

A satellite map of Southeast Asia and the Pacific region, showing landmasses in dark blue and water in lighter blue. The map is centered on the Pacific Ocean, with Southeast Asia and the Philippines visible on the left and right sides.

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GETTING PAST CONSTRAINTS

DEEPENING U.S. SECURITY RELATIONS WITH VIET NAM AND INDONESIA

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PACIFIC FORUM
INTERNATIONAL



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Getting past constraints: Deepening U.S. security relations with Vietnam and Indonesia

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Pacific Forum, in collaboration with local partners, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), and the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI), organized the Track 2 U.S.-Vietnam and U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogues in August 2022. With support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), ten U.S. strategic thinkers, including scholars, policy experts, and retired military and government officials, traveled to Hanoi on August 3-5, 2022, and to Bali on August 9-11, 2022, to meet and engage with 19 counterparts from Vietnam and 14 from Indonesia. Both Track 2 dialogues included one day of panel discussion on thematic issues and one day devoted to a scenario-based exercise.

The recommendations contained in this report, unless otherwise specifically noted, were generated by the discussions as interpreted by the Principal Investigators. This is not a consensus document. Both the agenda and participant list are included in the appendix; all participants attended in their private capacity.

The statements made and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Pacific Forum, the project sponsors, or the dialogue participants' respective organizations and affiliations. For questions, please email jeffrey@pacforum.org.

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Getting past constraints: Deepening U.S. security relations with Vietnam and Indonesia

Executive Summary

Vietnam and Indonesia are important security partners of the United States in Southeast Asia. In August 2022, Pacific Forum reconvened two Track 2 bilateral security dialogues to help identify ways the United States and the two Southeast Asian partners can work together to surmount problems in their respective relationships that hinder bilateral cooperation on security issues of shared concern, re-converge their national interests, and enhance partnerships. The 2022 iterations, held in-person, in Hanoi and Bali, served as a follow on to the outcomes of the 2021 virtual dialogues and aimed to clarify outstanding issues and delve more deeply into substantive topics to generate actionable and operationally relevant recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Pacific Forum reconvened two Track 2 dialogues with Vietnam and Indonesia in August 2022 to help identify ways the United States and its two Southeast Asian partners can work together to enhance bilateral cooperation on security issues of shared concern. Functional cooperation between Washington and its two Southeast Asian partners has considerably advanced in the past ten years, but differing strategic considerations still handicap some aspects of these relationships. The two security dialogues emphasized these findings, among other takeaways.

FINDINGS SUMMARY

In its February 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy document, the United States stressed that “collective efforts over the next decade will determine whether the PRC succeeds in transforming the rules and norms that have benefitted the Indo-Pacific and the world.” The 2021 U.S.-Vietnam and U.S.-Indonesia security dialogues had made clear that such framing would not generate broad Southeast Asian cooperation. This year’s dialogues echoed similar themes while underscoring functional cooperation as vital to the two countries’ security relations with the United States. Their strategic autonomy and agency are central to their response to threats from Beijing, and they are reluctant to align outright with the United States on China-related strategic considerations. Nevertheless, Indonesia and Vietnam are interested in working with the United States when it strengthens their strategic autonomy and ability to stand up to threats, including those from China. Two interconnected factors determine Indonesian and Vietnamese strategic thinking regarding China’s assertive behavior and willingness to cooperate with the United States on security issues. First, geography makes China an everyday presence for Hanoi and Jakarta and their economies. Second, the self-help regional security environment compels Jakarta and Hanoi to be extra cautious in dealing with Chinese assertiveness. They are not U.S. treaty-allies. Vietnamese and Indonesian interlocutors do not expect the United States to defend Vietnam and Indonesia should Beijing use force.

METHODOLOGY

Pacific Forum, in collaboration with the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), and the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI), organized the Track 2 U.S.-Vietnam and U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogues in August 2022. With support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), ten U.S. strategic thinkers, including scholars, policy experts, and retired military and government officials, traveled to Hanoi on August 3-5, 2022, and to Bali on August 9-11, 2022, to meet and engage with 19 counterparts from Vietnam and 14 from Indonesia. Both dialogues included one day of panel discussion on thematic issues and one day of scenario-based exercise. The agenda for each dialogue underwent pre-dialogue “socialization” with key stakeholders from the United States, Vietnam, and Indonesia to ensure topics for discussions were relevant to the national security interests and priorities of all

concerned states. The following are the key findings and recommendations from the two dialogues.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TWO SECURITY DIALOGUES

Finding: China has specifically designed its operations in the South China Sea to avoid thresholds for escalation and response by using civilian or non-military actors to operationalize claims using tactics that fall short of kinetic armed conflict. China would perceive any response to a gray zone coercion either as “escalatory”—possibly provoking a stronger Chinese response that could result in a complete reversal of status quo of certain features—or “muted”—which could encourage Beijing to attempt more coercive maneuvers.

- **Recommendation:** The United States and its partners must challenge the narrative surrounding the existence of civilian and non-military actors in the South China Sea. First, Washington should support regional partners’ efforts to identify, document, and publicize militia operations, including publishing photos and videos in open source, disseminating evidence in Track 1 forums and venues like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defense Ministers Meeting Plus and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Second, Washington must link the behavior of China’s maritime militia and Coast Guard to its interactions with the PLAN. The United States should communicate publicly and privately that it expects the PLAN, the Coast Guard, and the maritime militia to abide by the internationally recognized standards of seamanship and communications, including the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES).

