

# Briefing Memo

## **Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific and the Way Forward for Maritime Cooperation: QUAD-ASEAN Partnership**

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### **Introduction**

On June 12, 2018, the first U.S.-North Korea summit meeting was held in Singapore. It laid a path towards the easing of North Korea's nuclear and missile issues that escalated tension in 2017, and momentum is building for a turnaround in the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region. Meanwhile, in disregard of these developments, the downward spiral between the United States and China is becoming a reality.

On May 23, the United States retracted an invitation to China to the 2018 Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise. Regarding the reasons for not inviting China which participated in the exercise in 2014 and 2016, the United States explained that China had heightened tensions by deploying anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles on the Spratly Islands and landing a bomber on Woody Island, the largest of the Paracel Islands.

Furthermore, the United States has maintained its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, carrying out a freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) around the Paracel Islands on May 27 and flying B-52 bombers over the Spratly Islands on June 5.

On June 2, at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, U.S. Secretary of Defense Mattis sharply criticized China for its continued militarization of artificial features in the South China Sea and implementing an "intimidation and coercion" strategy in the Indo-Pacific region.

The United States and China, locked in an intensifying rivalry, are no doubt still the major actors in the maritime security of the Indo-Pacific region. However, attention needs to be given to the four countries of Japan, the United States, Australia, and India—the so-called QUAD (Quadrilateral)—and its relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) member states that surround them. The reason is that the four countries held security consultations on the margins of the 12th East Asia Summit in Manila on November 12, 2017 and reaffirmed the importance of QUAD for the first time since 2007. The question is what kind of cooperative relations the countries can establish for the peace and stability of the region and what practical activities they can conduct.

This article aims to gauge the features of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region and arrive at a way forward for maritime cooperation. First, it will distill the features of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" of China's Belt and Road Initiative. It will then analyze the relationship between QUAD and ASEAN in light of the maritime security policies of the QUAD countries. Finally, it will shed light on the way forward for maritime cooperation based on the features of the maritime exercises in recent years.

### **1. Features of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road**

In October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the concept for the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in a speech to the Indonesian parliament and stressed that China would strengthen maritime cooperation and partnership with ASEAN member states. President Xi also indicated that the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund set up in November 2011 would be utilized and proposed the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

On May 21, 2014, at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), President Xi stated that Asian economies are brimming with dynamism and security cooperation has made dramatic progress despite difficulties. President Xi went on to announce the "New Asian Security Concept" and underlined China's

leadership in Asian affairs, stating that “Asia’s security must be protected by Asians.”

On March 28, 2015, China’s National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce released “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road,” the first official document of the Belt and Road Initiative. It sets out the basic principles of: 1) peace and cooperation; 2) openness and inclusiveness; 3) mutual learning; and 4) mutual benefit and win-win. In addition, it calls for promoting practical cooperation in all fields and building a community of shared interests, destiny, and responsibility that realizes “mutual political trust, economic integration, and cultural inclusiveness.” As can be seen, the document underscores the community between China and relevant countries.

With regard to the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, China’s NDRC and State Oceanic Administration also unveiled the “Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative” on June 20, 2017 and proposed the following to coastal countries: with the theme of sharing a blue space and developing the blue economy, China and the coastal countries will give priority to protecting the marine ecological environment, materializing maritime reciprocity and interconnectivity, promoting the development of the marine economy, maintaining maritime security, furthering marine science research, implementing cultural exchanges, and jointly engaging in maritime governance, and will realize joint development that achieves harmony between man and the ocean by jointly pursuing a path of green development, jointly carving out a path of ocean-based prosperity, jointly creating a path of security, jointly building a path of wisdom and innovation, and jointly seeking a path of collaborative governance. The Vision thus makes clear that China intends to promote cooperative relations in a range of fields, including security, economy, science, and culture, under the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road concept. Here too, joint efforts between China and the coastal countries are consistently emphasized.

China’s naval capability enhancements along with expanded and stepped-up military operations have been remarkable. Furthermore, China has undeniably pursued maritime infrastructure development, such as ports in the Indo-Pacific region. According to the latest report on the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), distinctive trends are found for the four areas of Kyaukpyu in Myanmar, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Gwadar in Pakistan, and Chabahar in Iran. Kyaukpyu is situated in a key location, strategically and economically, connecting China and the Indian Ocean. There are fears over the entry of Chinese state-owned companies into Kyaukpyu and the town being used for Chinese military access. The town, above all, has the advantage of allowing the avoidance of the Strait of Malacca. As for Hambantota, a 99-year lease was given to China as its loan exceeded Sri Lanka’s ability to repay, and the port could become China’s naval base through its buyout. Gwadar is situated in a key location of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It is drawing attention as a civilian-military (dual use) base. It can be turned into a military port, and there is room for expansion. Chabahar is situated in a strategic location of the north-south transport corridor connecting India, Iran, and Russia. Since it is near Pakistan, a country friendly towards China, and China is the largest investor in Iran, there are fears over China’s influence, while the port has the advantage of allowing the bypassing of the Suez Canal.

