Chapter II

Regional and External Interests in Southeast Asian Seas

Interest in the Southeast Asian seas is not confined to the regional countries. External interest in these waters is significant and constant, spanning across centuries. While the Southeast Asian countries are concerned with all aspects of maritime issues and ocean governance that are relevant to their waters, extra-regional interest is primarily focused on the sealanes.

Maritime nations are dedicated to the practice of freedom of unhindered passage through the sealanes and choke-points. Their concerns are based on strategic and commercial considerations - factors that have remained constant down the ages. The natural wealth of Southeast Asia and its location at the crossroad of ancient maritime routes seafarers and traders from all over the world traversing the regional waters. During the age of colonialism, these sealanes gained great geographical significance as they played a central role in the strategic and tactical calculations of the colonial powers. The Cold War brought new actors to the region and a shift in priorities of military strategy over commerce but even then they did not lessen the role that Southeast Asia's seas played in superpower rivalry in the region. With
economics being the main determinant of post-Cold War international politics, these waters, which are pivotal for world trade, retain their importance.

**Regional Interest in Southeast Asian Seas**

The collective interest of Southeast Asian countries on ocean affairs consists of issues that are common to the region, and which will affect the region as a whole. However, Southeast Asia is composed of countries that differ from each other in terms of geography, politics and economy. Security requirements also vary. The distribution of land and water is such that one country's priorities in geostrategic terms can be quite different from that of the other.

According to Lewis M. Alexander, the components of national interest in oceans are accessibility, investment, dependence and control. All four are relevant in the Southeast Asian context, but they are dictated by the factors mentioned above that distinguish one country's concerns from another.

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In the case of accessibility, the oceans are accessible to all the countries in Southeast Asia, but most of them are disadvantaged in one way or another. Laos is landlocked, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Cambodia are zone-locked and Indonesia and Philippines are archipelagic states. Investment again depends on the economy of a country, and the kind of investment it is interested in. Countries such as Burma, Cambodia that are still industrially underdeveloped, would invest primarily in fishing whereas Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore have invested in such activities as oil exploration and scientific research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Coastline (Sq. km.)</th>
<th>Fish Catch (thousand metric tonns)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>36,834</td>
<td>2,221.4 (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>3,432</td>
<td>680 (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Philippines</td>
<td>17,460</td>
<td>1,688.4 (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2,584</td>
<td>3,348.1 (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>1,100 (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>92.5 (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>184.7 (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1.7 (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>836.8 (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>Landlocked</td>
<td>30.5 (1993) Inland waters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Dependence also varies, both in terms of the nature of dependence and the amount of dependence. Fishing plays a crucial role
in the economy of the region and is pivotal issue in ocean management because so many livelihood depend on this sector. Apart from fishing, the dependence of countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines on the seas includes security and communications. For Singapore, its very existence as an international port depends on the freedom of passage in the regional waterways, particularly the Malacca Straits. In the statement on the Malacca Straits of 16 November, 1971 issued by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, these coastal states declared

The Governments of the Republic Indonesia and Malaysia agreed that the Straits of Malacca and Singapore are not international straits, while fully recognising there use for international shipping in accordance with the principle of innocent passage....The Government of Singapore takes note of the position of the Governments of the Republic of Indonesia and Malaysia on this point.2

Control over ocean space includes the Exclusive Economic Zones and strategic choke-points. Owing to the declaration of the 200 mile EEZ after UNCLOS III, the region is beset with ocean boundary problems. The question of navigation in the sealanes involves security and environmental concerns. Indonesia and Malaysia which are coastal states of the Malacca Straits are deeply concerned over this and have

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sought several times, albeit unsuccessfully, to bring the Straits under their respective national jurisdiction.

Following are concise reviews of the national interest of each country in Southeast Asia.