“Their strategic autonomy and agency are central to their response to threats from Beijing, and they are reluctant to align outright with the United States on China-related strategic considerations.”

- **Recommendation:** Washington should take three actions to address the gradual, non-kinetic nature of China’s gray zone tactics. First, it should help improve situational awareness through capacity-building efforts that enhance partners’ maritime domain awareness, such as through provisions of maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, including remote sensing tools, unmanned platforms, and coastal radar. Second, it should help address the asymmetry in capabilities by tailoring defense assistance to partners with more surface assets to maintain sustained presence and expanding maritime law enforcement capabilities through initiatives like Coast Guard ship-riding programs. Finally, the United States and its partners should thoroughly discuss potential non-kinetic tactical responses to harassment.
- **Recommendation:** The United States should establish a task force within the Seventh Fleet, modeled on Task Force 59 in the Fifth Fleet, to develop and deploy unmanned and automated maritime domain awareness

platforms in coordination with Vietnam and other regional partners. This could vastly improve the ability to monitor and identify Chinese gray zone actors in a persistent and affordable manner.

Finding: U.S. efforts at direct deterrence (e.g., U.S. Navy operations to defend its own freedom of navigation) in the South China Sea have been much more successful than extended deterrence (e.g., assisting Vietnam and other coastal states in the region to protect their own maritime rights and interests against Chinese coercion).

- **Recommendation:** The United States should reinforce the principle of freedom of navigation in the South China Sea by clearly articulating through official documents and in meetings with China that the use of force to deny U.S. civilian or military vessels from rightful access to the South China Sea is a red line for the United States.
- **Recommendation:** The United States should articulate through official documents and in meetings with regional states that changing the status quo of disputed features by using force or gray zone coercion (e.g., ejecting existing Vietnamese presence on a disputed land feature) is another U.S. red line. The United States should engage its regional partners to establish acceptable parameters for a combined response and then respond appropriately in coordination with partner countries.

Finding: In a gray zone maritime crisis involving China, Vietnam will simultaneously de-escalate by engaging Beijing and defend its interests by deploying non-military assets to assert presence or control. Coordinating with Washington to address a China-related gray zone crisis would not be a top priority for Hanoi. Meanwhile, Indonesia will resolutely respond to a gray zone crisis by safeguarding its interests and preventing a *fait accompli* while maintaining its strategic autonomy. Jakarta will use its diplomatic, military, and paramilitary assets to maintain the status quo. The Indonesians would prefer the United States carefully balance its engagement and avoid direct involvement in any Indonesia-China tension. Both Hanoi and Jakarta expect that their strategic space to de-escalate or arrive at an acceptable solution would be severely constrained once the United States is directly involved, and the crisis would be reframed in the context of “great power competition.”

- **Recommendation:** Addressing a gray zone crisis requires coordination between Washington and the partner country directly involved. In this regard, the United States should immediately consult with partner countries about the best course of action before making any move.

Finding: Beijing is unlikely to use outright aggression against Southeast Asian states. Instead, China will continue to push the envelope in the South China Sea and elsewhere through gray zone/non-kinetic means. Absent any effective response, Beijing will achieve more *fait accomplis*, which are extremely difficult to roll back without the use of force.

- **Recommendation:** The United States should continue to devote more resources (e.g., by sponsoring more

tabletop exercises, research, and dialogues) to better understand China’s use of gray zone coercion and draft plans accordingly. The United States should also discuss potential responses to counter gray zone coercion with partners and allies.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE U.S.-VIETNAM SECURITY DIALOGUES

Finding: Vietnam’s policy documents regard defense cooperation, including joint exercises, with other countries as important “to improve capabilities to protect the country and address common security challenges.” However, Vietnam makes a distinction between military exercises that are aimed at developing war-fighting skills (*tập trận*) and military training exercises to learn or improve basic skills (*diễn tập*). Vietnam will not participate in the former with the United States, which could potentially explain Hanoi’s lack of interest in joining the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise.

- **Recommendation:** When the United States invites Vietnam to join a bilateral or multilateral exercise, Washington should clarify that the purpose is to improve basic skills (*diễn tập*). In bigger exercises like the RIMPAC, U.S. invitation extended to Hanoi should stress the *diễn tập* value of the activities.

Finding: The United States sees Hanoi as a stabilizing force in the region. Vietnam has shown determination to continue the trajectory of its military modernization, which could present opportunities for the United States, not just in providing hardware, but also in deepening institutional ties, interoperability, and long-term trust. In 2021, Vietnam committed to “building a streamlined and strong Army by 2025, and a revolutionary, regular, highly-skilled and modern People’s Army by 2030,” vowing to prioritize Air Defense/Air Force Service, Navy, Signal Force, Electronic Warfare Force, Technical Reconnaissance Force, Cyber Warfare Force, and Cipher (cryptology) Force.

- **Recommendation:** Washington could offer to help Hanoi realize some of the aspects of its 2030 military modernization plan, for example, by building on the successful U.S.-Vietnam deal for the transfer of three T-6 trainers by 2023, along with spare parts and a maintenance package. The U.S. should continue to probe Vietnamese willingness to purchase more T-6s with a package including simulators, maintenance, and participation in an expanded aviation leadership program. This could provide the basis for Vietnam to acquire more advanced fighter jets in the future. Helping modernize Vietnam’s military capabilities could promote mutual trust, which in turn could result in deeper bilateral cooperation. It could also help Hanoi secure its maritime zones amidst Chinese coercion and contribute to regional security free from Chinese dominance.

