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The Philippines-Indonesia Maritime Border Agreement: Strengthening Relations towards Regional Stability in Southeast Asia

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Background on Maritime Disputes

In his investigation of the historical and political trend of global maritime boundary disputes, Østhaugen described how states' perspectives of maritime ownership and rights have evolved over the past millennia – from the international community holding an “oceans as global commons” perspective to coming together to develop a comprehensive legal framework for the oceans, which has provided the legal rationale for states to justify increasing the scope of their respective territorial seas. Since the end of World War Two, instability in the international system can be traced back to contentions related to maritime territoriality; hence, issues on this matter have only continued to rise to the forefront of the international security sphere.

Binder noted that though the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defined the scope of extending sovereign economic rights, including establishing an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as a means of securing rights for resource extraction, it lacks the sanctioning mechanisms to protect states from infringements, seizure of territory, and application of force. Further, he concluded that the lack of territorial integrity and guaranteed sovereignty, resulting from ill-defined borders, leads to intensifying conflicts, and, in response, military protection should assume a greater role to compensate for the lack of legal protection of territories. Relatedly, Kim noted that many of Northeast Asia's maritime disputes are not only rooted in the colonial history of the region but are also aggravated by the disparities in the interpretation of the 1982 UNCLOS.

Seemingly, the institution of an international law framework for settling maritime disputes has not diminish maritime boundary disputes across all continents. Moreover, contest involving political, economic, and historic interests compound differences which obtain from the vague delineation of maritime boundaries.

In contrast, over the course of years of negotiations, the Philippines and Indonesia have succeeded in resolving the longstanding territorial border disputes concerning their respective overlapping maritime boundaries in the EEZs and have reached a final agreement that is largely in accordance with the governing principles of the UNCLOS. In view of the foregoing, this paper offers an assessment of the current situation of the Philippines–Indonesia Maritime Border Agreement and how the adherence by these nations to a framework of international law has been instrumental in the collaborative undertaking to solve a decades-long border issue, and shall consequently continue to cement the foundation for both nations to enhance their maritime security functions.



Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia

Almost for all time, global trade has been dependent upon free access to the seas. The dependence of nations upon the global commons informs and contextualises maritime boundary disputes in Southeast Asia.

Although generally perceived as a relatively stable, the past few decades have witnessed a great shift in maritime security in Southeast Asia as the region has taken on a much greater importance due to the growing economic and political weight of Asia, as well as the UNCLOS, which has resulted in 200-nautical-mile EEZs. Nevertheless, conventional challenges such as maritime territorial disputes and the security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) remain. Traditional conflicts rooted in unsettled or disputed borders, or stemming from historical animosity, which are the most likely serious security challenges to Southeast Asian countries, are derived from complex territorial disputes.

As purported in Karl Marx's conflict theory, "Society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. It [conflict theory] holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity."

Suffice to say, there is no clear-cut trend relating to the success or lack thereof in settling the various territorial disputes among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members. To further elaborate on this, some countries have settled more territorial disputes than others but none of the member-states has settled all its territorial disputes. This is best exemplified by Indonesia, which has settled some territorial disputes with Malaysia, while maritime boundaries in other areas have yet to be agreed by the two countries. Indonesia's dispute with Vietnam has not been resolved despite longstanding good bilateral relations and negotiations on the matter.¹ The list goes on, but this only underscores the prevailing complexity of the situation surrounding the settlement of maritime or territorial disputes.

Interestingly, a new development began in the mid-1990s with the willingness of some ASEAN members to take their disputes to international arbitration. Malaysia and Singapore, and Malaysia and Indonesia have decided to bring their respective disputes over islands to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.² This development is a clear indication that ASEAN members, in lieu of other options in border dispute settlement, have agreed to invoke and abide by the provisions of the prevailing international laws. This can be perceived as positive in situations when the parties to the disputes cannot reach a compromise.



This can be further shown by ASEAN's approach to conflict management, which has primarily taken the form of conflict avoidance and not allowing existing conflicts to disrupt inter-state relations. This is seen as a mechanism in the conflict management process since it aims at preserving peaceful relations between member-states by such measures as avoiding, defusing, and containing issues which could otherwise lead to open conflict and hostility.³

Whatever the case, a fundamental principle that is necessary in resolving many of these territorial disputes in Southeast Asia is the willingness to try to reach a meaningful compromise along with an agreement that shall be reasonable to all parties involved. In the face of an ever-evolving security environment, this shall be critical as the range of non-traditional threats such as piracy and maritime terrorism have continued to emerge alongside competition for resources and strategic access, which will inevitably increase the potential for conflict in the region.

