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A Prescription for Greater U.S.-Indonesian Engagement

Krista P. Sturbois

CAPT, USN

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Abstract

A Prescription for Greater U.S.-Indonesian Engagement

In light of China's militarization and increasingly aggressive behavior in the South China Sea, the United States must strengthen cooperation in the region to counter China's behavior and growing influence. Indonesia's strategic location, democratic government and strong economy make it an ideal partner for the United States. Indonesia's maritime domain challenges provide an opportunity for the United States to gain influence with Indonesia. This paper identifies and discusses Indonesia's four self-identified maritime threats. In alignment with U.S. National Security Strategy, the United States can provide training to the Indonesian navy, developing a more capable partner to combat common threats against a common adversary, China. This paper proposes the United States, vis a vis U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, should implement a Maritime Partnership Program with Indonesia to further develop the U.S.-Indonesia strategic relationship while curtailing China's diplomatic inroads in the Jokowi administration.

A Prescription for Greater U.S.-Indonesian Engagement

“China wants nothing less than to push the United States of America from the Western Pacific and attempt to prevent us from coming to the aid of our allies. But they will fail.”¹ These two lines embody the overall tone of Vice President Pence’s speech presented at the Hudson Institute on October 4th, 2018. Pence challenged the People’s Republic of China (PRC) repeatedly, bringing up examples of China’s efforts to out-maneuver the United States across all instruments of national power. In the military realm, he cited their ambitious military build-up and provocative actions in the South China Sea.² Concern regarding China is not unique to this administration. Responding to the PRC’s rising power and the region’s geostrategic importance, the Obama administration introduced the “pivot to the Pacific.” Although the United States and Southeast Asian nations face common threats perpetrated by a common adversary, China, the truth is that the United States has taken very limited steps to develop partnerships and gain influence in Southeast Asia. However, in the African and Eastern European theater, the U.S. Navy has successfully implemented Maritime Partnership Programs to build enduring relationships, improve partner nations’ naval capabilities and enhance inter-operability amongst coalition members. Developed in concert with Combatant Command Theater Security Cooperation plans, and coordinated with the State Department, the Maritime Partnership Program (MPP) is a whole of government approach aligned with national security strategy.

The United States vis a vis U.S. Indo-Pacific Command should implement a Maritime Partnership Program with Indonesia to further develop the U.S.-Indonesia strategic relationship while curtailing China’s diplomatic inroads in the Jokowi administration. First, this paper will

¹ “VP Pence Issues Remark on Trump Administration Policy Toward China,” *Targeted News Service*. (October 04, 2018), Accessed October 9, 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/2116349477?accountid=322>.

² “VP Pence Issues Remark on Trump Administration Policy Toward China.”

provide an overview of what the Maritime Partnership Program is and why MPP would be a good fit for implementation with Indonesia. Second, the paper will discuss why Indonesia is important to U.S. strategic interests and how the U.S. is competing with China to gain influence with Indonesia. Next, the bulk of the paper will break down Indonesia's four main maritime threats: freedom of navigation, illegal fishing, smuggling and piracy. This will include examining the four maritime threats to better understand their impact to Indonesia's national and economic security and provide greater context of how United States assistance via MPP would appeal to Indonesia and benefit the U.S. The paper will then look at the transactional nature of the Trump and Jokowi administrations to explain why greater engagement makes sense for both nations. Finally, before concluding, a case will be made for how the Maritime Partnership Program enhances cooperation and will lead to greater regional inter-operability and security.

Maritime Partnership Program is the Right Remedy

Maritime Partnership Programs increase theater security cooperation by dedicating U.S. resources to train and support a partner nations navy's ability to combat threats that undermine U.S. security. The Maritime Partnership Program can leverage resources across the Department of Defense, Department of State (DOS), and other U.S. government agencies as needed. MPP provides an opportunity to move the U.S.-Indonesian relationship forward while combatting threats from China that include attempts to limit freedom of navigation and illegal fishing in the South China Sea. MPP can also address smuggling and piracy, a carrot to appeal to the Jokowi administration given Indonesia's priorities in the maritime realm. A proposed Maritime Partnership Program would not be the first-time consideration has been given Indonesia's maritime threats; the United States and Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on

Maritime Cooperation in October 2015 that promotes action on all of the above areas.³ Some might point out that the U.S. and Indonesia already participate in a limited number of joint and coalition exercises, but the depth of the relationship between our navies can and should be expanded.