**Indonesia**

Indonesia is the largest and the most populated country in Southeast Asia. The country's diversity is such that its 200 million people speak 250 regional dialects and languages. Yet Indonesia has one national language i.e. Bahasa Indonesian. Geographically, it is scattered over some 13,700 islands that stretch along 5,120 kilometres. According to Dobbs-Higginson, for its size, Indonesia is reportedly the least reported country in the world.³

However, such immense statistics are not the only reasons that make Indonesia the region's most important country. Geospatially, its location is in the most strategic part of maritime Southeast Asia. It comprises the entire southern flank of all the main waterways between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The only alternative to

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the sealanes around Indonesia are the treacherous sea around northern Australia. Maritime nations recognise this, and are often apprehensive about the possibility of the closure of any of these waterways according to the whims of Jakarta.4

To Indonesia, the importance of the seas is much greater than the other regional countries. This is based on two primary factors; a) the geopolitical peculiarity of Indonesia as a geographically-fragmented country comprising thousands of islands making it the world’s largest archipelagic state and b) the country’s geostrategic location.

In Southeast Asia, no point of the region is more than 500 kilometres away from the sea, except parts of northern Burma; in Indonesia, all parts of the country other than interior Borneo, are within 200 kilometres of the coast. Indonesia claims the seas between its islands as part of its territorial sovereignty, essential for security, national unity and stability. On these imperatives, the Indonesian government proclaimed itself an archipelagic state on 13 December 1957. Thus was framed the Archipelago Principle or ‘wawasan nusantara’ Principle. Benny Moerdani clarifies the confusion that occurs over the terms ‘nusantara concept’ and ‘nusantara principle’. Nusantara Concept is a national outlook that encompasses principles of

4 Ibid.
political unity, economic unity, socio-cultural unity and security-defence unity. Nusantara Principle, on the other hand, is the geographic implementation of the political unity, i.e. drawing the state border line on the sea in such a way as to include the sovereign parts of the country into one unit.\(^5\)

The declaration of the Archipelago Principle incorporated a preamble that argued that

The geographical composition of Indonesia as an archipelago consisting of thousands of islands has its own characteristics. For the purpose of territorial unity, and in order to protect the resources of Indonesia, all islands and seas in between must be regarded as one total unit.\(^6\)

In addition, the government declared extension of its territorial seas from three to twelve nautical miles and also used the concept of straight baselines to establish a continuous boundary touching the outermost points of its outermost islands. The waters enclosed by the straight baseline perimeters would be 'archipelagic waters' (akin to internal waters) in which the state would have sovereignty through innocent passage would be recognised. The territorial sea and the

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economic zone would be measured outwards from such baselines. Instead of having a cluster of territorial seas separated by numerous belts and pockets of high seas, the archipelagic state would have one belt of territorial seas, encompassed between the straight baseline. The straight baselines method became treaty law when it was incorporated in the Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone at UNCLOS I in 1958. In 1984, at least sixty-three countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, the UK, Australia, the erstwhile USSR and the two Germanys had adopted straight baselines for measuring maritime jurisdictional zones. 7

According to C.P. Luhulima, the essence of Indonesian statehood is still being challenged, as in India, and the ‘wawasan nusantara’ Principle is one of the primary ideals of forging a sense of national unity. 8 The Principle is also of primary security concern to Indonesia as it would enable the whole entity of land and water to become a single strategic defence system. Control over these waters would help to check the security problems arising from Indonesia’s strategic ‘permeability’ such as smuggling (including illegal aliens), poaching by foreign


8 Luhulima, C.P., Professor, Department of Political Science, Jakarta University. Paper presented at a seminar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in September, 1994.
fishing trawlers, acts of piracy, supplying of arms of shallow-draft vessels to separatist insurgents and in the case of the Malacca Straits, pollution by oil tankers and possible misuse of navigational rights. Adam Malik referred to the 'wawasan nusantara' Principle as 'life and death for us'.