Territorial Disputes Involving the Philippines

Being an archipelagic state surrounded by bodies of water, the resolution of maritime territorial disputes is not a foreign concept to the Philippine Government. Over the years, the Philippines has gained success in negotiating and overcoming its territorial disputes with other claimant countries but has also faced some challenges that have yet to be resolved.

The Malaysian–Philippine Maritime Dispute

The Malaysian–Philippine Maritime Dispute or the Sabah Dispute is a long-running territorial dispute between both countries over most of the eastern part of Sabah. This dispute stems from the clash of colonial treaties and the provisions of the more recent UN Convention on the Law of the Sea created in 1982.⁴ In this case, the Philippines derives its claims on Sabah from the Sultanate of Sulu, one of the southernmost regions of the country. Here, the Sultanate of Sulu claims that the territory of Sabah, previously known as North Borneo, was given as a gift from the Sultan of Brunei for rendering their aid in a war that took place in the 1600s.

Now, the Philippines maintains a dormant claim on Sabah on the basis that this territory was merely leased to the British North Borneo Company in 1878, having never relinquished the actual territory itself. However, to date, only two Philippines presidents have actively supported Sulu's claim.



Since former president Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in 1986, the Philippine Government has not formally recognised the Sultanate of Sulu. On the other hand, Malaysia claims that the British North Borneo Co.'s agreement with the Sultanate of Sulu was installments to purchase the territory from the Philippines. Moreover, in the perspective of Kuala Lumpur, sovereignty was transferred to Malaysia when British Malaya was succeeded.⁵ Resolving this dispute is vital not only to lessen tensions between Malaysia and the Philippines, but more importantly to address the issue of thousands of Filipinos living in Sabah without proper documentation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of these Filipino residents living on the island were deported back to the Philippines.

In July 2020, the dispute that was left stagnant was suddenly reignited through a diplomatic feud that began on the social media site Twitter. Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin Jr quoted a tweet by the US Embassy in Manila regarding donations to Filipinos repatriated from Sabah, stating that “Sabah is not in Malaysia.”⁶ In response to this, Hishammuddin Hussein, the Foreign Minister of Malaysia, summoned the Philippine ambassador to Malaysia and regarded Locsin’s remarks as irresponsible and damaging to the bilateral relationship of the Philippines and Malaysia.

Effects on Other Maritime Territorial Disputes

According to Leng in his article “The Malaysian–Philippine Maritime Dispute” published in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, “if this [dispute] is not an easy task for both parties to sort out then the problem in the Spratlys will be an even more difficult one because it is not confined to Malaysia and the Philippines.” The predicament both countries face in answering the question of who Sabah actually belongs to not only affects their bilateral ties, but also affects the territorial projections in the South China Sea for them and other Southeast Asian countries such as Brunei, Indonesia and Vietnam. These kinds of disputes between the member states of ASEAN stand in the way of a united stance against a greater and more urgent threat, that being China’s blatant disregard for the ruling of UNCLOS and the militarisation of the disputed waters.

The Philippines and Indonesia Maritime Border Dispute

The Philippines has been one of the major forerunners of ASEAN and diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Indonesia were established on November 24, 1949. But even before the establishment of formal relations, friendly relations already existed between the Philippines and Indonesia. The centuries-old ties between these two nations are expressed in sub-regional and regional organisations where both the Philippines and Indonesia can exhibit similar ideals and aspirations.⁷



The Philippines and Indonesia are neighbouring archipelagos, perhaps even once part of the same land mass. While the Philippines lies generally northward and eastward of Indonesia, their climates are much the same. Both countries have a variety of racial/ethnic groups and languages, but in both the Malay stock and linguistic roots predominate.⁸

Furthermore, they have been greatly influenced and shaped by their colonial histories. The Philippines and Indonesia were under the rule of Spaniards and the Dutch for more than 300 years, respectively. However, the Philippines gained its independence after the Spanish–American War when Spain relinquished its rule over the Philippine archipelago to the United States and left the country with unclear territorial boundaries.