The Maritime Partnership Program would be an excellent vehicle for further cooperation. MPP dedicates a U.S. Naval Reserve unit to a country or region. *Proceedings*, published by the U.S. Naval Institute, lauds such units as “unique assets by the defense attaches in the countries in which they work. They are becoming the maritime experts for their respective nations and help fill a void in naval theater security cooperation support capabilities.”⁴ A Maritime Partnership Program dedicated to an individual nation enables a bond between navies from junior sailors up to the Chief of Naval Operations.⁵ Committing to a Maritime Partnership Program is a significant step towards enhanced cooperation between the United States and Indonesia.

A U.S. maritime partnership with Indonesia would establish trust between their navies and nations, creating a foundation for a meaningful partnership between the United States and Indonesia that extends beyond the sea. Maritime Partnership Program relationships are built over time. They progress initially by assessing capabilities, identifying priorities, building a training plan and then showing up repeatedly to provide comprehensive training held in the classroom and on the sea. Training by the United States is focused on accomplishing objectives that

³ “Fact Sheet: U.S.-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation,” Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc. (October 26, 2015): 1, accessed October 3, 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1727449047?accountid=322>.

⁴ Donald Harker. “Maritime Partnership Program,” *United States Naval Institute, Proceedings* 132, no. 8 (August 2006): 71, accessed September 22, 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/205981281?accountid=322>.

⁵ Donald Harker. “Maritime Partnership Program,” 71.

increase the partner nations capacity and capability to address common security issues that threaten U.S. security in the region. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) encourages the U.S. Department of Defense to work with Indonesia, developing Indonesia's capabilities in the maritime environment without unnecessarily sacrificing Jokowi's policy of non-alignment.⁶ CSIS states: "vision, steadfast commitment and professional knowledge are resources that commonly pay greater dividends for operational partnerships than hardware or cash."⁷ This sentiment expresses the bread and butter of the Maritime Partnership Program. MPP, coupled with other government resources identified by the U.S. Embassy Country Team, is uniquely positioned to help Indonesia tackle its maritime challenges. Because China is the perpetrator of aggression towards Indonesia in the maritime realm, MPP is well suited for the U.S. to develop inroads with the Indonesian government, leaving China on the sidelines.

U.S. and China Jockey for Influence in Indonesia

Indonesia's geostrategic location makes a U.S.-Indonesian partnership imperative. Its impressive current gross domestic product, abundance of natural resources and projected dominance in the future, coupled with its democratic system of governance, make it stand out as a strategic partner for the United States.⁸ Indonesia is an extensive archipelago with nearly 17,000 islands. It borders the South China Sea and critical straits, including the Strait of

⁶Sean Quirk and John Bradford, "Maritime Fulcrum: A New U.S. Opportunity to Engage Indonesia," *Pacific Forum CSIS. Issues & Insights* 15, no. 9 (October 2015): 10, accessed September 22, 2018, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/issuesinsights_vol15no9.pdf.

⁷Sean Quirk and John Bradford, "Maritime Fulcrum: A New U.S. Opportunity to Engage Indonesia," 10.

⁸ Indonesia, the largest economy in Southeast Asia, has enjoyed steady economic growth over the past decade, averaging between 5-6 percent, with moderate inflation, rising foreign direct investment, and relatively low interest rates. "U.S. Relations with Indonesia," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Department of State, Fact Sheet (August 14, 2018), Accessed September 22, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2748.htm>.

Malacca, where the U.S. and global economy are dependent on secure sea lines of communication. In 2017, the Department of State noted that the South China Sea is home to the world's busiest shipping lanes, with over \$5 trillion U.S. dollars in cargo and half of the world's oil tankers transiting each year.⁹ As significant, a quarter of all tanker oil and half of the world's commerce passes through the Strait of Malacca.¹⁰ Continued access to, and guaranteed safe passage of this global common, is vital to the worldwide economy, and a shared interest of the United States and Indonesia.