Indonesia's maritime priorities and interest in the seas is also due to its geostrategic location between the Indian ocean on the one side and the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean on the other side. Significant international sealanes and choke-points are either located within the territory and EEZ or close to them. The choke-points are especially important for maritime nations, military, strategically and commercially. For Japan, unhindered passage through these sealanes is vital as 80-90 per cent of crude oil for its industries comes from West Asia via these waters. Militarily, the Indonesian sealanes have been used by such navies as the US Seventh Fleet. However, the waters and the starits in these areas have proved too shallow for advanced nuclear-powered submarines carrying nuclear missiles (SSBNs). The Lombok

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1 In order to promote the 'wawasan nusantara' Principle among the concerned civilians as part of the Indonesia's overall defence strategy, it was announced at the 'Seminar on Sea Security' organised by the Defence Ministry of Indonesia in December 1975, that Indonesian fishermen would be trained and indoctrinated to prevent unlawful acts at sea, such as thefts or damage of buoys and light boats, as well as assistance in preserving the 'integrity' of Indonesia's territorial waters.
and Ombai-Weter Straits are still believed to be important to SSBNs operations from the Indian Ocean to Guam in the Pacific, but the development of the Underwater Long-Range Missile System (ULMS) and the deployment on new generation submarines will further lessen the United States' dependence on transit of straits. However this does not diminish the importance of the Indonesian sealanes militarily as regional powers such as China and Russia must pass through them to reach the Indian Ocean. It requires advance notice and permission of foreign military vessels to enter Indonesian territorial waters which are considered a 'security zone'.

Indonesia is a member of OPEC (Oil Producing and Exporting Countries) and a substantial amount of its oil and gas deposits lie offshore. Its crude petroleum production in 1992 was 73,732,000 metric tons.\textsuperscript{11} The Timor Gap Sea contains vast deposits of oil and gas reserves and Indonesia has agreed with Australia to a joint exploration of the 60,000 sq. km. zone.\textsuperscript{12} Indonesia has had several boundary problems but they have been settled amicably. It is however currently disputing

\textsuperscript{11} UN Statistical yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 1994 (UN, ESCAP, Bangkok, 1995).

\textsuperscript{12} The two countries came to an agreement to the joint explorations in 1989 in these areas in which the earlier had overlapping territorial claims. The agreement splits the area into three zones.
the ownership of the Natuna Islands (on its northern flank) with Vietnam, and also has claims in the Spratly Islands dispute.

According to Commodore I.G. Artjana of the Indonesian Navy, a number of influences and trends have the potential to affect the maritime interest of Indonesia in the future. They include the increased volume of ship traffic in the region and the resultant congestion and security problems, military competition of major powers in the Asia Pacific region, the possibility of nuclear waste being disposed in the South Pacific region and ethnic unrest within some developing countries in the region. Such concerns, even if they are voiced by Indonesians, are common to the region and like most problems in the region require cooperation, consensus and accommodation to solve them.13

Malaysia

Malaysia is a zone-locked country and one of its most prominent geographical features is that it is divided into mainland/peninsular Malaysia and maritime Malaysia with Sabah and Sarawak in the island

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13 Artjana, I.G., 'Maritime Priorities of Indonesia' in Babbage, Ross and Bateman, Sam, (ed.), Maritime change: Issues for Asia (St. Leonards, NSW. 1993) p. 113

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of Borneo. As a water-separated state, Malaysia has a national security interest in unrestricted access and communication between peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak. The Malaysian government has had to deal with independent tendencies demonstrated by Sabah and Sarawak in the past.

Malaysia has accepted the Indonesian archipelagic concept with the provision that the legitimate and existing rights of states adversely affected by the principle would be protected by international law. An Indonesian-Malaysian MOU at the highest level, unrestricted communication between peninsular Malaysia and eastern Malaysia. However, in the light of Indonesia's attack on Malaysia during the Konfrontasi period under Sukarno, speculations exist over the long term stability of the agreement.11

Malaysia is currently involved in a dispute with the Philippines laying claim to the territory.15 The territorial waters in the Sulu and Celebes Seas are therefore not yet determined by agreement due to friction between the Philippines and Malaysia over the question of the Sabah claim, Malaysia and the Malacca Straits.

14 Valencia, Mark.
15 President Macapagal of the Philippines had claimed Sabah as part of the Philippine territory in 1962.
Like Indonesia, Malaysia is a coastal state of the Malacca Straits, and has considered the Straits as its ‘front street’. In August 1969, Malaysia declared a territorial sea limit of twelve miles, instead of three miles thus conforming with Indonesia which had declared it earlier in 1957. The significance of this Act was that the Malacca Straits was no longer regarded as high seas but part of the territorial seas of these two states.