With the independence of the Philippines and Indonesia at the end of World War Two, both countries made unilateral claims during the 1950s that demanded a specific regime for archipelagic states to be articulated.⁹ The acceptance of the archipelagic principle is a clear demonstration of the international community’s awareness of these states’ need to find appropriate means of defining national territory and exercise jurisdiction over that territory.¹⁰

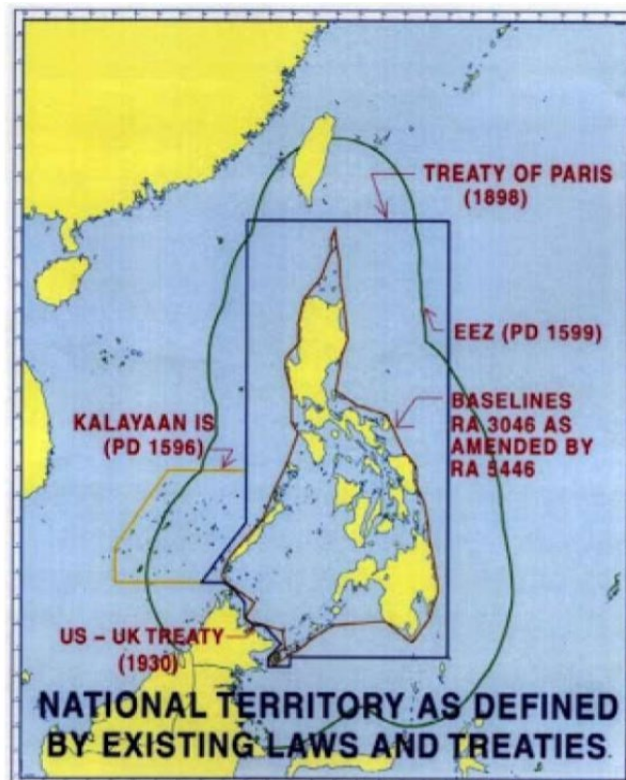
The 1982 UNCLOS contains provisions governing the maritime claims of states, including special provisions for archipelagic states. This is critical in maintaining international peace and security in establishing a legal framework for all marine and maritime activities. It lays down a comprehensive regime of law and order in the world's oceans and seas, establishing rules governing all uses of the oceans and their resources. It embodies in one instrument traditional rules for the uses of the oceans and at the same time introduces new legal concepts and regimes and addresses new concerns. UNCLOS also provides the framework for further development of specific areas of the law of the sea.¹¹

To date, more than 20 states have utilised these provisions by enacting archipelagic baselines, within which these states claim sovereign waters subject to the navigational rights of other states.¹² Despite this “acknowledgement” by the international community through UNCLOS, most if not all the archipelagic states around the world face various challenges, particularly in securing sovereignty over their respective territorial waters. A case in point is the inability of these states to properly manage and take advantage of their rich natural resources and at the same time look after the welfare and security of every element of the nation.



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However, the Philippines has asserted claims to its current territorial boundaries based on three colonial treaties defining boundaries: 1) the Treaty of Peace Between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain on 10 December 1898, also referred to as the Treaty of Paris; 2) the Treaty Between the Kingdom of Spain and the United States of America for Cession of Outlying Islands of the Philippines on 7 November 1900; and 3) the Convention Between the United States of America and Great Britain Delimiting the Boundary Between the Philippine Archipelago and the State of North Borneo on 2 January 1930. These treaty limits are subject to debate in the international law as baselines did not obey the provisions constituted in Articles 56 and 57 of the UNCLOS.¹³ (see figure below).



Consequently, no country has ever recognised the Philippines' claims based on these treaty limits. Subsequently, these treaty limits have inadvertently created an overlapping maritime boundary in the EEZ from the Celebes to Mindanao Sea in which some parts belong to Indonesia as well.

Beyond just the matter of territorial borders, the EEZ also plays a significant role in the economies of both countries as an archipelagic country's livelihood depends largely on the sea, such as fisheries and natural gas reserves. Moreover, this area is the main route of international shipping lanes.



In scientific terms, EEZs expand to the implementation of scientific research on a variety of marine creatures, and seabed sampling for oil and gas purposes that can also be carried out therein.