China's emergence as a great power and showy militaristic expansion of the Spratly Islands has Southeast Asian countries, particularly Indonesia, reconsidering their relationships with China and the United States. The possible reconfiguration of alliances is a natural response to accommodate a changing balance of power in the region. For Indonesia and its neighbors, expanding a U.S. relationship is complicated by their proximity to and dependence on China: "On the one hand, they seek cooperative relations with China and mutually beneficial development. On the other hand, they worry about China's ambitions and possible dominance. In general, the governments no longer see a danger of U.S. dominance... [but see] the United States as a useful hedge against possible domineering behavior by China."¹¹ For now, Indonesia has demonstrated a desire to maintain a decidedly neutral posture. The Jokowi administration has been "straddling the fence" to avoid a one-sided alliance with either country.¹² As China

⁹ "U.S. Relations with Indonesia," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 9.

¹⁰ Sean Quirk and John Bradford, "Maritime Fulcrum: A New U.S. Opportunity to Engage Indonesia," 7.

¹¹ Robert G. Sutter and Michael E. Brown, and Timothy J. A. Adamson, and Mike M. Mochizuki, and Deepa Ollapally, *Balancing Acts: the U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability*, Elliott School of International Affairs & Sigure Center for Asian Studies: George Washington University (August 2013), 18, accessed September 22, 2018, http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/BalancingActs_Compiled1.pdf.

¹² Robert G. Sutter and Michael E. Brown, and Timothy J. A. Adamson, and Mike M. Mochizuki, and Deepa Ollapally, *Balancing Acts: the U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability*, 18.

continues to expand its territorial claims and threatens freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, this position seems untenable in the long term. China's aggressions in the South China Sea put Indonesia in a vulnerable position.

Indonesia has been dependent on China for significant aid and investment, leaving less room for U.S. influence economically. Improving Indonesian infrastructure and public services is a political and economic priority for the Jokowi administration (Jokowi faces reelection in 2019), requiring substantial foreign investment. President Jokowi has leaned on China for financing, meeting with President Xi six times in less than two years to attract additional investment.¹³ The Indonesian government's adjustment to a more neutral stance towards China potentially threatens future Chinese state-run investment.¹⁴ While a reduction in Chinese investment is a clear risk to Indonesia's economic growth and stability, so, too, would be accepting Chinese claims to Indonesian territorial waters and fishing incursions into Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). China is reducing Indonesia's exclusive economic zone by enlarging their own and illegal fishing in Indonesia's EEZ is a theft of natural resources, both of which negatively impact Indonesia's economy.

Despite China's aggressive actions in the maritime domain, the PRC have cleverly balanced their behavior by developing economic interdependency and encouraging alliances in other areas within Southeast Asia. China's persistent efforts are recognized in the Lowy Institute's 2018 Asia Power Index in which: China ranked number one in economic

¹³ P. Chacko and D. Willis, "Pivoting to Indo-Pacific? The Limits of Indian and Indonesian Integration," *East Asia* 35, no. 2, (June 2018), 133, accessed October 3, 2018, <https://doi-org.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s12140-018-9293-6>.

¹⁴ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward," New York, NY, Council on Foreign Relations (February 2018), 15, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/report/keeping-us-indonesia-relationship-moving-forward>.

relationships, diplomatic influence and future trends; the United States ranked second in these three indices.¹⁵ The challenge for the United States is finding a way to develop a strategic partnership with Indonesia that does not antagonize China too much. The United States doesn't want Indonesia to decide it's accepting too much risk and withdraw from potential areas of cooperation.

Maritime Threats Open Door for Increased US Engagement

One clearly identifiable area of cooperation for the United States is working with the Indonesian navy. Indonesia's current administration recognizes the importance of the maritime domain. President Jokowi introduced Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) Doctrine in 2015. The doctrine calls on Indonesia to capitalize on its unique geostrategic position at the nexus of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Within the GMF doctrine, four maritime security threats are identified: freedom of navigation, illegal fishing, smuggling and piracy.¹⁶ The United States can lend expertise in all four areas, but in order for Indonesia to combat these threats, they are reliant on the Indonesian navy.

A stronger Indonesian navy, partnered with the United States, enhances U.S. security in the region. The Indonesian navy is not as advanced as would be expected for an economy as prosperous as Indonesia's. The Indonesian navy and coast guard lag behind regional peers, lacking basic equipment and coordination to confidently counter maritime threats within their territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone.¹⁷ The state of the Indonesian Navy and the

¹⁵ "Asia Power Index," Lowy Institute (2018), Accessed October 1, 2018, <https://power.lowyinstitute.org/lowy-api-page-files/lowy-asia-power-index.pdf>.