Finding: Vietnam is unlikely to reinvigorate its civilian nuclear power program in the near future. Despite the high expectations surrounding the advent of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), interest in Vietnam is still not enough to push policymakers to reconsider a 2016 decision to halt

Vietnam's pursuit of nuclear energy. The view remains that Vietnam and Southeast Asia broadly have considerable alternatives to nuclear power. Nevertheless, Vietnamese experts stressed that SMRs and floating nuclear power plants are important topics for research, but any development is beyond the 10-year horizon.

- **Recommendation:** The U.S. Government should provide educational opportunities for Vietnamese nuclear engineers and nuclear policy/security experts. This would ensure that U.S.-educated engineers and experts are readily available should Hanoi decide to restart its civil nuclear program. This would counter potential Chinese or Russian influence in determining the trajectory of Vietnam's nuclear energy policy.

Finding: The U.S. and Vietnamese responses to the Itu Aba exercise conducted at the U.S. Vietnam Track 2 dialogue revealed the undercurrents in U.S. and Southeast Asian strategic thinking. First, Washington would not go to war against China to defend partner countries over small offshore territories in the South China Sea. Second, Southeast Asians' primary consideration when dealing with Chinese provocation is the idea that when hostilities escalate, they are on their own. U.S. partners do not expect the U.S. military to fight for them should there be a conflict.

- **Recommendation:** U.S. capacity-building initiatives should focus on helping partner countries obtain capabilities that allow them to maintain an active, sustained and visible presence in their own maritime zones. This means providing partner countries with surface assets like law enforcement patrol vessels that are capable of navigating their vast exclusive economic zones for longer periods and with the capacity to respond to Chinese coercion.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE U.S.-INDONESIA SECURITY DIALOGUES

Finding: Disagreement related to Archipelagic Sea-Lane (ASL) passage could become a long-term operational issue between Indonesia and the United States. The United States wants Indonesia to allow all navigational rights and freedoms within its archipelago as described in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Indonesia, however, remains reluctant to introduce more archipelagic sea-lanes, fearing the presence of more foreign warships in its archipelagic waters.

- **Recommendation:** The United States should have regular, standalone maritime security dialogues with Indonesia at the Track 1 and Track 2 levels to understand the factors that inhibit Indonesia from fully complying with the ASL provisions of the UNCLOS and help reassure Jakarta that U.S. military operations fully respect Indonesian sovereignty and territorial integrity. On the former, Indonesia's lack of maritime domain awareness may be discouraging it from establishing additional ASLs, in which case the United States could be helpful. On the latter, regular interactions between Indonesian and U.S. maritime institutions and experts would increase trust over time, which could lead to more maritime cooperation that accommodates both U.S. preferences and Indonesian interests.

Finding: Indonesia's growing Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, while not targeted at any specific country, could complicate assumptions about force flows, supply chains, and ally reinforcements. In this context, Indonesia could potentially close off its waters from all military forces, including the United States and its treaty allies, in the event of a crisis, for example, over Taiwan.

- **Recommendation:** U.S. military planning should take into account access to Southeast Asian territorial seas, and archipelagic waters (including their airspace) to assess the impact of potential restrictions or differing interpretations of international maritime law.
- **Recommendation:** More U.S. Government-sponsored dialogues and tabletop exercises should include Indonesia and other important partner countries in Southeast Asia to help promote common understanding and appreciation of key issues that arise during crises.

Finding: Two U.S.-led frameworks, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), could assist Indonesia with its Counterterrorism and Counterproliferation capacity-building. Neither the GICNT nor the PSI creates new obligations for participating states. Instead, cooperation is voluntary, with individual members' respective national authorities coordinating to help ensure that bad actors, including extremists, do not obtain Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)-related materials. Indonesia's persistent refusal to join U.S.-led security institutions is a political decision, rather than an objection to their operating principles.

- **Recommendation:** Washington should clearly articulate in Track 1 dialogues involving policymakers that both GICNT and PSI would allow Indonesia to remain carefully protective of its own national sovereignty and independence. The United States should also underscore the multilateral nature of these arrangements.

Getting past constraints: Deepening U.S. security relations with Vietnam and Indonesia

Report from Track II Dialogues

Jeffrey Ordaniel and Carl Baker

INTRODUCTION

Vietnam and Indonesia are important security partners in Southeast Asia. Pacific Forum reconvened two Track 2 bilateral security dialogues to help identify ways the United States and the two Southeast Asian partners can work together to surmount problems in their respective relationships that hinder bilateral cooperation on security issues of shared concern, re-converge their national interests, and enhance partnerships. The 2022 iterations, held in-person, in Hanoi and Bali, served as a follow on to the outcomes of the 2021 virtual dialogues and aimed to clarify outstanding issues and delve more deeply into substantive topics to generate actionable and operationally relevant recommendations.

Vietnam's improved ability to maintain presence and secure its maritime entitlements in the South China Sea amidst coercion from Beijing is not good only for Hanoi; it also supports a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Indonesia, meanwhile, is the world's largest archipelagic state facing both the Pacific and the Indian Oceans and the *de facto* leader of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). While it has stressed its strategic autonomy and desire to avoid so-called "great power competition," it has also expressed interest in more security cooperation with the United States, making it a promising partner in shaping the regional security architecture to accommodate broad U.S. interests.

