, Australia and Indonesia to work together, they must have a shared strategic picture of the grey-zone challenges in their maritime domain. All three countries have had to deal with the different facets of the maritime grey-zone challenges posed by China, whether in the Indian Ocean or the South China Sea. From a shared understanding of grey-zone operations, the countries might seek to establish more dialogues between civilian partners about grey-zone activities to find shared redlines,[159] since such operations often start with civilian actors, necessitating as a response the deployment of civilian assets before military ones.

The shared strategic picture of the maritime domain naturally begins with crafting a trilateral maritime security cooperation framework, which should ideally list the common challenges such as grey-zone activities. While crafting such a framework, the internal challenges over maritime governance within each nation must be accounted for as well, particularly the varied nature of maritime security governance—and the differing roles of the navies and coast guards—as well as the various bureaucratic cultures and politics.

To be sure, MDA is less of a technological problem than a strategic, social and political one. Challenges surrounding MDA include problems of trust, identity, organisational cultures, interests and bureaucratic routines, as well as power constellations or political interests.[160] It is necessary to foster a willingness to share data, to engage in joint interpretation, and to use these interpretations for action.[161] Where the data comes from and how they are interpreted involve different agencies—each with its own organisational interest, culture, and procedures.

Thus, national working groups that include representatives from across a range of relevant government agencies from the three countries could act as an important building block for trilateral iterations. Establishing shared definitions and clearly defining roles between coast guard elements and navies are critical first steps. Government departments and policy advisors could incorporate findings from Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues into Track 1 agendas (discussed below). Minimising misunderstandings between bureaucracies and services within each country will maximise the fruitfulness of trilateral discussions between different bureaucratic cultures and diverging strategic interests.

There are valuable lessons to be gained from the experiences of other minilateral groupings on maritime issues. For instance, not only does the European-led Maritime Surveillance Mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) have a clear mandate, but European states also frame participation as not targeting any one country.[162] This kind of political framing helps allay concerns that the three countries are complicit in targeting one state.[163] The careful messaging of the EMASOH is in stark contrast to the US-led Maritime Security Coalition Operational Sentinel, which then-US Defence Secretary Esper had admitted was to "deter Iran."[164] For cooperation on grey-zone activities, some states have a track record of such tactics; however, agreeing on an understanding of grey-zone and redlines helps to establish norms. This flexible approach results in outcomes that are not tied to any formal groupings, such as the Quad. In short, efforts and resources should be put into not only developing a shared strategic picture between India, Australia, and Indonesia over grey-zone challenges, but also ensuring a coherent strategic communication of that shared picture.

Common Operating Picture

While the three countries must develop a common maritime security framework, there should be some degree of flexibility for each to enact efficient collaboration, coordination, and cooperation. While maritime information and intelligence-sharing mechanisms are becoming increasingly common, in bilateral agreements as well as various multilateral and national information fusion centres, maritime data-transparency initiatives and coast guard communication and sharing mechanisms remain largely ad-hoc and under-institutionalised across the region.

India, Australia and Indonesia have different opportunities, challenges and capabilities surrounding their MDA. Indonesia, the largest archipelagic state with more than 13,000 islands located at the heart of the Indo-Pacific maritime domain, faces the toughest MDA challenge. The country made the vessel monitoring system (VMS) mandatory for "any person performing business and/or activities on fishery management" in its waters, with a directive to standardise VMS operating procedures, and has set up a fisheries-vessel-monitoring centre. In 2017, Indonesia became the first state to publicly share its national VMS data on the Global Fishing Watch's online platform.[165] Further, under a 2015 MMAF regulation, Indonesia requires all vessels exceeding 30 gross tonnage to be equipped with VMS transmitters. The idea behind such transparency is to increase societal participation in monitoring fishery activities and preventing IUU fishing. However, to avoid unintended consequences (e.g., overfishing in some spots where most vessels fish), the government has declared that the publicly available data will not be "real-time" information.[166]

Indonesia is also increasingly placing MDA as a central feature of its maritime engagement with regional partners, including India and Australia. As noted before, however, there is neither a trilateral maritime framework between the three countries nor an MDA agreement. Instead, there is bilateral cooperation and engagement surrounding MDA. Indonesia, for example, is exploring the possibility of signing a "White Shipping Agreement" with India.[167] The absence of such an agreement is perhaps one of the missing pieces in the efforts to implement the Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation, which specifically highlights the need for greater geodetic information-sharing and the joint development of early warning systems.[168] In the area of maritime piracy, Indonesia and India are already engaged in information-sharing.

