



PAVING THE WAY FOR REGIONAL MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS

INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE

Edited by
Christian Bueger and
Jane Chan

RSiS

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

S. RAJARATNAM
SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES



**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**
SINGAPORE

PAVING THE WAY FOR REGIONAL MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS

INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE

Edited by

Christian Bueger and Jane Chan

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Copyright © 2019 each author for his or her own chapter

Published by

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Nanyang Technological University

Block S4, Level B3, 50 Nanyang Avenue

Singapore 639798

Telephone: 6790 6982 Fax: 6794 0617

Website: www.rsis.edu.sg

First published in 2019

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

Produced by **BOOKSMITH**

(booksmith@singnet.com.sg)

ISBN 978-981-14-1515-9

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction: Maritime Domain Awareness and the IFC <i>Christian Bueger and Jane Chan</i>	1
2	Information Fusion Centre and the Global Maritime Domain Awareness network <i>Christian Bueger</i>	14
3	Beyond Information Fusion and Sharing: The IFC and the Future of Southeast Asian Maritime Security Governance <i>Koh Swee Lean Collin</i>	20
4	Learning from the IFC? The Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar <i>Antoine Jeulain</i>	28
5	Creation of an Information Fusion Centre in Callao, Peru for the Latin-American Maritime Region <i>Captain Jesus A. Menacho Pierola</i>	34
6	The IFC: Challenges in Building a Regional Maritime Domain Awareness System <i>David Brewster</i>	41
7	Legal Aspects of Information Sharing in the Maritime Domain <i>Douglas Guilfoyle</i>	48
8	An Interview with Head IFC, Singapore <i>Senior Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Ong</i>	55
9	The IFC and a Challenging Future <i>Geoffrey Till</i>	64
	Biographies of Editors	68

The IFC and a Challenging Future

Geoffrey Till

King's College London

In many ways the IFC faces an uncertain future. Its broader role, through the processing and distribution of information, is to make sense of maritime activity and contribute to the maintenance of good order at sea. Since the world's peace and prosperity ultimately depend on the continued success of the global sea-based trading system, this is a crucial and important task. That system, as the American strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan warned us over a century ago,¹ is both sensitive and vulnerable today, perhaps more than ever and in ways which Mahan could hardly conceive.

There are perhaps three visions of the maritime future. Threats to 'the system' can be found in all three, and the IFC has a major contribution to make in every case. First, there is the vision of a cooperative maritime future in which nations, their navies, and coast guard forces come together in common defence of a rules-based order at sea which allows the peaceful and profitable passage of ships to everyone's benefit. Here the threat is obvious – crime at sea in its many forms, national and transnational. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is an indispensable prerequisite for the identification and apprehension of wrongdoers and by the collection, fusion, and global dissemination of information about what is going on at sea in the Indo-Pacific region. For this, the IFC plays a crucial role. Since imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the appearance of 'other IFCs' around the world provides convincing evidence of its continuing success. More locally, its upgraded information sharing platform the IFC Real-time Information Sharing System (IRIS) has already proved helpful in ASEAN deliberations and exercises. Nonetheless, alongside this is the inescapable fact that the IFC is facing growing challenges. Criminal organisations are notoriously agile because they are far less constrained by the kind of rules

1 Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *Retrospect and Prospect: Studies in International Relations, Naval and Political*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902, p 144.

and regulations that agencies of law enforcement have to observe, and so the IFC will need to constantly respond and adapt to the inevitable dynamism posed by the diverse types of crime it needs to deal with.

On the face of it, the IFC would seem to have much less to do with the second vision of a maritime future, very different from the one described above. This second vision is much more competitive, much more mercantilist, much more of a struggle between nations about who gets what, when, and where. A few years ago, this darker vision of the maritime future seemed much more remote than it does now, with the growth of great power tensions, alongside unresolved disputes between small and medium ones, with talk of trade wars, and with the unsettling sense that the old and relatively stable world we knew is shifting, as new powers rise, especially in the Indo-Pacific. The prospect of inter-state conflict does not seem as remote now as it did then, and few would doubt that this could represent one of the gravest of all threats to the international sea-based trading system. This is decidedly not the business of the IFC, but nonetheless it does have something substantial to offer. This of course, is to illustrate the continuing desirability and feasibility of international cooperation, less from the angle of dealing with crime but more as an indirect organic trust and confidence building measure between nations that could otherwise regard each other with gathering suspicion. In this way, the IFC has a significant role to play in the mitigation of the worst effect of what some have called the power - rather than the rules-based order.

Arguably though, even the power-based system has rules but ones which are amoral, expediential, based simply on what seems to work rather than on what is right. But the third and in many ways the bleakest of maritime futures that may well be emerging is the one where there are no rules, and where anarchy prevails.