Functional cooperation between Washington and its two Southeast Asian partners has considerably advanced in the past ten years, but differing strategic considerations, especially in relation to China, still handicap some aspects of these relationships. The 2022 U.S.-Vietnam and U.S.-Indonesia security dialogues emphasized these findings, among other takeaways.

FINDINGS SUMMARY

In its February 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy document, the United States described China's coercion and aggression as "most acute in the Indo-Pacific....Our collective efforts over the next decade will determine whether the PRC succeeds in transforming the rules and norms that have benefitted the Indo-Pacific and the world."ⁱ

The 2021 U.S.-Vietnamⁱⁱ and U.S.-Indonesiaⁱⁱⁱ security dialogues had made clear that the framing laid out in the February 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy document would not generate broad Southeast Asian cooperation. Overall, this year's bilateral security dialogues echoed similar themes. Vietnam and Indonesia consider functional cooperation vital to their security relations with the United States. Their strategic autonomy and agency are central to their response to threats from China, and they are reluctant to align outright with the United States on China-related strategic considerations.

Indonesia and Vietnam are interested in working with the United States when it strengthens their strategic autonomy and ability to stand up to threats, including those emanating from China. Two interconnected factors determine Indonesian and Vietnamese strategic thinking regarding China's assertive behavior and willingness to cooperate with the United States on security issues. First, geography makes China an everyday presence for Hanoi and Jakarta and their economies. Moreover, they see U.S. regional military and diplomatic presence as contingent

and inconsistent. Second, the self-help regional security environment compels Jakarta and Hanoi to be extra cautious in dealing with Chinese assertiveness. They are not U.S. treaty-allies. Vietnamese and Indonesian interlocutors do not expect the United States to defend Vietnam and Indonesia should Beijing use force. This is compounded by China's gray zone coercion, which the Vietnamese and Indonesian governments should manage carefully to avoid outright conflict. Because Indonesia and Vietnam consider Washington risk-averse and unlikely to set new redlines to challenge China's persistent efforts to change the status quo, they are unlikely to consider escalatory maneuvers to address Chinese assertiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Pacific Forum, in collaboration with local partners, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), and the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI), organized the Track 2 U.S.-Vietnam and U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogues in August 2022. With support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), ten U.S. strategic thinkers, including scholars, policy experts, and retired military and government officials, traveled to Hanoi on August 3-5, 2022, and to Bali on August 9-11, 2022, to meet and engage with 19 counterparts from Vietnam and 14 from Indonesia. Both Track 2 dialogues included one day of panel discussion on thematic issues and one day devoted to a scenario-based exercise.

During the panel sessions, Pacific Forum asked experts to provide framing remarks and brief presentations on dialogue topics, which were followed by plenary discussions. During the scenario-based exercise, participants broke into two groups—the United States and Vietnam/Indonesia—to strategize and respond to a scenario with answers to set questions. The agenda for each dialogue underwent extensive pre-dialogue "socialization" with key stakeholders from the United States, Vietnam, and Indonesia to ensure topics for discussions and actionable recommendations were relevant to the national security interests and priorities of all concerned states.

ANALYSIS

Functional bilateral security cooperation should remain the highlight of U.S. security relations with Vietnam and Indonesia. Hanoi and Jakarta will continue to welcome (if not expect) U.S. assistance activities, particularly those that increase maritime domain awareness and provide more capacity-building for military and paramilitary institutions. However, in the next five to 10 years, it is unlikely that functional cooperation will evolve into coordinated strategic efforts that could directly counter China at the regional level. Even in a contingency situation that would challenge their individual sovereignty, Vietnam and Indonesia apparently have little inclination to seek direct assistance from Washington.

U.S.-Vietnam security relations: aligned and functional, but *China factor* remains constraining

Because last year's dialogue identified maritime security, particularly in the South China Sea, as the issue that aligns U.S. and Vietnamese security interests, this year's dialogue devoted more time to the topic. This year's discussions included enhancing military-to-military cooperation within the broader context of pushing back against China's coercive maneuvers in the South China Sea. Nevertheless, Vietnamese strategic consideration became

apparent when some participants made clear that Hanoi remains uncomfortable in publicly and directly resisting China. Vietnam is aware it is no match for China, and it does not want to rely on another country in the event of an armed conflict. Vietnam prefers a more measured response to Chinese provocations. Vietnamese political leaders can also be sensitive about “uncontrolled” public opinion limiting their strategic space to maneuver in future crises. Finally, there remains no significant interest among Vietnamese policymakers to pursue nuclear energy aggressively, despite the promise of small modular reactors and potential U.S. assistance. In the end, while U.S.-Vietnam security cooperation is aligned and functional, it remains constrained by Vietnam’s wariness of isolating itself from other countries in Southeast Asia and risking its broader relationship with China.

Maritime security in the South China Sea

U.S. and Vietnamese experts recognize that a combination of “deterrence, intelligence collection, and public diplomatic and economic cost imposition” is key to securing Washington and Hanoi’s national interests in the South China Sea. Nevertheless, operationalizing those concepts in ways that shape Chinese behavior is difficult. This was apparent when dialogue participants discussed what Beijing has been able to accomplish in the past several years to the detriment of Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries, underscoring the difficulty of responding to “gray zone” operations.