These Chinese activities of recent years remind us of the logic of Alfred Thayer Mahan. “Sea power,” as defined by Mahan, consists of merchant fleets by which a maritime nation conducts maritime activities, a navy that protects them, and overseas bases and colonies needed as platforms to support these activities. A nation exercises sea power to seek to expand its influence. China at present is developing an overseas port network in accordance with the concept for the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and is precisely attempting to exercise sea power in the Indo-Pacific region.

## **2. Maritime Security Policies of the QUAD Countries**

In this section, this article will distill the maritime security policies of the QUAD countries, especially from the perspective of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Japan’s first National Security Strategy approved by the Cabinet on December 17, 2013 explains its purpose as follows: “As fundamental policies pertaining to national security, [the National Security Strategy] presents guidelines for policies in areas related to national security, including sea, outer space, cyberspace, official

development assistance (ODA) and energy.” “Sea” is listed first. Additionally, as part of its fundamental principle, the National Security Strategy describes Japan as a maritime nation that has pursued “Open and Stable Seas.” Under Japan’s strategic approaches for national security, it states with regard to ensuring maritime security that, “As a maritime state, Japan will play a leading role, through close cooperation with other countries, in maintaining and developing ‘Open and Stable Seas,’ which are upheld by maritime order based upon such fundamental principles as the rule of law, ensuring the freedom and safety of navigation and overflight, and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with relevant international law.” As concrete examples, it identifies necessary measures to address anti-piracy operations and promotion of maritime security cooperation with other countries.

The United States unveiled the National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) on December 18, 2017. It exposes the United States’ wariness of China and Russia and indicates its intention to strengthen quadrilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. On January 19, 2018, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) released the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (NDS), which states that China and Russia are challenging the United States and its allies and are seeking to undermine the international order. As its strategic approach, it identifies building a more lethal force, strengthening alliances and the need for new partners, and reforming the DoD. Notably, with respect to alliances and partnerships, it lists “Indo-Pacific” first, followed by NATO, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere.

Regarding the Indo-Pacific region, the U.S. DoD released the Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy on August 21, 2015. In view of China’s rising influence, it presents the following three objectives and four lines of effort.

#### 3 Objectives

- (1) Safeguarding freedom of the seas
- (2) Deterring conflict and coercion
- (3) Promoting adherence to international law and standards

#### 4 Lines of effort

- (1) Strengthening U.S. Military capabilities in the maritime domain
- (2) Capacity building assistance for allies and partners
- (3) Leveraging military diplomacy to reduce risk and build transparency
- (4) Supporting the development of an open and effective regional security architecture

It also states that enhancing U.S. forward presence in the Asia-Pacific region is a priority and that the U.S. DoD would deploy its finest capabilities, assets, and people to the region.

Australia unveiled its first national security strategy, Strong and Secure: A Strategy for Australia’s National Security, in January 2013. It expresses the view that it is important to address the economic and strategic changes in the Asia-Pacific region. It presents the following four national security objectives and three priorities for the next five years.

#### National security objectives

- (1) To ensure a safe and resilient population
- (2) To protect and strengthen sovereignty
- (3) To protect assets, infrastructure and institutions
- (4) To promote a favorable international environment

#### Priorities for the next five years

- (1) Strengthening engagement in the Asia-Pacific region
- (2) Integrating cyber policy and operations
- (3) Building effective partnerships

On February 25, 2016, the Government of Australia published its seventh defense white paper, 2016 Defence White Paper. It anticipates that Australia will face new complexities and challenges and identifies Australia’s strategic defense interests as: a secure and resilient Australia including secure sea lanes; a secure nearer region; a stable Indo-Pacific region; and a rules-based international order. As its strategic defense objectives, the white paper lists the following three items:

- (1) Deter, deny and defeat armed attacks on or threats to Australia and its national interests, etc.
- (2) Make military contributions to support the maritime security of Southeast Asia and support the governments of South Pacific countries, etc. to build and strengthen their security
- (3) Make military contributions to coalition operations that support Australia's interests in a rules-based global order

On November 23, 2017, Australia published the Foreign Policy White Paper for the first time in 14 years. Coupled with Japan and the United States, the concept of "Indo-Pacific" is at the forefront of the fundamental objectives which are the following:

- (1) Promote initiatives to keep the Indo-Pacific a secure, prosperous and open region;
- (2) Maximize opportunities for Australian companies and workers through standing against protectionism and firmly upholding policies that enable Australians to reap profits from an open, highly competitive economy;
- (3) Ensure Australians remain safe, secure and free in the face of threats such as terrorism;
- (4) Promote a world based on fair rules that respect the rights of all nations and on strong cooperation; and
- (5) Step up support for a more stable and prosperous Pacific region.