¹⁶ Sean Quirk and John Bradford, "Maritime Fulcrum: A New U.S. Opportunity to Engage Indonesia," 2.

¹⁷ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward," 9.

current investment Indonesia allots for defense are legitimate concerns. It would be reasonable to ask if significant U.S. investment makes sense given that Indonesia is not adequately funding or prioritizing their navy.¹⁸ However, in light of China's PLA-Navy's modernization and posturing, U.S. investment in strengthening the Indonesian navy is justified. The current U.S. administration has not shied away from burden-sharing conversations. The U.S. will need to discuss, and perhaps set conditions for, Indonesian investment in their navy. Conditions would ensure Indonesia's financial commitment to improving hardware and dedicating resources required for a more capable maritime force. Working together in the maritime domain against common threats provides the United States and Indonesia a roadmap for security cooperation that is mutually beneficial enough to incentivize participation of both countries. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's establishment of a Maritime Partnership Program would provide a framework for increased cooperation that improves Indonesian naval capabilities, allowing them to address the four maritime security threats in the region that undermine Indonesia's stability.

Enabling Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea

The United States should work with Indonesia, and other Southeast Asian countries to pressure China to adhere to widely followed and established norms regarding freedom of navigation. Organizations like Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is based

¹⁸ According to Gregory Raymond, "President Jokowi has made increasing defence spending conditional on GDP growth reaching 7 per cent. However, the World Bank predicts that Indonesia's GDP growth rate will only reach 5.5 per cent in 2018, up from 4.8 per cent in 2015. This means that without serious military reform, including the downsizing of the army, funding to grow and modernize the navy is likely to remain inadequate. In Evan Laksmana's view, trying to maintain "strategic relevance" sufficient to maintain the fleet-in-being is the Indonesian navy's abiding concern. At this point a "green water navy", and significant TNI power projection capability, remain a long way from reality."

Gregory Vincent Raymond, "Naval Modernization in Southeast Asia: Under the Shadow of Army Dominance?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2017), 168-169, accessed October 8, 2018, <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.

in Jakarta, can leverage its collective strength to appeal to China.¹⁹ Freedom of navigation has required a strong, forward deployed U.S. Navy throughout history and has undoubtedly contributed to economic stability throughout the world since World War II. China's military modernization includes an increasingly large and capable People's Liberation Army Navy that threatens U.S. military dominance and disrupts the existing balance of power in the South China Sea. Much like the U.S., Indonesian officials recognize their vulnerability and have announced that they will increase patrols in the South China Sea to demonstrate their right to freedom of navigation.²⁰ While China has resisted calls to adjust their behavior in the South China Sea, the United States, Indonesia, and all South China Sea stakeholders should continue to apply pressure and regularly demonstrate their right to transit the South China Sea without provocation by conducting military freedom of navigation operations. A Maritime Partnership Program with Indonesia will help ensure their navy is prepared to conduct FONOPS. The Indonesians ability to operate independently or in conjunction with the United States or regional partners strengthens U.S. commitment to freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

Illegal fishing: A Carrot for Indonesian Participation in MPP

There is no greater economic incentive for Indonesia to accept enhanced partnership with the United States than reducing illegal fishing. A stronger Indonesian navy would allow Indonesia to combat illegal fishing in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Illegal fishing is seen as one of the largest national threats and the primary maritime threat, posing an enormous negative impact on the economy. Estimates indicate that Indonesia loses up to 3 billion USD per

¹⁹ Lyle J. Morris and Giacomo Persi Paoli, "A Preliminary Assessment of Indonesia's Maritime Security Threats and Capabilities," Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation (2018), 35, accessed September 22, 2018, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2469.html.

²⁰ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward," 10.

year from illegal fishing in its EEZ.²¹ China has overextended its reach here as well. The infamous “nine-dash line” reaches into Indonesia’s territorial waters outside of their Natuna Islands; China has justified fishing within that area despite Indonesian government protests and skirmishes at sea.²² On the face of it, defending against illegal fishing in Indonesia’s Exclusive Economic Zone does not seem aligned with U.S. strategic interests, but it is another area where China is unlawfully encroaching on a neighbor’s rightful territorial claim in the South China Sea. Illegal fishing is also a national priority for Indonesia, and the argument can be made that because China is the perpetrator, promoting assistance to Indonesia in this area allows the United States to leverage its influence without challenge from China. Additionally, MPP provided maritime domain awareness and vessel board search and seizure (VBSS) training to combat illegal fishing would increase the Indonesian navy’s capability and capacity to tackle threats, like smuggling, that are more aligned with U.S. strategic interests.