Regarding this issue, it is necessary to understand how the unique archipelagic makeup and strategic geographic location of these two countries will prove vital for the social and economic development not only of these two countries but the entirety of Southeast Asia. The maritime border where the Philippines and Indonesia share the same EEZ is in areas of high-volume marine traffic and serves as a regular transit area of foreign registered vessels. With this comes the rising complex challenges plaguing the region and places immense pressure on their leaders. These challenges include but are not limited to the preservation of sovereignty over the waters; entry of maritime security threats; occurrences of maritime terrorism; and various maritime violations such as foreign vessel intrusion, illegal fishing, trafficking, smuggling, and piracy.¹⁴ “The State shall protect the nation’s marine wealth in its archipelagic waters, territorial sea, and exclusive economic zone, and reserve its use and enjoyment exclusively to Filipino Citizens” (section 2, Article XII of the 1987 Philippine Constitution).

The imminent likelihood of a slowly mounting maritime border dispute between the Philippines and Indonesia has prompted both countries to take immediate actions, after having been confronted by several factors, to finalise their maritime boundaries. Factors that could lead to unpredictable and volatile situations that could ultimately disrupt bilateral relations or escalate to armed conflict include overlapping and conflicts of territorial sovereignty, disruption in the observance of rights, contradictions and uncertainties regarding authority, and inequalities in resource management.

Both countries firmly concluded that having defined maritime boundaries is an essential and necessary part of the international system. Thus, the Philippines and Indonesia conducted several meetings to reach their final agreement on the delimitation of the EEZ boundary in accordance with the principles of the UNCLOS. According to UNCLOS, every coastal state has “jurisdiction, rights and duties with regard to the establishment and use of artificial islands, installations and structures, marine scientific research and protection and preservation of the marine environment”.¹⁵

Contemplating the statement above, one cannot deny that maritime border disputes will cause a negative effect, particularly on the economic development of the states involved. One major reason is that public and private entities will be unable to explore the resources over a disputed maritime area since there is no clear agreement or guidelines for a legally defined boundary that would determine specific activities and explorations that are permitted.



Furthermore, the Philippines and Indonesian archipelagos are strategically positioned in a maritime area that has often been transited and traversed by merchant vessels along the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) as well as military vessels, including submarines and other nuclear-powered vessels. These factors have made these maritime zones and airspace a very important strategic consideration in the minds of the regional and global powers.¹⁶

Finalising the Philippines and Indonesia Maritime Border Agreement

On May 23, 2014, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Philippine President Benigno Aquino III entered in a formal agreement with the signing ceremony at the Malacanang Presidential Palace in Manila, Philippines. Both countries have signed an agreement resolving their sea border dispute after 20 years of negotiations and these leading Southeast Asian neighbours have vowed to forge even closer ties.¹⁷