India prescribed that it was a maritime nation for the first time in the Annual Report 2014-15 published by the Ministry of Defense, in which it announced that it would promote constructive engagement with maritime partners. In October 2015, India unveiled Ensuring Secure Seas: India's Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS-2015), in which India utilized the term "Indo-Pacific" for the first time in an official document. Whereas the title of the previous 2007 maritime security strategy was "Freedom to Use the Seas," the title changed to utilize stronger wording, "Ensuring Secure Seas."

The latest Annual Report 2016-17 published by the Ministry of Defense describes that the 21st century will be the "Century of the Seas" and that India's maritime security environment is changing dramatically and increasing in instability, and goes on to state that India will assume maritime leadership in the Indian Ocean region.

These documents relating to the maritime security policies of the QUAD countries all identify the importance of law and norms, the need to strengthen cooperation, and an intention to play a leading role. It is significant that Japan and the United States jointly set forth the following Indo-Pacific strategy based on the clear guidelines related to these maritime security policies of the QUAD countries.

On November 6, 2017, the leaders of Japan and the United States reached agreement on the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy over their working lunch and summit meeting, and confirmed that a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law is a cornerstone for stability and prosperity of the international community. The strategy puts focus on the vast population and economic dynamism that emerge from the confluence of the two major oceans of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. At the same time, it seeks to ensure rule of law in the region in order to maintain a stable security environment, a prerequisite for prosperity.

The Japanese and U.S. leaders confirmed that the two countries would lead the efforts to make the Indo-Pacific free and open and implement measures based on the following three pillars to ensure peace and prosperity across the whole region:

- (1) Promotion and establishment of fundamental values (rule of law, freedom of navigation, etc.)
- (2) Pursuit of economic prosperity (improvement of connectivity, etc.)
- (3) Commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, etc.)

Recent weeks have witnessed notable developments indicating the importance of the "Indo-Pacific." On May 30, 2018, the U.S. Pacific Command that is responsible for this region was renamed the "Indo-Pacific Command." Furthermore, the importance of the Indo-Pacific was discussed at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue on June 2, 2018. Prime Minister Modi of India mentioned the "Indo-Pacific" 11 times in his keynote address. U.S. Secretary of Defense Mattis also made 18 mentions of the "Indo-Pacific" to underscore its importance. The "Indo-Pacific" has become a common term for maritime security. QUAD represents the key actors that will play a leading role in the Indo-Pacific region, and it is evident that the QUAD countries are moving in the direction of strengthening their cooperative relations.

### 3. QUAD and ASEAN

A major trait of recent years has been the reaching of agreements to strengthen the relationship between the QUAD countries and ASEAN for the purposes of the maritime security of the Indo-Pacific region.

Since 1977, the United States and ASEAN have deepened their relationship as dialogue partners. As demonstrated by the rebalance policy of November 2011 of then U.S. President Obama, there were concerns over China's maritime advancements in the South China Sea and the United States and ASEAN announced the Sunnylands Declaration in Sunnylands, southern California at their summit held from February 15 to 16, 2016. It made note of "freedom of navigation" as well as "non-militarization and self-restraint in the conduct of activities," and the United States sought to further expand its role in Asia from a long-term horizon.

On August 6, 2017, Japan and ASEAN unveiled the Revised Implementation Plan of the Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. It declares that under "ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together," Japan and ASEAN, as partners for peace and stability, partners for prosperity, partners for quality of life, and heart-to-heart partners, will resolve disputes by peaceful means, strengthen dialogue and cooperation, and strengthen assistance in accordance with the principles of international law.

On January 25, 2018, India and ASEAN announced the Delhi Declaration. It confirmed that under "Shared Values, Common Destiny," India and ASEAN will deepen the India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership across the spectrum of political, security, economic, and socio-cultural cooperation. In particular, in the area of security, it confirmed the importance of maritime safety and security and freedom of navigation.

From March 17 to 18, 2018, Australia and ASEAN held the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in Sydney and adopted the Sydney Declaration, which enshrines enhancing security and economic cooperation and cooperation on counter-terrorism measures. Australia and ASEAN confirmed that they will further elevate the Australia-ASEAN Strategic Partnership of 2014 and jointly shape a secure and prosperous region and that ASEAN will play a central role in the rules-based regional architecture. This was the first time that an ASEAN summit-level meeting was held in Australia, and Indonesian President Joko wishing to welcome Australia as an ASEAN member drew wide attention.

As can be seen, the cooperative relations between QUAD and ASEAN have certainly deepened in recent years, and QUAD has begun to present itself as a responsible player.