Security and sovereignty considerations were strong factors in Malaysia's position. In policy terms where the Straits are concerned, Malaysia has adopted similar priorities to Indonesia. It has shown similarity in defence interests demonstrated by joint exercises in the Straits and combined ground force exercise with Indonesia. There has also been the same formal adherence to the Non Aligned foreign policy.

The inclusion of Malaysia in the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) is viewed as an important deference against any intervention in the region of the Malacca Straits. However, the FPDA, which was formulated primarily owing to Indonesia’s Konfrontasi policy in the 1960s, has always created tensions within the region.\(^\text{16}\) The deference

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\(^{16}\) Other members are the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. It was concluded with the purpose of filling in the vacuum in the Malaysian and Singapore defence as a result of the withdrawal of the British forces from East of Suez in 1968.
value of the FPDA is based on the logic of ‘threat probability’ of FPDA members; military ‘disturbances’ against Malaysia or Singapore based on the treaty will involve England, Australia and New Zealand.17

Environment and Pollution: Environmental protection in the Straits used to be a secondary issue with Malaysia, but has now attained prime importance. Two hundred million tons of crude oil imported by Japan (80-90 per cent of all its oil imports) pass through the straits each year and the danger of oil spills is always present. The pollution level in the crowded 1040 kilometers-long Straits - infamous for accidents, oil spills and pirate attacks - is presently at 200 parts per million (ppm), and if not monitored, could rise to 500 ppm and destroy all marine aquatic life.18

Apart from pollution, the problem of piracy plagues the Malacca Straits. It has somewhat abated since the littoral States started coordinated joint patrols. Lack of co-ordination among the coastal states has handicapped any effective steps to apprehend them from repeating

18 Bangkok Post, 3 February 1995.
the offence. The Malacca Straits pollution issue had been discussed often enough but it never reached convention or treaty level. Problems of pollution in the Straits could be settled if Malaysia has the right of pursuit. In 1994, The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) rejected Prime Minister Mahathir's proposal that users should pay toll as in the Suez and Panama canals.

UNCLOS III and the creation of new maritime regimes and the increasing exploitation of offshore hydrocarbon resources have increased the task of the Royal Malaysian Navy. This includes the protection of Malaysia's non-living offshore resources, and the management of its fishery resources which has enormous economic potential. Malaysia has also had to deal with illegal Vietnamese immigrants entering through the east coast of peninsular Malaysia.

Singapore

Singapore's economic success and indeed its very existence as an independent sovereign State owes it to its strategic location at the eastern mouth of the Malacca Straits. Singapore's success story is

19 This refers to the right of pursuit of vessels that often flee without cleaning up sludge from ballast waste.

20 Mak, J.N., 'Maritime Priorities of Malaysia' in Babbage, Ross and Bateman, Sam (ed.) n.11.
because of the position of the Straits as a vital choke-point and passage for international trade.

Ironically, even though its location is responsible for its wealth, Singapore is severely geographically disadvantaged, being shelf-locked and having the least potential off-shore area, in the event of a 200-mile limit. The area of Singapore also accounts for the lowest proportion of the coastline per unit area.

Singapore wants to enhance its status as a maritime centre of ASEAN and the region and 'serving to consolidate and disperse the Europe-Southeast Asia trade and as a centre for warehousing and pre-and post-marine exploitation services'. Sein and McAndrews are of the opinion that in the long term, Singapore is likely to benefit from the extension of jurisdiction of its neighbours and their increased marine activities.

Singapore is very active in issues relating to land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states. As mentioned earlier, its principal marine interest and its economic base, is unrestricted transport of goods

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and oil in the region. Being zone-locked, it also has a direct interest in the ocean regimes of its neighbours.