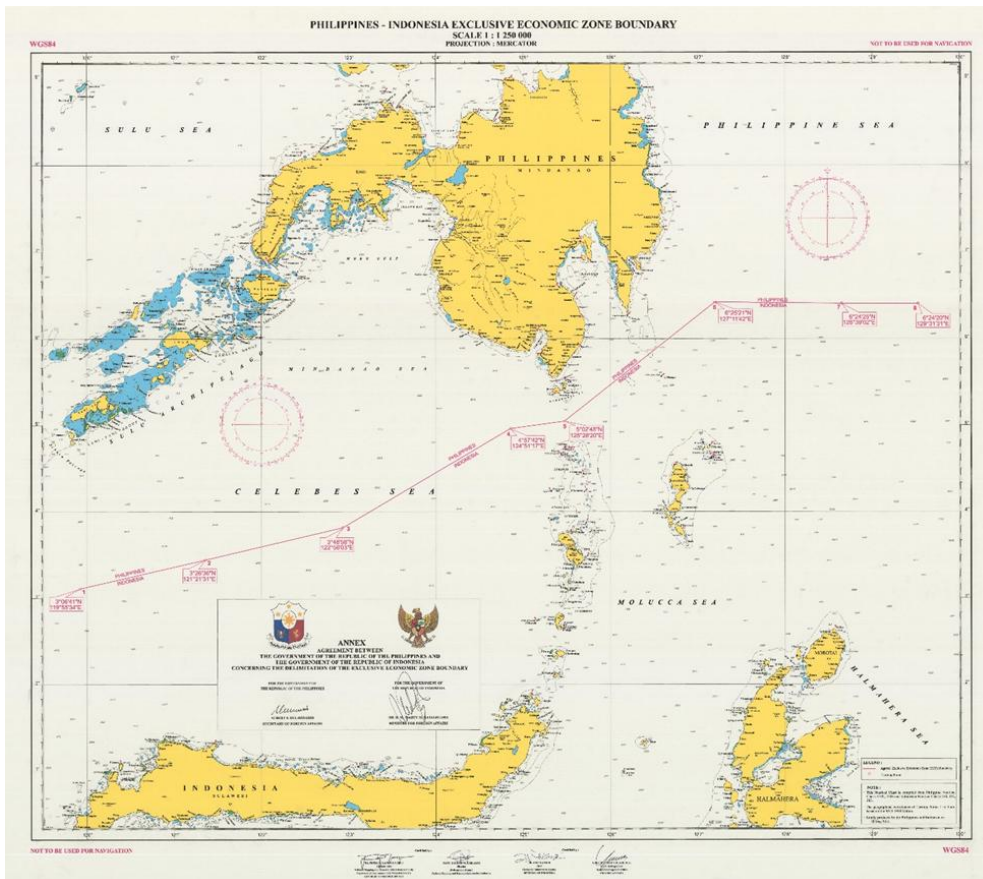


Figure 2: Philippines-Indonesia EEZ Boundary.

(Source: United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. No. 55946, Indonesia-Philippines, I-55946-Map)



Indonesian President Yudhoyono further emphasised in his statement, “This indeed is a model. A good example that any border disputes, including maritime border tension, can be resolved peacefully and not [through] the use of military might, which interferes with and endangers stability and peace in our region or anywhere in the world.” Philippine President Aquino III called the border agreement a milestone “that is founded on the principles of international law, particularly the UNCLOS, and it serves as solid proof of their steadfast commitment to uphold the rule of law and pursue the peaceful and equitable settlement of maritime concerns.”

Further, the Philippines’ Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) explained that the EEZ agreement with Indonesia was forged in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS and the state practices and decisions of international tribunals on maritime boundary delimitation. In essence, it is the result of a rules-based negotiation to peacefully resolve maritime issues between two archipelagic states, the DFA said. “This is the first maritime boundary treaty of the Philippines. The EEZ boundary line defines the limits of the sea space in the southern Philippines thereby giving our fishermen and other stakeholders a clear extent of the area where they can exercise the sovereign rights over the waters as provided for by national laws and treaties, including the 1982 UNCLOS.” The EEZ boundary will also further boost the government’s efforts to enforce Philippine fishing, maritime and security laws, it added.¹⁸

In 2019, the Philippines and Indonesia’s Maritime Border Agreement delineating the boundary between the overlapping EEZs officially entered into force following the exchange by the two countries’ foreign ministers of the instruments of ratification in a special ceremony held on August 1, 2019, in Bangkok, Thailand. It was ratified by President Rodrigo Duterte on February 15, 2017, and by the Indonesian Parliament on April 27, 2017. To complete domestic procedures, the Philippine Senate concurred with the President’s ratification on June 3, 2019. The Agreement is expected to benefit both countries, economically and politically, by promoting more bilateral cooperation in the EEZ to advance the common interest of managing and preserving the resources in the EEZ and further strengthening maritime security cooperation between the two countries.¹⁹

The successful enforcement of the Philippines and Indonesia Maritime Border Agreement emphatically shows each country’s commitment and adherence to maritime diplomacy. The Agreement has solidified the establishment of cooperation through this collaborative undertaking for common interests in economics, politics and security. In accordance with the UNCLOS, the Philippines and Indonesia have realised that a unilateral proclamation must be aligned with prevailing international laws, especially when it comes to sovereignty issues, in this case claims over maritime territories.



Pursuing cooperative maritime diplomacy to resolve maritime border disputes shows how both countries highly respect and value their longstanding friendship and further shows the effectiveness of goodwill in settling maritime disputes peacefully.