Australia and India, meanwhile, operationalised their White Shipping Agreement in 2017, a result of India's greater emphasis on MDA following the Mumbai maritime terror attack in 2008. However, while the agreement allows signatories to access a common platform operated by India, it neither allows for the sharing of data with other signatories (e.g., India–France) nor leads to the establishment of a common operating picture.[169]

In 2017, Indonesia and Australia established a broader framework in the form of the Joint Declaration on Maritime Cooperation. It includes provisions on coordination and communication in SAR operations, the exchange of information and hosting of capacity-building programmes in combating transnational crimes, and cooperation in maritime security education and research.[170] The declaration also led to the signing of an MoU by BAKAMLA and the ABF in 2018, focused on information-sharing relating to IUU. Critics argue that the operationalisation of the MoU is still limited, and that information-sharing happens on a case-by-case basis.[171] The current limitations notwithstanding, Australia is working on creating a "maritime neighbourhood watch scheme" that involves traditional allies and emerging powers such as India and Indonesia.[172]

While there is no pan-Indo-Pacific MDA mechanism that allows Indonesia, India and Australia to work closer together, the three countries can draw from the existing Southeast Asian efforts on that front. The centres based in Singapore—ReCAAP's Information Sharing Centre (ISC) and the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) operated by the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN)—and Malaysia—the Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB)—have become prototypes for how to organise regional information sharing.[173] India, Australia, and Indonesia should take their first MDA collaborative and cooperative steps within these existing regional efforts.

The report has already discussed ReCAAP's role in facilitating collaborative workshops and training for regional countries, including India, Australia, and Indonesia. The IFC,

meanwhile, takes a broader, multi-issue and real-time approach to information-sharing, with linkages to Indonesian, Indian and Australian agencies (and 35 others). Each of these three nations has sent international liaison officers to the IFC, which is integrated into the Open and Analysed Shipping Information System, the Western Pacific Naval Symposium Regional Maritime Information Exchange, and the ASEAN Information Sharing Portal. However, the IFC may be better suited for incidence response than for early threat detection.[174]

India has also established an information fusion centre in 2018—the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)—to which the member states of the IORA, including Australia and Indonesia, have access. Australia has since sent a liaison officer to the IFC-IOR in 2021 and Indonesia may follow suit.[175] Finally, Indonesia has also recently established the Maritime Information Centre (MIC) in 2020. While the MIC is evidently still very much in its infancy, there is potential for collaboration and coordination down the line with the IFC-IOR, especially given that both states have shared interests in tackling IUU fishing, maritime trafficking and pollution, as well as improving MDA across the IOR. Whether these individual efforts and bilateral engagement could be leveraged into a coherent trilateral framework remains to be seen.

Track-2 Initiatives

The above top-down approaches are complementary to unofficial or bottom-up ones. In their 2020 report, the authors recommended Track-2 workshops, centred on capacity-building, maritime safety and security for Indo-Pacific coast guards led by India, Australia and Indonesia. Given the uncertainty generated when civilian vessels swarm another state's assets (civilian or military), conversations around maritime safety must attempt to incorporate grey-zone scenarios and involve maritime law-enforcement agencies. The authors noted that joint research on maritime studies involving think tanks and universities from India, Australia and Indonesia can help strengthen the bottom-up approaches to maritime security architecture-building. The publication of research that could then be shared in the media or public domain will help enhance the popular understanding of government measures against grey-zone activities.

Workshops on UNCLOS familiarity amongst the maritime security practitioners of the Indo-Pacific Region, led by Indonesia in collaboration with India and Australia, are worth pursuing. Future collaboration can happen between the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras and the Department of Aquatic Resources Management of Institut Pertanian Bogor, Indonesia for short-term courses on aquatic resources and climate change. Joint research can also be conducted between these universities and

institutes. Such courses and capacity-building initiatives can help the three countries better plan for future security impacts of climate change.

The Indian, Australian and Indonesian governments can support jointly funded research studies focusing on maritime security, while research scholars exchange and professor exchange programmes can be held between the Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), the Indonesian Defence University, the University of Wollongong, and the Australian National University. Part of the funding can be channelled into Track-2 dialogues on maritime security cooperation, involving the leading think tanks from India, Australia and Indonesia.