Singapore’s reluctance in agreeing to the de-internationalising of the Malacca Straits stems from the fact that it was from the full freedom of maritime traffic through the Straits that it had prospered. At UNCLOS III, the Singapore delegation explained that the Straits formed a vital link between different parts of the globe and that the maintenance of communications was for the benefit of the international community.23 In the words of a delegate from Singapore to UNCLOS III,

Once we allow our neighbours to be in a position to dictate to us, then we will be at their mercy. At any moment they may put the squeeze on us and we are economically dead.24

During the Cold War, Singapore believed that a balance of superpower capabilities in Southeast Asia would ensure its security. Seeing a threat to itself from the naval power of the erstwhile Soviet Union, Singapore became one of the United States strongest defacto allies in the region. The end of the Cold War has not unbound the MoU, a bilateral defence pact, that Singapore and the US signed in 1990.


After the withdrawal of the US Seventh Fleet from Subic Bay, Singapore offered a base for logistics to the US navy. There are now 195 GIs on a rotating basis in Singapore. Chief of the Navy, Rear Admiral Kwek Siew Jin of the Republic of Singapore (RSN) stated that, despite changes in the global and regional strategic situation due to the end of the Cold War, the RSN's vital tasks of ensuring the seaward defence of Singapore and protecting its sealines of communications have not changed.

Thailand

Thailand is a zone-locked country, located between the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. Like Singapore, it has interests in the types of marine transportation regimes enunciated by its neighbours. The government of Thailand has faced insurgency in the form of Muslim separatist movements in the southern part of the country near the Malaysian border. Therefore Thailand has great security interests in maintaining unrestricted naval and commercial transit between the

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25 Naidu, G.V.C., Researcher, IDSA, New Delhi. Paper presented at a seminar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in February, 1996.

26 'Protecting the Singapore Straits', Interview with Rear Admiral Kwek Siew Jin, Chief of Navy, RSN, Naval Forces, No. 1, 1996, p.32
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east and west coasts of the Kra Isthmus through Malaysian, Singaporean and Indonesian territorial waters in the Malacca Straits.

Thailand has a very high level of fish consumption and it has therefore shown strong interest in marine research, possessing the most research vessels in the region. It also has a distant-water fishing fleet, but as a zone-locked country it has faced problems because of the EEZ with neighbouring countries such as Burma and even Bangladesh. Thai fishing vessels have had to transit waters claimed by either Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Burma, in order to reach distant fishing grounds. Thailand did not recognise the EEZs of other nations until it declared its own on 25 April 1981.

In Thailand, the Royal Thai Navy is accorded only second or third place in the defence hierarchy. Since the army is the most important unit, more money is allocated to it. The Thai navy has a much smaller area of responsibility, unlike India or Indonesia, therefore it has yet to develop into a blue water outfit.

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27 Interview with Capt. S. Amrapala, Naval Attache, Royal Thai Embassy, New Delhi, on 2 April 1996 at New Delhi.
Thailand has resolved most of its maritime boundary issues with other countries, but it still has an ongoing sea border dispute with Cambodia.

The maritime security issues that concern Thailand are coastal defence, smuggling, piracy, illegal domestic fishing and the possibility of external material support to insurgent groups. The country does not possess a separate coastal guards unit but there is a similar unit with approximately 24 patrol boats. Since Thai fishing vessels have run into numerous problems with neighbouring countries, viz. Burma, in the past, the protection of fishing and merchant vessels has gained great importance and the Royal Thai Navy (after giving prior notice), convoys fishing vessels through Burmese waters to prevent untoward incidents initiated by either party. Some neighbouring countries regard Thailand as a potential threat as Thailand has the third largest fishing fleet in the world, and most of the trawlers are armed.

Thailand staunchly supports unrestricted passage through the Malacca Straits; its viewpoint arising from the practical reasons that

\[\text{\textsuperscript{28}}\textit{ibid}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{29}}\textit{Nation (Bangkok) 26 February 1995. Clashes in the Gulf of Thailand and Andaman Sea over fishing are already common.}\]
the Straits are the only convenient marine passage between the east and west coasts of the kingdom.