Indeed, fostering open communication, mutual respect, and placing utmost consideration on the interests of the countries concerned are important lessons that other nations entangled in territorial disputes ought to learn from the case of Indonesia and the Philippines. Moreover, compliance with prevailing international law has certainly yielded positive results in the case of this border dispute, as evidenced through the collective efforts of the Philippines and Indonesia in achieving a stable and peaceful regional society, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Enhancement of Maritime Security

Given the myriad challenges that continue to plague the archipelagic waters of both the Philippines and Indonesia, particularly in the Mindanao and Celebes seas, the finalisation of the Philippines–Indonesia Maritime Border Agreement has continued to strengthen ongoing initiatives, particularly in the fields of defense and security as umbrellas to undertake military and security cooperation for both countries.

For Indonesia, the Jokowi administration focused on maritime diplomacy and naval development as the key themes of the country’s foreign and defense policy planning and have further implemented the doctrine of Global Maritime Axis. Focusing on maritime security, this policy seeks to continuously promote maritime cooperation and efforts in addressing border disputes, illegal fishing, sovereignty offenses, piracy and marine pollution.²⁰

On the other hand, the Philippines aligns its maritime-related agenda to the National Security Policy set by the national government, and the Department of National Defense consequently sets the Defense Policy and Defense Planning Guidance that shall serve as the National Military Strategy (NMS) for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The NMS Framework outlines the alignment of the Ends (National Military Objectives), Ways (Elements of Strategy & Strategic Concepts), and Means (Characteristics & Capability). It also defines the Security Environment, the Policy Environment, and the four Strategic Approaches.



Creating the National Policy and Strategy

The Active Archipelagic Defense Strategy (AADS) is the Philippine Navy's strategic plan, aligned with the NMS of the AFP. It defines the strategic maritime environment and the different security challenges that are being confronted. Furthermore, it also defines how the navy operates based on the guidance of national laws, policies and strategies, which are realised through the AADS strategic and operational approaches, and emphasises the concept of joint operation.

Importance of Cooperation and Collaboration

An integral component of the Philippines' maritime agenda is fostering cooperation and collaboration not only with internal stakeholders but also with external stakeholders such as our neighbouring allies. In today's complex global security environment, it is imperative that we continue to strengthen cooperation with allies and partners in order to expand and adapt these relationships in dealing with new challenges and threats such as terrorism, transnational crimes, cyber and maritime security concerns, as well as natural and man-made disasters that transcend borders and boundaries.

Again, the importance of cooperation and collaboration is greatly highlighted by the continued and strengthened relations of the Philippines with ASEAN. ASEAN is one of the cornerstones of the Philippines' foreign and trade policies. This is manifested in the Philippines' policy of promoting a more peaceful, stable and free Southeast Asia through the pursuit of different initiatives in policy making, economic development, trading and functional cooperation activities. To illustrate this further, the Philippines actively participates in the shaping of ASEAN's regional agenda that ensures the bloc's relevance and importance in the international arena. More importantly, the Philippines has constantly affirmed the notion of ASEAN centrality that should be always promoted, both in the group's internal and external dealings, and that ASEAN continues to remain as the driver of regionalism acting as an intermediary between competing regional powers.²¹

Border Crossing Agreement

In furtherance of existing friendly relations, the desire to conclude an agreement that will provide a basis for the action and treatment to be accorded to nationals of both parties who are illegally in the territory of the other, and the establishment of a more expeditious and simplified system of control for the entry and exit of nationals of the contracting parties living within the specified border area, the Agreement on Border Crossing Between the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Indonesia was established in 1975.²²



Border Security and International Exchange

A concrete manifestation of the Philippines' cordial naval relationship with its neighbouring countries is the regular conduct of Coordinated Patrols (CORPAT) with Indonesia which is part of the 1975 Border Crossing Agreement with Indonesia. The CORPAT aims to enhance the interoperability between the assets of the Philippine and Indonesian navies through the conduct of combined mission planning and exercises at sea, in order to boost the cooperation of the two navies in the domain of maritime security and to strengthen the bilateral ties of the two countries.