Further joint research projects can be funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, or KEMENLU), and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to explore underdeveloped areas of cooperation between the three maritime democracies, with standalone research projects undertaken on each of the maritime security challenges highlighted in this report.

There is tremendous potential in advancing marine research in the Pacific for sustainable energy. With Australia taking the lead, India and Indonesia's contribution to knowledge and adaptation on resilience, adaptation and mitigation can strengthen their relations. The three nations can initiate a cooperative framework focusing on issues such as disaster risk resilience, climate-smart fishing practices, and the potential of renewable energy in selected countries of the region.

V
Challenges and Policy Recommendations

SEVERAL CHALLENGES CURRENTLY affect cooperation between the three nations discussed here. For instance, between India and Indonesia, there is a lack of deep strategic trust. That the white shipping agreement between the two countries has been proposed but is yet to be signed is one example of that problem. Another issue is that the two nations view the China challenge differently and each seems to have little strategic knowledge and empathy for the other's concerns. For Southeast Asian littorals, the concern of sovereignty has often impeded cooperation in the maritime domain. Another challenge is Indonesia's reluctance to look beyond ASEAN as a tool for the management of the wider maritime regional order. But to prevent the region from becoming an exclusive playing field for the US and China, it is necessary for regional states to collectively strengthen a shared vision of a rules-based order that they desire for the Indo-Pacific. As part of this collective responsibility, Indonesia, Australia and India can deepen their engagement in trilateral maritime security. The following is a summary of the policy recommendations for the three nations to consider in their efforts towards increased trilateral cooperation based on the previous sections above.

General

1. The three countries can convene a series of Track 2 and 1.5 meetings to formulate a "Trilateral Maritime Cooperation Framework" document that can become the basis for a future series of policies and programmes, through which the three countries can collaborate, coordinate, and cooperate across different maritime challenges.

2. Meetings between the defence ministers of the three countries can be conducted on the side-lines of the ADMM Plus meetings, which can then be expanded to an annual "Trilateral Defence Ministers Meeting." Similarly, there can be an annual trilateral naval heads meeting on the side-lines of the IONS, to discuss maritime security issues in the Indo-Pacific.

3. Based on the ministerial meetings, trilateral shared vision statements of maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific can be developed.

Specific
1. Maritime Diplomacy

Bilateral

Short Term

1. India and Indonesia can work together bilaterally to deal with the problems of IUU fishing and maritime piracy in the Eastern Indian Ocean.

2. Australia and Indonesia can collaborate to contribute to the training and capacity-building of Pacific Island nations in areas such as disaster relief and climate-smart fishing practices.

3. India and Australia can collaborate on the capacity-building of Western Indian Ocean island-states such as Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh—in the field of blue economy, providing naval ships and coast-guard vessels, and conducting trainings for naval and coast-guard officers. This will ensure that both countries gain a greater presence in this part of the maritime theatre, where China is rapidly increasing its footprint.

4. India and Indonesia can also form an expert group on "Disaster Relief and Disaster Preparedness," with the research focusing on natural disasters in Western Sumatra and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Long Term

1. Australia and Indonesia can form a working group on IUU fishing and disaster relief in the Pacific Islands Forum.

2. India and Indonesia can form a "Maritime Preparedness Centre" in Aceh for disaster risk resilience and joint rescue operations for disasters originating in Western Sumatra and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

3. Australia and Indonesia can establish a Maritime Preparedness Centre in Papua New Guinea for disaster risk resilience and joint rescue operations, to protect against disasters originating in any of the Pacific Island countries.

Trilateral

Short Term

1. A trilateral vision statement, or a statement of action for maritime cooperation, should be issued in the Indo-Pacific.

2. A forum can be established on the theme of "Indian Ocean Environmental Security" to bring together military and civil officials from the Indo-Pacific to tackle relevant security issues in the IOR.

3. The three countries can form an Indo-Pacific maritime security group to discuss grey-zone activities in the Indo-Pacific. This group can also involve other important players in the region, such as Japan, the US, France, Germany, the UK and Canada.

Long Term

1. The three nations can establish and head a development finance institution, in collaboration with other countries such as the US, the UK, Japan, France and Germany. The institution will work under India's Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI) Initiative in the island nations and the littorals countries of the Indian Ocean, e.g., Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Seychelles and the Pacific Island nations.