Since 2013, when Beijing started building artificial islands and militarizing features in the Spratlys, Chinese gray zone coercion against Vietnam and other Southeast Asian claimants has steadily increased. China has forward deployed the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), the China Coast Guard (CCG), and maritime militia vessels to the Spratlys. PLAN vessels intimidate while CCG and militia vessels persistently harass peacetime activity by China’s neighbors. Militia and CCG vessels have also operationalized Chinese claims to significant portions of the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of Vietnam and other Southeast Asian states. Because those Chinese vessels are non-military, responses from Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries are muted. Chinese militia boats are often present for extended periods in the EEZs of other states without any escalatory response from the Southeast Asian countries because China can frame the militia activity as private and civilian. This reinforces the illusion of normal Chinese fishing activities in Chinese-claimed waters, although they were not in those areas until recently.

The militia vessels—both the state-owned ships registered in Sansha City in the Paracels and the larger fleet of heavily subsidized Spratly Backbone Fishing Vessels from Guangdong—now operate continuously in the Spratlys. On any given day, roughly 300 subsidized fishing boats loiter in the Spratlys but do not actually fish. Maritime militia boats, backed by CCG vessels, regularly attempt to prevent the Philippines’ rotation and resupply missions on the Second Thomas Shoal. Because Beijing can apparently employ this kind of gray zone coercion against a U.S. treaty ally with impunity, some participants

wondered what would prevent China from doing the same against Vietnam’s many small and isolated outposts in the Spratlys in the future.

China also uses its “pretend” fishing boats to justify the presence of CCG vessels, which allows the Chinese to claim “routine” administrative presence throughout the areas included in the nine-dash line. In the event of an engagement, CCG and PLAN vessels weaken the position of Vietnam and others in the region, providing China with escalation dominance.

Since 2018, China has met all new attempts by Southeast Asian states to explore hydrocarbon resources in their own Continental Shelf inside the nine-dash line with a dangerous CCG response. In addition to preventing others from benefitting from their own maritime entitlements, China has regularly deployed its state-owned marine survey fleet to conduct seabed surveys in Southeast Asian waters. U.S. interlocutors speculate that if Chinese gray zone coercion continued at this pace, it would soon be “impossible for Vietnam and other Southeast Asian states to pursue normal peacetime activities” as the risk would be too costly and sustaining presence would be expensive. This would make the illegal nine-dash line a *fait accompli* and represent a major blow to U.S. credibility as a regional security provider and to international maritime law.

The dialogue did not generate a workable U.S.-Vietnam solution to Beijing’s behavior. Discussions pivoted to understanding why China’s gray zone activities are successful. Participants generally agreed that China specifically designs its operations in the South China Sea to avoid thresholds for escalation and response by using civilian or non-military actors to operationalize claims using tactics that fall short of kinetic armed conflict. Participants lamented the inadequate response options to gray zone coercion—“escalatory” responses could provoke a stronger Chinese response and result in a complete reversal of status quo over certain features, while “muted” responses could encourage Beijing to attempt maneuvers that are more coercive. Some Vietnamese participants also

“...China specifically designs its operations in the South China Sea to avoid thresholds for escalation and response by using civilian or non-military actors to operationalize claims using tactics that fall short of kinetic armed conflict.”

stressed that directly and blatantly seeking U.S. assistance could be escalatory. Doing so could anger China and compel it to punish Vietnam. Vietnamese participants do not expect the United States to fight China on behalf of Vietnam in a conflict in the South China Sea.

In sum, China’s actions in the South China Sea continue to create tension in the maritime security environment for Vietnam and other Southeast Asian claimants. Nevertheless, U.S. efforts to defend its own interest in freedom of navigation have been reasonably successful. While small Chinese commercial craft have occasionally sailed dangerously close to U.S. vessels (e.g., during USS Lassen’s 2015 Freedom of Navigation Operations in the Spratlys), Chinese Government vessels have, so far, refrained from outright interference with these

operations. Some participants noted that U.S. vessels still enjoy relative military superiority. However, in extended deterrence efforts—assisting Vietnam and other coastal states in the region to protect their own maritime rights and interests against Chinese coercion—the United States has been much less successful. Participants cited three reasons: 1) U.S. vessels cannot be everywhere at all times, which undermines effective deterrence by denial since China enjoys predominant local power; 2) Washington has adhered to a policy of restraint, which undercuts any attempt at deterrence by punishment; and 3) extended deterrence is generally more difficult than direct deterrence because it often raises questions of political will. On the latter, U.S. experts at the dialogue noted that there had been a “substantial coalescing of political will” among U.S. political leaders to deter Beijing’s coercive behavior, as demonstrated in official documents such as the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy^{iv} and the unclassified National Defense Strategy fact sheet.^v