Smuggling Funds Islamic Extremism

Smuggling in Southeast Asia’s maritime domain presents a major threat both to Indonesia and the United States, particularly in the fight against Islamic extremism. Smuggling includes human trafficking as well as illicit movement of refugees, drugs and commercial goods. Smuggling between Indonesia and the Philippines is a concern. Neighboring Mindanao (Philippines) is a known haven for the Islamic State: “If fighters continue arriving in Mindanao even after the end of the battle in the city of Marawi- the Middle East- the island could easily serve as a gathering place for Indonesian extremists and a jumping-off point for militants to

²¹ Lyle J. Morris and Giacomo Persi Paoli, “A Preliminary Assessment of Indonesia’s Maritime Security Threats and Capabilities,” 25.

²² Patrick M. Cronin and Marvin C. Ott, “Deepening the US-Indonesian Strategic Partnership,” *The Diplomat* (February 17, 2018) accessed October 3, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/deepening-the-us-indonesian-strategic-partnership/>.

attack Indonesia.”²³ Smuggling contributes to the financing of criminal enterprise, as well as Islamic extremism. The RAND corporation believes that Indonesia lacks the capacity, particularly the inter-governmental coordination, as well as mechanisms, to engage with international partners to the extent that is required to stem smuggling.²⁴ The Maritime Partnership Program works directly with the Department of State and leverages additional agencies, like the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Department of Justice, to assist in building partner capacity. This includes the investigation and prosecution of smugglers, from following the money to establishing stronger legal framework and courts. DOS-coordinated education and training provides the Indonesian government the capability to wholly address transnational maritime threats, complimenting the Navy’s efforts. To combat smuggling and reduce the proliferation of Islamic extremism in the region, a multi-faceted approach would aid both Indonesia and the United States while building cooperation across the military and governmental organizations of both countries.

Piracy, Another Carrot for Indonesian Participation in MPP

Piracy is Indonesia’s fourth maritime threat and has disproportionately affected Indonesia, threatening freedom of navigation throughout Southeast Asia. When considering the region, piracy incidents are most prevalent in the territorial waters of Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore, with Indonesia being disproportionally affected by an average of 100 events per year between 2000-2014.²⁵ Indonesia and Malaysia would benefit from United States assistance in “hot pursuit” training to increase information sharing capabilities and allow for

²³Joshua Kurlantzick, “Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward,” 12.

²⁴ Lyle J. Morris and Giacomo Persi Paoli, “A Preliminary Assessment of Indonesia’s Maritime Security Threats and Capabilities,” 25.

²⁵Lyle J. Morris and Giacomo Persi Paoli, “A Preliminary Assessment of Indonesia’s Maritime Security Threats and Capabilities,” 25.

continued pursuit of pirates across territorial waters. Although there are agreements in place, hot pursuits are rarely conducted.²⁶ Maritime domain awareness would be a focus area for the Maritime Partnership Program. In the Horn of Africa, reduction of piracy has been a success story for MPP. Success in the West African area of operations could serve as a model for enhanced maritime domain cooperation within Southeast Asia. Improved maritime domain awareness and cooperation is key to piracy reduction but will also ensure greater freedom of navigation within the South China Sea, a strategic priority of both the United States and Indonesia.

Time is Right for Buy-In from US and Indonesian Leadership

Since taking office, President Trump and President Jokowi have demonstrated a transactional approach to foreign policy. Where they can, they have both eschewed traditional alliances and multinational organizations in favor of bilateral deals. In the past, Indonesia's human rights record has handicapped greater cooperation between the U.S. and Indonesia. President Trump has shown a willingness to look past human rights concerns if cooperation reaches an administration objective. With this in mind, regional expert Joshua Kurlantzick encourages both parties to center their partnership on security concerns. He proposes addressing three threats: Chinese aggression in the South China Sea (refers to challenges to freedom of navigation and illegal fishing), smuggling and piracy, stating, "Such a practical and security-based approach should appeal to both nation's presidents."²⁷ Enhanced cooperation makes sense given the increased strategic importance President Jokowi has placed on maritime security. The Global Maritime Fulcrum doctrine lays out Indonesia's maritime security concerns and calls attention to

²⁶ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward," 21.