2. A climate change action group can be formed for the Indo-Pacific countries, in conjunction with other like-minded nations in the Indo-Pacific, to provide training to fishermen communities in the underdeveloped littoral countries of the IOR on sustainable fishing practices as well as methods to prevent ocean temperatures from rising.

Multilateral

Short Term

1. The three nations can annually convene the IORA Leaders' Summit, initiated by Indonesia in collaboration with the chair of the organisation.

2. Dialogues and workshops can be arranged at the IORA over a wide range of regional issues, such as climate change, counterterrorism, piracy, IUU fishing, HADR.

3. Member countries of the IORA can be persuaded to install VMS transmitters in all vessels exceeding 30 Gross Tonnage. The idea behind this is to increase transparency in monitoring fishery activities and preventing IUU fishing.

4. India and Indonesia can also conduct workshops on the platform of the IORA to help other underdeveloped littorals who do not yet have domestic legislation to effectively counter IUU fishing.

Long Term

1. An IORA statement on the Indo-Pacific can be published, mapping out a common strategic and operating picture by highlighting maritime threats and the measures to be undertaken.

2. IORA member states can be persuaded to share information regarding their fishing vessels on an IORA Fishing Watch Platform (established in tandem with the member and the dialogue countries) through the VMS to ensure transparency and curb the problem of rising cases of IUU fishing in the Indian Ocean.

Naval Confidence-Building

Short Term

1. The navies of the three countries can hold training exercises, with a special focus on HADR, SAR, and disaster management in the Indian Ocean.

2. Officer exchange programmes and training programmes for low-level officers can take place in the naval colleges of Madras and Goa, the Australian Command and Staff College, and Indonesia's SESKOAL. Indonesian language courses for Indian and Australian Naval officers stationed in Indonesia can be offered at SESKOAL, and English language training for Indonesian naval and coast guard officers in Indian and Australian defence institutions.

Long Term

1. Trilateral coordinated patrols can be conducted in the Sunda and Lombok straits bordering the Indonesian archipelago, the Bay of Bengal, and the Andaman Sea.

2. Maritime Law Enforcement

White Hull Diplomacy

Short Term

1. Bilateral engagement, exercises, and education and training amongst the coast guard and maritime law-enforcement agencies can be increased in frequency.

2. Coordination and collaboration can be encouraged between the countries in multilateral coast guard or maritime law-enforcement venues.

Long Term

1. A framework can be formulated for trilateral coordinated patrol and exercises around SAR or HADR.

2. A framework can develop for trilateral coordination and collaboration on various regional maritime law-enforcement forums, both at the track-1 and track-2 levels.

Coast Guard Capacity-Building

Short Term

1. Australia and India can support and provide various coast guard capacity-building programmes for Indonesia within each respective bilateral framework.

2. The three nations can increase the frequency of joint exercises and training amongst coast guards and maritime law-enforcement agencies within their respective bilateral frameworks.

Long Term

1. Formulating a trilateral framework can be useful for a regional education and training centre based in Indonesia. India can also host officers from regional coast guards and other maritime law-enforcement agencies.

3. Maritime Domain Awareness

Shared Strategic Picture

Short Term

1. National working groups can be established, which will include representatives from across a range of relevant maritime law government agencies from the three countries. These groups can meet annually in each of the three countries on a rotational basis, to discuss a wide range of maritime security policy challenges.

Long Term

1. A framework can be formulated for trilateral maritime information- and intelligence-sharing, involving regional information fusion centres. The three countries can start over a specific set of information (e.g., piracy or IUU fishing) before expanding to a broader set of maritime information.

2. Australia and India can also supply data through the VMS on Global Fishing Watches' Online Platform.

Common Operating Picture

Short Term

1. The three nations can conduct Track-2 research on the challenges of the maritime domain faced by them and explore the potential technological and diplomatic solutions.

2. Each pair can explore bilateral agreements on intelligence-sharing, focusing on the data gathered from maritime law-enforcement operation and prosecution.

3. The three countries can draw from the existing Southeast Asian efforts on regional MDA to have closer trilateral information sharing and exchange dialogue, coordination, and collaboration.

4. An Indonesian Liaison officer can be stationed in the Indian IOR-IFC, as Australia did in 2020.

Long Term

1. The possibility of crafting a trilateral white shipping agreement between the three countries can be explored.

2. A trilateral mutual logistics sharing agreement can be drawn up between the three.

Track-2 Initiatives

Short Term

1. Workshops can be conducted on UNCLOS familiarity amongst the maritime security practitioners of the Indo-Pacific Region, led by Indonesia and in collaboration with India and Australia.