Understanding military capabilities, postures, and expectations

The first iteration of the dialogue underscored the United States’ growing interest in contributing to Vietnam’s military modernization since Washington increasingly sees Hanoi as a stabilizing force in the region. Hanoi has also expressed interest in potential U.S. assistance to diversify its defense procurement. To understand Vietnamese needs and U.S. interests, this year’s dialogue included an extensive discussion of Vietnam’s force modernization, which experts noted has focused on three sectors over the past 20 years: the Navy, air defense, and national defense industry. Vietnam’s Navy acquired eight Svetlyak-class missile patrol craft, eight Molniya-class missile corvettes, four Gepard-class missile frigates, and six improved Kilo-class conventional submarines. These acquisitions transformed Vietnam’s Navy from “a brown water, inland and coastal force to a green water force” capable of operating in the South China Sea. Moreover, Vietnam’s Air Force acquired 36 Su-30 multi-role jet fighters and the S-300 air and Bastion coastal defense systems. Vietnam developed its national defense industry to maintain and repair newly acquired weapons and platforms, co-produce a variety of anti-ship and anti-air missiles, assemble missile fast attack craft, and build vessels of various tonnage for the Coast Guard. Overall,

reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities in air/space reconnaissance, ground reconnaissance, and maritime surveillance. Vietnam also requires improvements in airlift and maritime transport and anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Vietnam has shown determination to continue the trajectory of its military modernization, which could present opportunities for the United States, not just in providing hardware, but also in deepening institutional ties, interoperability, and long-term trust. In February 2021, during the 13th National Congress, the Vietnam Communist Party, through a resolution, committed to “building a streamlined and strong Army by 2025, and a revolutionary, regular, highly-skilled and modern People’s Army by 2030.” The resolution stated that, up to 2025, Vietnam would prioritize achieving organizational structure; training; military standards, discipline, and administrative reform; and selective modernization of the Air-Defense/Air Force Service, Navy, Signal Force, Electronic Warfare Force, Technical Reconnaissance Force, Cyber Warfare Force, and Cipher (cryptology) Force.

In this context, Vietnamese and U.S. interlocutors explored opportunities for cooperation. They noted that Vietnam’s 2019 Defense White Paper underscored the importance of defense cooperation with other countries “to improve capabilities to protect the country and address common security challenges.” However, Vietnam insists that any cooperation with the United States to develop its defense capabilities should respect its “four no’s” policy: “no joining of military alliances, no alignment with one country to fight other countries, no foreign military bases, and no use of force or threat to use force in international relations.”^{vi}

Participants highlighted the significance of Hanoi’s current re-evaluation of Politburo Resolution No. 8 (2003), which classified countries as either partners for cooperation (*đối tác*) or objects/subjects of struggle (*đối tượng*). There are discussions about changing these terms to partners and adversaries. These terms guide the extent to which Vietnam is willing to engage in defense cooperation with foreign partners, including the United States. Because U.S. and Vietnamese security interests mostly align, it is unlikely that Vietnam sees the United States as an adversary. Functional security cooperation will continue to advance.

“...avoiding U.S. or other Western sanctions for purchasing arms and military technology from Russia is imperative for sustaining friendly defense relations with Vietnam.”

between 1995 and 2021, Vietnam acquired weapons and military technology from 27 countries. Since the United States lifted its embargo on the sale of lethal weapons to Vietnam in 2016, Hanoi has procured two Hamilton-class cutters (with a third to be delivered) and six ScanEagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) from the United States. Vietnam also ordered three POC-9 (T-6) trainer aircraft in 2021. Still, since 2014, over 80% of Vietnam’s acquisitions in U.S. dollar terms were from Russia. The other top providers included Belarus, Ukraine, Israel, India, the United States, and South Korea, in that order.

Despite considerable progress, experts noted that Hanoi still lacks intelligence, surveillance, and

On military exercises, Vietnam makes a distinction between military exercises aimed at teaching or improving basic skills (*diễn tập*) and those aimed at developing war-fighting skills (*tập trận*). Vietnam will not participate in the latter with the United States. Hanoi also insists on a continuing U.S. commitment to addressing war legacy issues (e.g., Agent Orange) as the basis for future defense cooperation.

On procurement, Vietnamese and U.S. participants raised concerns about how political considerations (human rights, religious freedom, and democracy promotion) could disrupt defense cooperation. Many in Vietnam’s defense and foreign policy establishments increasingly see the

United States as a valuable security partner. Vietnam particularly welcomes continued U.S. support for maritime capacity-building, especially for its Coast Guard. Some participants want to see a follow-up to the 2015 U.S.-Vietnam Joint Vision Statement on Defense Cooperation, for instance, by initiating defense industry cooperation between American and Vietnamese entities involving technology transfer and even co-production.

Finally, similar to the concerns expressed last year, avoiding U.S. or other Western sanctions for purchasing arms and military technology from Russia is imperative for sustaining friendly defense relations with Vietnam. Some participants are concerned about the increasing pressure against more procurements from Moscow given the Ukraine invasion. Both U.S. and Vietnamese experts doubt that any other country would be able to replace Russia as a major arms supplier to Vietnam.

The future of nuclear energy in Vietnam

Vietnam's potential pursuit of nuclear energy could have regional security implications. While Hanoi and Washington have an existing agreement concerning peaceful uses of nuclear energy (otherwise known as the 123 agreement), Vietnamese thinking on nuclear energy remains unclear. To understand the future of nuclear energy in Vietnam and its implications for security cooperation with the United States, the dialogue included a panel session on the topic. Both U.S. and Vietnamese experts agreed that Vietnam is unlikely to achieve civilian nuclear power in the near future. During the dialogue, experts reviewed the trajectory of Vietnam's nuclear plans and their security implications, tracing the interest back to the 1980s when Hanoi first undertook preliminary studies of nuclear power and concluded that nuclear energy could meet the country's growing need for electricity. For decades, nothing materialized. In 2010, Vietnam announced plans to build as many as 14 reactors by 2030, fulfilling 10% of the nation's electricity requirements. The first plant was supposed to be commissioned by 2017, but in 2016, Hanoi canceled plans for a series of nuclear power plants based on Russian designs and engineering, citing cheaper alternatives for generating electricity.