²⁷ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward," 4.

Indonesia's geographic decisive point between the Pacific and Indian Ocean.²⁸ Indonesia is a maritime nation; Jokowi recognizes that his political survival and Indonesia's economic prosperity are dependent on Indonesia's ability to counter maritime challenges.

For President Trump, there are upsides to cooperation outside of the maritime security realm. By choosing to strengthen ties with Indonesia, home of the world's largest Muslim population, President Trump counters the narrative that his administration's immigration policies are based purely on anti-Muslim sentiment while reinforcing the President's preferred security from strength posture.²⁹ Common threats in the South China Sea buoy a United States-Indonesia strategic partnership that is advantageous to both U.S. and Indonesian policy makers.

The bottom line is that both the United States and Indonesia need reliable and capable partners in the maritime domain. "Mutual benefit" has been mentioned throughout this paper and is a critical component to achieving buy-in from national leadership. It is unlikely a strategic partnership would form and prosper without mutual benefit. A positive sign is that President Jokowi, President Trump and senior members of their administrations have publicly opened the door to increased cooperation, recognizing that such would likely result in mutually beneficial outcomes.³⁰ Defense Secretary Mattis travelled to Jakarta in January 2018 where he met with President Jokowi and Indonesian Chief of Defense Tjahjanto to discuss common security threats. The trip came shortly after the release of the U.S. National Defense Strategy (NDS); Secretary Mattis said his

²⁸ I. Chapsos and JA Malcolm, "Maritime security in Indonesia: Towards a comprehensive agenda?" *Marine Policy* 76, (February 2017), 8, accessed October 3, 2018, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2016.11.033>.

²⁹ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward," 23.

³⁰Evi Fitriani, "The Trump Presidency and Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2017), 59, accessed August 23, 2018, <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.

trip to Indonesia supported one of three lines of effort in the NDS: “engage and build more partnerships and allies.”³¹ He added: “This is a very strategic partnership with the third largest democracy in the world. It's the most populous Muslim nation in the world and it's the largest archipelago, stretching across the South China Sea...all the way to the Indian Ocean.”³² China’s militarization and aggressions in the South China Sea have reinforced the need for increased partner capacity; going it alone is not a prudent option for either the United States or Indonesia.

Enhanced Cooperation Drives Regional Inter-Operability and Security

The Maritime Partnership Program would strengthen Indonesian naval forces and increase inter-operability between the U.S. Navy, Indonesia and regional coalition partners. Enhancing maritime cooperation has been tried and tested in the Gulf of Guinea with Maritime Partnership Program units supporting the Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet and Naval Forces Africa. Gulf of Guinea nations have faced many of the same security concerns as Indonesia: freedom of navigation, illegal fishing, smuggling and piracy. Maritime Partnership Program units, in concert with Embassy Country Teams, have worked with individual African nations to develop maritime domain awareness, maritime interdiction operation, vessel board search and seizure competency, implementation of routine maintenance, training and standardized operating procedures. Tailored assist visits from U.S. Navy personnel and government agencies throughout the year culminate in an annual at-sea exercise, Obangame Express.

³¹ "Press Gaggle by Secretary Mattis En Route to Indonesia," U.S. Department of Defense (January 22, 2018) accessed October 23, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1420752/press-gaggle-by-secretary-mattis-en-route-to-indonesia/>.

³² "Press Gaggle by Secretary Mattis En Route to Indonesia."