### 4. Way Forward for Maritime Cooperation

A number of exercises are conducted in the Indo-Pacific region, and it can be observed that the Quad-related exercises of recent years appear to have a particular orientation.

Malabar, a maritime joint exercise hosted by the United States and India, began as a U.S.-India joint exercise in 1992. U.S. and Indian aircraft carriers participated for the first time in 2005, and U.S. and Indian coast guards participated in 2006. Five countries (QUAD and Singapore) participated in the exercise in September 2007, which notably was preceded by the first QUAD security consultations on the exercise in June. Since then, an exercise among the five countries has not been conducted out of consideration for China. Japan became an official member in 2015, and trilateral exercises have become the established format. The Japan-U.S.-India Malabar exercise in July 2017 was the largest of its kind. It was participated by the U.S. naval aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, the Indian naval aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) escort vessel JS Izumo. It is without a doubt that India's role and presence have increased significantly through the Malabar exercises in the Indian Ocean region.

The multilateral maritime joint exercise Kakadu hosted by Australia was conducted off the coast of Darwin in northern Australia from September 12 to 24, 2016. In addition to QUAD, 19 countries participated including the ASEAN member states of Singapore and the Philippines. The most notable feature of this exercise was that anti-submarine warfare—a more advanced, practical exercise—was carried out. It was participated by 19 vessels as well as the U.S. naval patrol aircraft P-8A Poseidon, the Australian Navy's latest anti-submarine MH-60R Seahawk

Romeo helicopters, the Singaporean Navy's unmanned aircraft Scan Eagle, among other assets. Australia has taken on a larger role and presence in the waters around Australia. Meanwhile, there has been an increasing tendency towards holding multilateral exercises and more advanced, practical exercises.

Japan conducted the Japan-ASEAN Ship Rider Cooperation Program for the first time on board the MSDF escort vessel JS Izumo in the waters around Singapore from June 19 to 23, 2017. In accordance with the Vientiane Vision: Japan's Defense Cooperation Initiative with ASEAN, which Japan unveiled in November 2016 at the ASEAN-Japan Defense Ministers' Informal Meeting, this program, inviting all ASEAN member states, was conducted with the aim of contributing to regional stability by achieving a shared understanding of international law to ensure the rule of law, supporting the enhancement of capabilities related to maritime security, and promoting the development of mutual understanding and professional networks. In order to differentiate from other multilateral exercises, the development of mutual understanding and professional networks must cover a variety of levels, and the training activities need to be creative from the perspective of novelty and continuity. Moreover, in order to aim for strategic effects, consideration must be given to the implementation timing, place, scale, planning, the main points of implementation disclosures, among other aspects.

From November 13 to 21, 2017, the 1st ASEAN Multilateral Naval Exercise (1st AMNEX 2017) was held in Thailand in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of ASEAN. The purpose of the exercise was to promote multilateral cooperation to prevent the exploitation of marine resources and environment. It was conducted by following the standard operating procedures adopted at the 9th ASEAN Navy Chiefs' Meeting (ANCM) held in Myanmar in August 2015. 26 vessels from 19 countries participated in the exercise. Aside from ASEAN, vessels from QUAD, Russia, and Iran took part. It is interesting that the environment, a common issue, is identified as a purpose of the exercise, and the standard operating procedures are expected to become the established procedures and expand going forward.

India has led the Malabar exercise. Australia, too, has led the Kakadu exercise. As these examples suggest, there is an emerging trend for the QUAD countries to responsibly lead multilateral exercises in the Indo-Pacific region based on their respective capabilities. In the future, multilateral exercises featuring various activities will need to be conducted systematically and strategically with the participation of a range of actors in different waters. In order to further increase the effectiveness of the exercises, it will be important to set up opportunities for security dialogues before the exercises and to implement the exercises by proactively utilizing the ports along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, such as Hambantota and Gwadar, and by exercising influence.

## **Conclusion**

A feature of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region is that both QUAD and China, key actors in the region, have established similar maritime security policies and demonstrate an intention to exercise influence in the region. As such, there is a potential for both coordination of interests among the actors as well as conflict of interest.

With regard to the way forward for maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, multilateral exercises need to be conducted for maritime infrastructures such as the ports along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the nexus of security and economic prosperity, in order to exercise continued influence. To further increase their effectiveness, the multilateral exercises should be conducted in cooperation with China, which in turn would deepen mutual understanding and increase the possibility for maritime cooperation in non-conventional security areas, such as search and rescue activities in peacetime as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities.

"Sea power," as defined by Mahan, has impacts not only on military but also civilian operations, and linkages with not only the ocean but also land are becoming essential. Cooperative relations in the sea can link multilateral exercises in the ocean to activities on land, and their practical operations are assured for the first time through the systematic and strategic implementation of practical multilateral exercises at a variety of levels.

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