Last year's dialogue participants explored Hanoi's renewed consideration of nuclear energy, which led to discussions about how the United States could assist. This year, Vietnamese interlocutors underscored that interest in Vietnam and the wider region is still insufficient to push policymakers to consider serious investments. This is despite high expectations surrounding the advent of small modular reactors (SMRs), including that they require smaller parcels of land or could even be deployed at sea. Vietnam and Southeast Asia broadly have considerable alternatives to nuclear power, such as natural gas, coal, geothermal, wind, solar, and other sources that carry fewer political and security risks. One example experts cited is that a single, modern-day offshore wind turbine can generate more than 8MW of energy, meaning 37 wind turbines could potentially equal one SMR.

Participants noted that Vietnam's experience with nuclear power is not unique. In the wider region, plans for nuclear power have not progressed significantly. Malaysia has plans for a nuclear power plant, but there is no definite timeline (especially given that the country has plenty of oil and gas). Indonesia possesses uranium mines and some small research reactors, but has no specific plans for

building and operating civil nuclear electricity-generating plants. Singapore has studied nuclear energy, but its small size (and therefore vulnerability to nuclear accidents) would probably preclude any development.

Nevertheless, Vietnamese experts pointed out that nuclear energy remains an option for the long-term future, noting that, should the political leadership in Vietnam finally decide to pursue that option, Hanoi will likely revert to the previous Vietnam Nuclear Power Program (VNPP). Vietnamese experts stressed that SMRs and floating nuclear power plants are important topics for research, but Vietnam will not implement them in the next five to ten years.

U.S.-Indonesia security relations: gains capped by politics

Following last year's dialogue, which focused on the advantages of Indonesia strengthening its strategic autonomy, participants focused on the functional cooperation options that could advance their interests without triggering Jakarta's political sensibilities related to "great power competition." Participants portrayed Indonesia's traditional policy of nonalignment as consistent with increased U.S.-Indonesian security cooperation in the current international environment. Specifically, for some U.S. participants, to the degree that nonalignment retained its emphasis on independence and autonomy "against hegemonism makes improved U.S.-Indonesian cooperation on key shared security issues not merely possible but also actually necessary." The Indonesian view was that Jakarta wanted to preserve its economic and strategic autonomy as a sovereign state amidst challenges. For the United States, however, China's efforts to enmesh Indonesia (and its neighbors) in exploitative webs of dependency and coercion represent a significant threat to the region, and Jakarta and Washington should cooperate to resist those efforts. The Indonesians were reluctant to embrace this perspective.

On maritime security, the United States and Indonesia converge on their assessment of Chinese maritime activities and claims (e.g., both sides see the nine-dash line as illegal), but diverge on navigational rights and freedoms. The former could lead to increased functional cooperation; the latter could complicate U.S. naval operations in the region.

Both sides see value in ASEAN, but some Indonesians see other U.S.-led mechanisms as potentially undermining ASEAN centrality, while U.S. experts at the dialogue highlighted how extra-ASEAN mechanisms like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) complement ASEAN.

While U.S. participants saw opportunities for greater Indonesian participation in U.S.-led nonproliferation regimes, the dialogue revealed that Indonesia is simply not keen on joining arrangements it perceived as not led by ASEAN or the UN, consistent with its nonaligned multilateralist approach.

Throughout the dialogue, it was apparent that Indonesia's reluctance to align its efforts with the United States is not because it views U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy as inherently flawed or that Chinese assertive behavior is not threatening. Rather, political considerations in Jakarta still revolve around the perceived need to demonstrate strategic autonomy – pursuing initiatives on its own terms, avoiding mechanisms not led by ASEAN or the United Nations, and

avoiding any impression that its policies are determined by any great power.

Understanding U.S. and Indonesian strategic priorities

There persists a mix of convergence and divergence in how Indonesia and the United States perceive the security environment in the region. Both countries recognize that China's actions—whether dangerous maneuvers in the South China Sea or operational responses to Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan—continue to heighten tensions, even if Jakarta is less public about this than Washington is. However, the two countries diverge on how to respond to Beijing's assertive behavior because of other considerations, such as COVID-19 and the resulting public health crisis and economic security issues related to China. Indonesian interlocutors perceive Indonesian policymakers as being preoccupied with more pressing domestic challenges. They claim that issues like food shortage and energy supply are prioritized in domestic political discourses, which inhibit a more internationalist, geopolitical agenda that might align Indonesian interests more with the United States.

Participants from both the United States and Indonesia acknowledged that a stronger Indonesian military and a more credible and consistent U.S. presence could boost regional security and stability if expectations are managed. Operationally, this "consensus" could mean more complementary capacity-building initiatives and the prioritization of Jakarta within the U.S. hierarchy of relationships in the Indo-Pacific. Participants argued that U.S. capacity-building should be responsive to Indonesian needs and not merely driven by desire to counter Chinese assertiveness. For Indonesia, this could lead to less antagonistic public perceptions of U.S. presence and operations vis-à-vis China. Currently, there is a tendency for the Indonesian government to characterize U.S. and Chinese presence and operations in the region as being equally problematic for regional security.

There was also general agreement about broadening the U.S. approach to security relations with Indonesia to include the full range of security issues where Indonesia could play a role amid challenges such as terrorism, post-U.S. Afghanistan withdrawal, and nuclear threats from Iran and North Korea. This would allow the relationship to grow and mature beyond concerns related to China.