2. Jointly funded research studies (focusing on maritime security) and professor-exchange programmes can be facilitated between the Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies (JNU), the Indonesian Defence University, and the University of Wollongong (Australian National University).

3. Track-2 level dialogues on maritime security cooperation can be held between India, Australia and Indonesia, involving the leading think tanks from the different cities from these nations.

Long Term

1. Joint funded research projects from the DFAT, KEMENLU, and MEA can be initiated to explore new and underrepresented areas for fostering trilateral cooperation between the three maritime democracies.

VI
Conclusion

THIS REPORT HAS EXPLORED the areas that have the greatest potential for trilateral cooperation between India, Australia and Indonesia. These domains are likely to yield the most benefit to all three countries, individually and collectively, as well as to the region. Such trilateral cooperation will be designed to complement existing regional forums. The aim is for the synergy and cooperative spirit that is already being demonstrated by India, Australia, and Indonesia to provide a model for progress and allow them to redress the negative perceptions of regionalism. The Quad, for example, is often associated with containment and lack of neutrality; forums such as ASEAN, meanwhile, continue to be constrained by internal norms. Areas omitted from the discussion—such as maritime pollution from shipping, particularly oil spills, and land waste—are no less important to all three countries but can be tackled using either existing means or once a trilateral framework is more fully developed.

Overall, the progress in trilateral cooperation will be determined by the three countries' willingness and capacities for trilateral maritime cooperation. It is likely that cooperation on various security issues will remain uneven. Some issues might be easier to address, particularly those for which mechanisms for cooperation have already been established between familiar actors; others will require slower and more concerted efforts to overcome political resistance and achieve even marginal steps in the immediate term. For instance, in some cases, offshore activities such as joint patrols or exercises might be more challenging to develop than onshore exercises such as Track-2 dialogues. In other cases, the viability of an offshore activity will be enabled by the development of a confidence-building onshore activity, e.g., a desktop planning exercise.

This report does not seek to place the US–China strategic competition as the fulcrum of India–Australia–Indonesia cooperation, even as it is an important strategic undercurrent. All three countries should tackle the short- and long-term maritime challenges discussed in this report and continue to strengthen cooperation, irrespective of fluctuations in US–China ties. The idea is to build a functional framework of trilateral cooperation that is not determined by or predicated on the behaviour of any single actor or relationship in the Indo-Pacific. While the agenda for the trilateral is likely to evolve according to the strategic environment, maritime cooperation between India, Australia and Indonesia is crucial to maintaining a stable and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, for the prosperity and security of all nations in the region.

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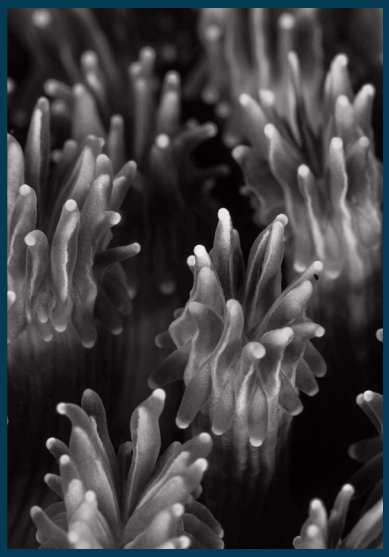
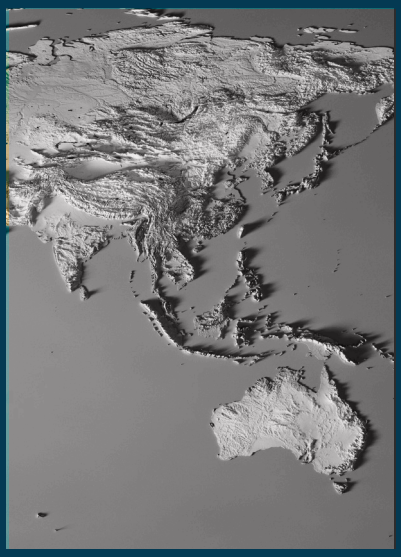
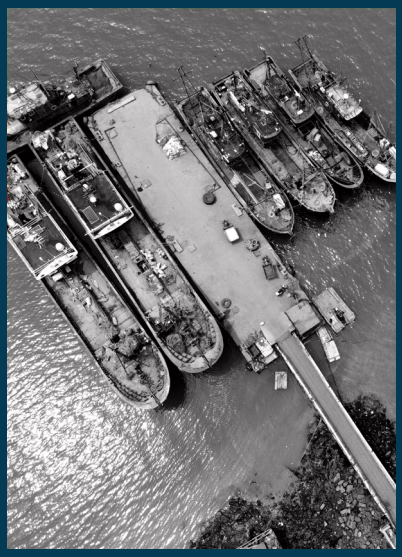