The Philippines

Along with Indonesia, Mauritius and Fiji, the Philippines worked towards persuading UNCLOS III to support the archipelagic concept. Apart from its geographical peculiarities, the Philippines also claims to be a 'border-state' of the Pacific. All its internal straits are narrower than 24 miles and therefore fall within its 12-mile territorial waters. Its sealane regime is therefore stricter than Indonesia. In line with the concerns of the other archipelagic states, the Philippines is concerned about national unity, coastal defence, sovereignty over resources and prevention of assistance to communist and Muslim separatist movements.

The Philippines was the first country in the world to declare the archipelagic state concepts; the declaration first appeared on 7 March 1955. The Philippine Republic Act No. 3046 of 17 June 1961 specified the baselines of its territorial waters. The Act stated

Whereas, all the waters around between and connecting the various islands of the Philippines archipelago, irrespective of their width, dimension, have always been considered as necessary appurtenances of the land territory, forming part of the island or internal waters of the Philippines;
Whereas, the baselines from which the territorial sea; for the Philippines is determined consist of straight lines joining appropriate points of the outermost islands of the archipelagic.\textsuperscript{30}

According to Tangsubkul, this document is very interesting not only in terms of any perspective towards the archipelagic movement, (i.e. national appropriation of maritime areas) but it became one of the basic documents that influenced parts of the Informal Composite Negotiating Text (ICNT) of UNCLOS III in 1977.\textsuperscript{31}

The Philippines is one of the contenders in the Spratly Islands dispute and owing to its proximity to these islands, armed conflict would affect its territorial water and would be quite disastrous for its EEZ. The Philippines is also involved in a dispute with Malaysia over the Island of Sabah which the Philippines has claimed. However, the Philippines has not asserted its claim and no armed conflict has taken place.\textsuperscript{32}


\textsuperscript{31} n.8. p.12.

The Philippines' internal security faces challenges in the form of promacy, smuggling and a Muslim separatist movement in Mindanao. These factors, along with lack of modern weaponry and resources, have been responsible for its inability to assert its claim in the Spratlys dispute.\textsuperscript{33} Owing to the geographical nature of the country, the sea has contributed towards aiding these problems; i.e. piracy, smuggling and separatism. Illegal fishing by foreigners in the Philippine waters deprives the country of some 60,000 metric tons of fish each year.

In its effort to counter such threats, the Philippine navy has stressed more on coastal defence. The acquisition of fast patrol and fast attack craft and logistic support vessels are given priority over frigates and destroyers.\textsuperscript{34} The Armed Force of the Philippines Modernisation Act of 25 July 1994's proposed a 15 year acquisition programme (US $ 5.4 billion over 22 years) which includes 24 patrol craft, 16 patrol boats, 12 offshore patrol vessels, 6 corvettes, 3 frigates, 5 seaplanes, 9 multipurpose helicopters, 3 MCMVs.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{34} Philippine Navy Acquisition Programme. Naval Forces, 3/96, p.55.
\end{thebibliography}
transport ships, 10 amphibious vehicles, 4 tugboats and other support equipments.35

Vietnam

The history of Vietnam is fraught with struggles to attain independence first from China, and later from France, Japan and the United States. China's threat was land-based but the modern colonisers arrived via the sea. Vietnam's geographic location - a long narrow land open to the sea and near gigantic China - has made this country vulnerable from ancient times.36 French gunboats arrived on its shores during the nineteenth century, and a hundred years later, US forces landed on its beaches. In January 1994, China launched a naval operation to seize the Paracel Islands from South Vietnam.37 In May 1975, the Khmer Rouge launched attacks on Vietnamese-occupied islands in the Gulf of Thailand. The threats to its territorial integrity have come time and again from the sea, so

35 ibid


37 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam, Vietnam’s Sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Archipelagos. (Hanoi 1979)
Vietnam’s security strategy has been very much involved with the sea.

Vietnam is a maritime country. It has a 2,828 nautical mile coastline and claims an EEZ of 210,600 square miles. Apart from this, its interest in the sea stems from the inhospitable terrain of its interior, making a majority of its population settle along its long coastline. In view of this, it is imperative for Vietnam to place a high priority in ocean matters.