Today's situation, many would argue, has become more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA for short). This is partly because some of today's leading states want it to be like this and so pursue 'a multidimensional and multidisciplinary strategy that consciously blurs the classical distinctions between warriors and non-combatants, front and rear, peace and war, state and proxies, and fact and fiction; and which employs a variety of tools – military technology and operations, information and cyber, economic pressure, ethnic bridgeheads and sensitivities – in order to

manipulate both rival societies and [their] own.”² One very topical aspect of this is the battle for information – the heart of the IFC’s activity – for this is now the age of all-pervasive social media and what some have called ‘Truth Decay’.³ By this they mean the impact that easy accessibility and potentially overwhelming power of the social media is having on people’s trust in authority and in traditional forms of expertise. Imperfectly controlled, this empowers cranks, bigots, criminals, and those who would wilfully deceive, by according them the same apparent status as experts. ‘Don’t you see,’ asked George Orwell, ‘that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?’⁴ Deluged with showers of contradictory information, deliberate misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories, it is increasingly difficult for people to know what to believe. This encourages them to fall back on that very human trait of believing what they want to believe and forming up into dissonant ‘tribes’ unable to relate to, or even to understand ‘the others’. And when criminals or terrorists are the ones supplying the misinformation, the threat becomes very real.

Collectively, this threatens the social order. Some would go further: “We are facing nothing less than a crisis in our democracy based on the systematic manipulation of data to support the relentless targeting of citizens, without their consent, by campaigns of disinformation and messages of hate.”⁵ In the words of the recently released EU Code on dealing with disinformation, “...open democratic societies depend on public debates that allow well-informed citizens to express their will through free and fair political processes.”⁶ Such thinking about the dangers of competing narratives has led Singapore to establish a ‘Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods,’ thinking it important to support social cohesion by cultivating

2 Levite, Ariel E., and Jonathan (Yoni) Shimshoni. “The Strategic Challenge of Society-centric Warfare.” *Survival* 60 (2018): 91-118. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1542806>.

3 Kakutani, Michiko. *The Death of Truth*. London: William Collins, 2018.

4 Orwell, George. 1984.

5 Damian Collins, Chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on the digital world, culture media and sports’ quoted in *the Guardian* 30 July 2018.

6 Quoted in Chadwick, Paul. “Could this EU crackdown on fake news be a gamechanger?” *The Guardian*, September 30, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/30/eu-crackdown-fake-news-code-disinformation>

an informed public and encouraging a culture of ‘fact-checking’.⁷ Staying afloat in this whirlpool of conflicting currents requires a continued capacity for independent judgement at every level, and the IFC has much to offer in the maritime dimensions of this unfamiliar and unsettling world.

In conclusion, it would seem that in order to cope with the possible consequences of these three possible visions of the maritime future, some further growth in numbers and in the width of its aspirations would be necessary. The threats facing the maritime system with which the IFC has to deal are not single strands that can be managed on an individual basis; on the contrary, they are intermingled and intertwined. Terrorism and various forms of crime are seen to merge into one another rather than operate as discrete phenomenon. Perhaps this calls for a responsive focus on the mutually reinforcing wider forms of maritime activity, such as fishing, drugs trafficking, illegal immigration and so forth. The inclusion of personnel at the IFC, with representatives from national and international organisations with special expertise in such areas may well be the way forward. If this is the path followed, the IFC will certainly face as many challenges in its future as it has in the past 10 years. It will not be easy to reconcile the procedures and interpersonal relations of a tightly knit group with a closely defined remit for its operations with a larger group of people with wider responsibilities. But in this age of widespread hacking, the Internet of Things, and 5G technology networks — when information itself has no boundaries and needs to be defended — that may have to be the way forward.

7 Neubronner, Stephanie. “After the Recommendations: Now for the Hard Part.” *RSIS Commentary* 160 (2018). <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CO18160.pdf>

Biographies of Editors

Christian Bueger is Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. He is an honorary professor of the University of Seychelles and a research fellow at the Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA), University of Stellenbosch. Before joining Copenhagen he was a professor at Cardiff University. His fields of research are International Organisations, Security Studies, International Political Sociology and International Practice Theory. His current research is on maritime security governance as well as the sociology of knowledge production and expertise. He is the lead editor (Europe) of the *European Journal of International Security* (Cambridge UP) and was the founding editor of *piracy-studies.org* – the research portal for maritime security (until 2019).

Jane Chan is a Research Fellow and Coordinator of the Maritime Security Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. She has a LL.B from University of Tasmania in Australia and she also holds a MSc. in International Relation from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her main research interests include maritime security issues in Southeast Asia, law and order at sea, regional maritime cooperation and confidence-building measures. She is also an affiliated faculty at the Singapore Arm Forces (SAF)-NTU Academy (SNA) and was a Non-resident Visiting Fellow at the Sea Power Centre –Australia (SPC-A). Her publications include Vijay Sakhuja and Jane Chan (eds.), *China's Maritime Silk Road and Asia*, (VIJ Books India Pvt Ltd, 2016), Geoffrey Till and Jane Chan (eds.), *'Naval Development in Southeast Asia'* (Routledge, 2014).



RSiS

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

S. RAJARATNAM
SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES



**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**
SINGAPORE