Since the inception of Obangame Express in 2011, participating navies have demonstrated improved capacity in the maritime domain and are increasingly prepared to operate jointly for regional security. In 2018, nineteen African nations participated, operating alongside the U.S. and fifteen European partners. All of these efforts support three regional goals: information sharing amongst Gulf of Guinea countries, development of national maritime strategies with accompanying governance to enforce laws and prosecute violators, and reduction of piracy and threats from transnational criminal and terrorists' organizations.³³ Admiral Foggo, Commander U.S. Sixth Fleet, concluded this year's Obangame Express by saying, "It comes down to regional actions, partnered with international support that ultimately leads us to security in the maritime domain- and long term security for the Gulf of Guinea."³⁴ The common threats and need for expanded maritime capacity in the South China Sea make the Maritime Partnership Program an ideal fit for Indonesia to ensure greater inter-operability in the region.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command has set the groundwork for increased cooperation with bilateral exercise CARAT (Coordinated Afloat Readiness and Training), which it holds with nine Southeast Asian partners. However, the Center for Strategic Studies suggested that more could be gained from the exercise with greater Indonesian government support; they conclude, "Divergent strategic visions have prevented it from reaching its potential in terms of complexity and sophistication."³⁵ Establishing a

³³ "Remarks as Delivered by Admiral James G. Foggo III During the Closing Ceremony of Exercise Obangame Express 2018 in Libreville, Gabon, March 29, 2018," U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa / U.S. 6th Fleet (March 29, 2018), Accessed October 23, 2018, <http://www.c6f.navy.mil/speech/remarks-delivered-admiral-james-g-foggo-iii-during-closing-ceremony-exercise-obangame-express>.

³⁴ "Remarks as Delivered by Admiral James G. Foggo III During the Closing Ceremony of Exercise Obangame Express 2018 in Libreville, Gabon, March 29, 2018."

³⁵ Sean Quirk and John Bradford, "Maritime Fulcrum: A New U.S. Opportunity to Engage Indonesia," 9.

Maritime Partnership Program with Indonesia would provide the Indonesian government a road-map that connects the need for increased complexity of naval operations, to include Indonesian's participation in regular coalition operations, to a reduction in maritime threats. Analysts at the RAND Corporation recognize a possible shift in attitudes, with Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines recently conducting joint counterpiracy operations in the Sulu Sea.³⁶ Another area for cooperation is freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea.

Freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) are critical to push back on China's continued expansion within the South China Sea. The U.S. has recently received publicity, and Chinese condemnation, for FONOPs within 12 nautical miles of the Spratly Islands. President Jokowi made public comments ruminating about possible joint FONOPs with the Australian Navy in the South China Sea in advance of a visit to Australia in early 2017. His comments were clearly in response to Chinese aggressions but nonetheless signal a willingness by the Indonesian President to push back at China and consider alliances to thwart Chinese advances in the South China Sea.³⁷ The United States should encourage Indonesia to continue to assert its rights in the maritime domain, unilaterally and multilaterally. Indonesia's ability to operate with the United States or U.S. partner nations in support of freedom of navigation is essential to regional security.

CONCLUSION

Since World War II, the United States has led the development of an alliance-based world order under a United Nations umbrella. China's emergence as a great power

³⁶ Lyle J. Morris and Giacomo Persi Paoli, "A Preliminary Assessment of Indonesia's Maritime Security Threats and Capabilities," 34.

³⁷ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Keeping the U.S.-Indonesia Relationship Moving Forward," 17.

with near peer capabilities threatens the existing balance of power, particularly in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is a strategic gem that has managed to avoid clear alignment with either the U.S. or China. China's actions in the South China Sea have Indonesia weighing potential alliances. At the recent change of command ceremony for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Davidson spoke of the United States' enduring commitment of "free nations to the free and open international order," and to our allies he said, "You will have no better ally. To our partners, I look forward to advancing our partnership in a way that serves our mutual interests."³⁸ China has threatened Indonesia's economic security and given the Jokowi administration pause; Indonesia recognizes a need to strengthen their maritime capability to counter Chinese aggression. Senior policymakers in the United States are also weighing what a strategic partnership with Indonesia could look like, and how to counter China's diplomatic influence.

The maritime domain is ripe with opportunity for enhanced cooperation to the United States' and Indonesia's mutual benefit and aligns with U.S. national security strategy. Establishing a Maritime Partnership Program with Indonesia allows for a whole of government approach to tackle maritime security challenges and improve partner capacity, while developing the professional and personal relationships that lead to real understanding and cooperation over time. A Maritime Partnership Program with Indonesia will not solve all of U.S. ills in the South China Sea, but greater engagement is more than a band-aid and would certainly be a move in the right direction.

³⁸ "Remarks at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Change of Command Ceremony," U.S. Department of Defense. (May 30, 2018), Accessed October 23, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1535689/remarks-at-us-indo-pacific-command-change-of-command-ceremony/>.

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