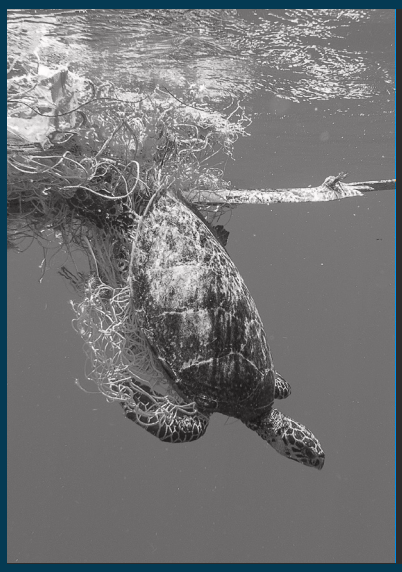

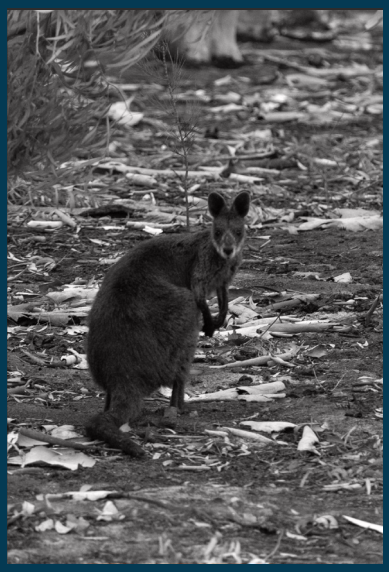

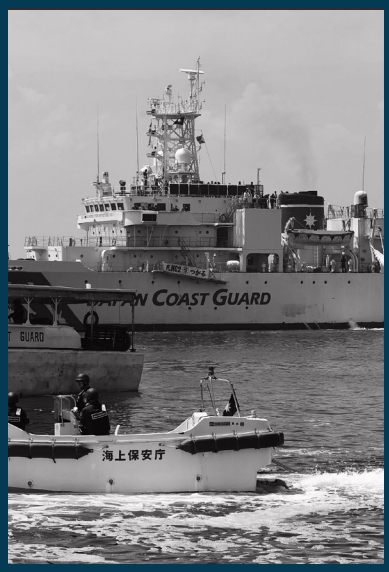
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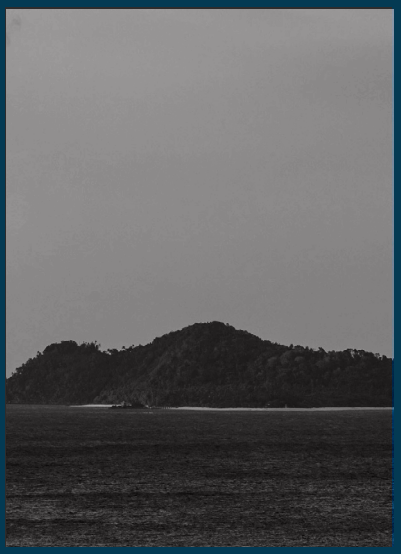
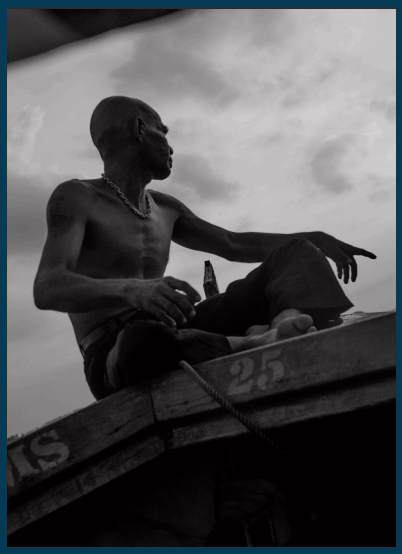

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