Vietnam is involved in a number of territorial disputes. It has overlapping maritime claims or unsettled boundaries with China in the Gulf of Tonkin, with Indonesia north of the Natuna Islands, and with Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia in the Gulf of Thailand. Among these disputes, the most important and potentially dangerous is the South China Seas dispute. Vietnam and China are the most serious contenders to the dispute and have had two armed confrontations, in 1974 and 1988, over the ownership of these Islands.

Vietnam’s interest in marine affairs also stems from its offshore resources, namely, fish and hydrocarbons and the need to protect

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39 See Chapter IV for further detail on the South China seas Dispute.
them. Vietnam has had fishing conflicts with Thailand for nearly 30 years and the Vietnamese government has arrested hundreds of Thai fishing vessels and fishermen either fishing illegally in Vietnamese waters or passing through; its EEZ.\textsuperscript{40} Thailand on the other hand has accused Vietnamese vessels of being involved in piracy.

Vietnam has potential in the petroleum and gas industry and as its crude oil exports grow, it is on the threshold of becoming a player in Asia's natural gas industry.\textsuperscript{41} The US firm Unocal Corporation and Petro Vietnam are jointly exploring for oil and gas in the waters off the southern coast of Vietnam which are said to show good prospects for gas productions.\textsuperscript{42}

The major obstacles to resolutions of many maritime-related problems faced by Vietnam are because of the country's isolation and preoccupation with domestic and political problems. However, the post-Cold War political environment has become more conducive to problem-solving so it is likely that Vietnam will be able to settle many of its disputes.

\textsuperscript{40} n.36

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Nation} (Bangkok) 11 March 1995

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Bangkok Post} 29 May 1996
Burma

Burma is the only peninsular country in the region which is not Zone-locked, having an open access to the sea on its western coast. Burma has come across as being very assertive about preserving marine areas and resources for its own use. On 15 November, 1968, Burma declared a straight baseline extending 12 nautical miles seaward including a baseline in the Gulf of Martaban 223 nm in length. In the text of this decree, the government of Burma declared that

it [was] necessary by reason of the geographical conditions prevailing on the Union of Burma coasts, and for the purpose of safeguarding the vital economic interest of the ...... coastal regions , to establish the system of straight baselines ..........43

On 19 April 1977, Burma claimed internal waters, historical waters, a territorial sea, a contiguous zone, a continental shelf and an EEZ extending from these baselines. Such maritime claims have resulted in disputes with neighbours and extra-regional powers. Thailand does not recognise Burma's baseline enclosing the Mergui archipelago, and there is dispute between them over three islands in the Andaman Sea. The 15 November 1968 Declaration which

43 Ministry of Foreign Affairs , Govt. of Burma, Archipelagic / Straight Baselines and Historic Claims, 15 November, 1968 (Rangoon, 1968)
claimed much of the Gulf of Martaban as internal waters was challenged by the United States. 41

Cambodia

Cambodia has a very low marine interest in the region. Internal political instability for decades has not allowed it much time to devote to marine and maritime affairs. Although most of its GNP is from fisheries, almost all of its production is from fresh water.

Cambodia has a number of maritime boundary problems; with Thailand in the Gulf of Thailand and with Vietnam to the South of its coast. This has been aggravated by the discovery of more than 20 fields, primarily of gas in the immediate vicinity of Cambodia's offshore area, particularly in Thai waters45

Brunei

Brunei is the second smallest Southeast Asian country after Singapore but it is the richest in the region; its wealth coming from its substantial oil reserves. Burnei being situated in an island


45 Bangkok Post. 11 October. 1994
cannot ignore ocean matters. Burnei's prime marine interests are to safeguards its claimed offshore petroleum resources while avoiding disputes. It has also claimed a Geographically Disadvantaged State (GDS) status. Unrestricted tanker and other traffic through Malaysian waters surrounding and dividing Burnei is also a prime maritime interest of Brunei.46

Extra-regional Interest in Southeast Asian Waters

The United States

By virtue of geography and history, the United Stats is a Pacific power with economic, political and security interests in the Asia Pacific region. US interests in Asia have been consistent over the past two centuries in that they have been based on commercial access to the region, freedom of navigation and the prevention of the rise of any hegemonic power or coalition. According to J.K. Holloway, the US Navy has historically looked upon the Pacific as "its" ocean. In World War II, Pacific theatre was "its" war. 47 A Defense Department strategy report elucidates this by stating that