Expanding Security Cooperation

Security cooperation in Southeast Asia has continuously expanded, particularly in the Celebes Sea region. Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have essentially taken this security cooperation to a whole new level for their own security and for the safe passage of international trade. The Celebes Sea's triborder area has been labeled as the "danger zone of Southeast Asia", due to cross-border activities of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), organisations notorious for their involvement in crime, terrorism and piracy among many other illicit activities.²³

Trilateral security in the Celebes Sea is jeopardised by a complex threat which affects Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Terrorist organisations have found safe havens in the surrounding islands of the Celebes Sea to recruit, train, operate and remain concealed. Many of these territories are hosts to ethnic and religious conflicts, thus creating a greater challenge for local authorities, and providing a haven for these organisations to operate. Some of these organisations have adopted traditional pirate tactics to fund their operations and carry out their agendas. Criminal piracy is also rampant in the region, affecting the livelihood of local communities and the safe transit of international commerce. All three nations have unilaterally attempted to combat this threat. However, the terrain and remoteness of these archipelagic borders allow these groups to move easily from one country to another. These nations have engaged in trilateral efforts to control their common border areas, but the ineffectiveness of their forces, mistrust of each other's intentions and corruption have limited the efficacy of these efforts. The failure of unilateral and trilateral approaches to these problems has prompted the three nations to reinstate trilateral efforts to secure the areas surrounding the Celebes Sea.²⁴



With the constant threat looming, these three countries then developed the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA) that aims to disrupt terrorist hijackings and hostage-takings in the Sulu Sea. The first component of the TCA was the launch of the Trilateral Maritime Patrol (TMP) by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in Tarakan, Indonesia, in June 2017.

These joint efforts have helped stem the continuing flow of funds and fighters to Southeast Asia. Moreover, the creation of the Our Eyes Initiative (OEI) was based on the principle that it takes a network to beat a network. If the terrorists in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore can train together in the Philippines, then the Southeast Asian states should also similarly engage in joint training, exercises and operations.²⁵

Prospects in the South China Sea

Maritime boundaries and borders do not really exist in the South China Sea. As such, it is important to distinguish between maritime borders/boundaries and maritime frontiers in the maritime realm. Boundaries or borders are where political limits are demarcated, whereas frontiers tend to be rather flexible, since they are geographic zones where states have yet to establish complete political control or are in the process of doing so. Thus, a significant portion of the various claimed maritime zones in Southeast Asia may be considered as maritime frontiers.²⁶

Nevertheless, the recent conclusion of negotiations over maritime boundaries between Indonesia and the Philippines is a significant development for the two ASEAN member states. This is viewed as a positive turn amidst rising tensions in the South China Sea sparked by worsening disputes over competing maritime claims. The successful conclusion of the talks between Jakarta and Manila holds an important lesson for all claimant states over disputed waters in the South China Sea.

The current prevailing law to settle maritime boundaries is articulated in the UNCLOS, which has a gravitas and consequence far beyond local custom. Thus, the Philippines–Indonesian Border Agreement clearly signifies the emergence of a state practice whereby a maritime boundary dispute shall be settled through and aligned with prevailing international law.²⁷

Further, the Maritime Border Agreement of the Philippines and Indonesia is a prime example of conflict prevention and management of disputes regardless of the existence of boundaries. They have shown that it can be done by putting shared aspirations and common interests forward for the sake of regional stability and security.



Conclusion

As a democracy, a maritime nation and member of the community of nations, the Philippines has a vested interest in becoming a more influential and constructive actor in the security affairs of the region. This means that the Philippines will need to pay greater attention to the strategic dimension of its treaty commitments, its multilateral relationships and to work more cooperatively on transnational issues.²⁸ Strengthening and nurturing bilateral relations is undeniably a prerequisite for initiating border negotiations and affects success particularly in addressing maritime border issues. The favourable outcome of the Philippines-Indonesia Maritime Border Agreement has shown how good diplomatic relations between neighbouring countries are important to maritime border settlement. It has also been proven that collaborative approaches or any similar undertakings may successfully end border disputes with proper consideration for the prevailing international law. Although the author also considers certain prerequisites are necessary and not all disputes can be easily settled in the same manner, as is the case in the South China Sea, nevertheless it can still be done. The Philippines-Indonesia Maritime Border Agreement was instrumental in the promotion of peace and stability in the Southeast Asian region with the expansion to other agreements such as the TCA in addressing terrorism. This Maritime Border Agreement has certainly opened more opportunities for collaboration and cooperation, not only with Indonesia but also with the rest of the ASEAN member states, especially in acknowledging the dynamic and volatile security environment in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world.



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