For the United States, a maritime power, the Pacific Ocean is a major commercial and strategic artery; oceans are America’s lifeline. Our interests and stake in this dynamic region are large and growing; our future lies across the Pacific no less than the Atlantic. 48

US interests in Southeast Asia and the regional seas are based on its wider interests in the Asia-Pacific. The primary concerns of the US are the safety of the sea lines of communications and unimpeded passage through chokepoints such as the Malacca Straits.

The Asia Pacific contains some of the staunchest security allies of the US in Asia such as Japan and South Korea. Even though the Soviet “threat” has ceased with the end of the Cold War, Southeast Asia still has several security concerns. US forces have withdrawn from Subic Bay, but American security interests in the region in general and the safety of the sealanes are still very high. The South China Sea Dispute, if it escalates into a war would greatly jeopardise maritime passage in the region. This would be fatal not only for the US but also for international trade, in view of the rising economies in Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific across the Pacific is one-third larger than US trade with Europe. The US also exports


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more to Indonesia than to Eastern Europe and more to Singapore than to Spain or Italy. 49

According to Richard Cheney, former US Secretary of Defense, the six concepts of security in the Asia Pacific are: engagement, alliances, forward-deployed forces, overseas basing, responsibility-sharing and greater defence cooperation. 50

The regional seas and their security, and unimpeded passage through; these waters are central to this concept. The US depends greatly on cooperation from the regional countries to secure its interests and this will be constant given the coming Pacific Century.

Japan

Japan as an island states has always depended very greatly on the seas and it has a vital life-and-death interest in the sea.

Japan's economic success after World War II has increased its dependence on the seas, particularly on the sea lines of communications. The expansion of Japanese industry had revolved around the high-consuming steel industry which was aided by the low

49 ibid

price of crude oil. Japan as a resource-poor country imports all of its crude oil and almost all of its raw material. Much of this comes from west Asia and Southeast Asia, and they have to traverse the regional waters of Southeast Asia. The security of the sealanes are therefore pivotal for Japan's survival and prosperity.

There are many potential threats to the security of the Southeast Asian SLOCs. The outbreak of war over the South China Seas Disputes is Japan's greatest fear. Japan also sees China as a potential threat to security in the region. For the first time, Japan stated its concerns over China in its *Defence White Paper 1996*. Japan had taken note of China's assertion of its rights to use military force to enforce its claim in the South China Seas. During Nakasone's premiership, Japan's maritime defence zone was extended from 200 to 1000 nm, southeast of Honshu. It also carried out joint exercises with the US navy and saw joint US-Japan planning on the protection of SLOCs.

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The 1980 naval build-up has made the Maritime Self Defence Force (MSDF) the world’s fifth largest navy - which for Japan is significant given its dependence on the safety of regional SLOCs for its survival.

China

China has a perception of threat from the sea, so military and security concerns have played a major role in the formulation of China’s marine policy. This is compounded by the historical facts that since the Opium War of 1840, the sea has been frequently used as a major route either for carrying out direct military actions or influencing coercion against China.

In 1983, Chang Pao-min wrote that Chinese conception of the security of the sealanes has been very much underdeveloped. This has changed a lot now owing to several factors. The potential of conflict over the Spratlys, the ‘vacuum’ in Southeast Asia after the US withdrawal and China’s increasing marine activities have greatly


55 ibid

increased Chinese interest in the seas, viz, the waters of Southeast Asia.

China has been the most aggressive in its South China Seas claim and its readiness to use force in matched only by Vietnam. The PLA Navy's task has of late been largely directed towards supporting this claim.

In addition to national defence, the Chinese naval development was influenced by the need to protect its economic interests at sea.57 With its growing marine activities and economic interests in the Indian Ocean, China and also become more vocal about the freedom of unimpeded passage on seas.

57 Muller, D.G., China as a Maritime Power (Boulder, 1983) p. 124.