Challenges to maritime security and regional stability

There are areas of agreement and disagreement between the United States and Indonesia on matters of maritime security operations in the region. U.S. participants were encouraged to see Indonesia take a more proactive stance regarding Chinese infringements in the North Natuna Sea area. For example, the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (known as BAKAMLA) recently hosted a meeting of Coast Guard leaders to discuss gray zone activities in the South China Sea. Participants cited the construction of a training facility in Bintan and the

provision of ScanEagle drones as examples of complementary capacity-building resulting from a broadening security outlook. High-value military equipment transfer projects can become reality if this trend continues. Overall, the military-to-military relationship

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seems to be advancing beyond the legacy of U.S. sanctions.

Freedom of navigation could become a long-term operational issue for the U.S. military. The United States wants Indonesia to allow all navigational rights and freedoms within its archipelago as described in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Indonesia, however, remains reluctant to introduce more archipelagic sea-lanes (ASL). In the past, the United States and Indonesia have handled these differences at the technical level—typically at the navy-to-navy level but occasionally through diplomatic channels. However, three developments related to freedom of navigation could become problematic: 1) growing Indonesian maritime domain awareness; 2) increasing U.S. deployment of unmanned vehicles; and 3) expanding Indonesian anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) military capabilities.

With growing capability to monitor activities in its waters, maritime operations perceived as violating Indonesia's legal standards or national sensibilities are more likely to be noticed by political leaders and the public and politicized, including U.S. Navy use of ASL passage in areas where Jakarta has yet to designate an ASL. U.S. deployment of more unmanned and autonomous vehicles (UAVs) could increase bilateral tension as Washington asserts UAVs have the same privileges as manned warships. Participants expect Indonesia to take a more restrictive stance against all UAVs traversing its territorial and archipelagic waters. Finally, Indonesia has not targeted its growing A2/AD capabilities at any specific militaries. If there was an armed conflict in the South or East China Seas, Indonesia would want de-escalation and would delay picking sides for as long as possible. More importantly, Jakarta's A2/AD capabilities allow it to complicate both sides' assumptions about force flows, supply chains, and ally reinforcements. There was some discussion during the dialogue and in other forums about Indonesia potentially closing off its waters from all military forces, including those of the United States and its treaty allies, in the event of a crisis, such as a potential conflict in Taiwan.

Strengthening ASEAN's regional security mechanisms

Building on the first dialogue's discussion of the importance of ASEAN in Indonesian security engagements, this year's dialogue focused on Washington's inconsistent attitude toward ASEAN and the impact of other multilateral and minilateral arrangements in the region on ASEAN centrality.

"There was some discussion during the dialogue...about Indonesia potentially closing off its waters from all military forces, including those of the United States and its treaty allies, in the event of a crisis, such as a potential conflict in Taiwan."

First, participants discussed the nature of U.S. foreign policymaking to contextualize how it has been approaching multilateralism. U.S. participants pointed out that U.S. foreign policy is global (rather than strictly regional). While Washington values ASEAN centrality, other arrangements complementary to ASEAN institutions could better address some challenges. Some U.S. participants sought to address significant concerns expressed by Indonesian interlocutors that ASEAN interests would be subordinated to the QUAD, Australia-United Kingdom-United States Partnership (AUKUS), or other "great power" interests. For instance, the QUAD was presented as a loose arrangement, and a place for bi- and tri-lateral cooperation among its four members (India and Japan being the most important) based on interest and capability. U.S. participants cited the India-Japan East-West Road Initiative to demonstrate how cooperation between and among QUAD members benefits ASEAN. U.S.-led minilateral and multilateral partnerships were also cited as complementary to ASEAN. For instance, the Mekong-U.S. Partnership, while not affecting Indonesia directly, showed how non-ASEAN minilateral information-sharing mechanisms help ASEAN countries resist "might-makes-right" behavior from their large northern neighbor.

In this context, U.S. participants recognized that the days of the United States operating under a "hub and spoke," alliance-centered framework are over. The United States now prioritizes partnerships and cooperative arrangements in which those with the greatest interest take the lead and others with shared interests participate.

U.S. participants expressed disappointment that littoral ASEAN states, including Indonesia, have not expressed even rhetorical support for the 2016 Arbitral Award, the unanimous ruling by an Arbitration Tribunal constituted in The Hague that declared China's nine-dash line as without basis under international law. Views of ASEAN states, including Indonesia, regarding the 2016 Award could have an operational impact on how China and the United States act in the South China Sea. Some participants argued that a seemingly disinterested Indonesia/ASEAN could result in an even more assertive China, while simultaneously providing no "moral" support for the United States' work to ensure that the South China Sea remains free, open, and rules-based.

Counterproliferation and WMD-related challenges

Discussions on counterproliferation and WMD issues highlighted what U.S. participants saw as "low-hanging fruits" for potential cooperation to support both countries' common security interests. First, in the arena of

counterterrorism (CT) and counterproliferation (CP), U.S. participants argued that Indonesia could contribute to international security by choosing to join two organizations devoted to mutual CT and CP capacity-building: the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Both institutions would enable Indonesia to increase its capacities while

remaining carefully protective of its own national sovereignty and independence. Neither the GICNT nor the PSI created new obligations. Instead, cooperation is voluntary, with individual members' national authorities coordinating to help ensure that bad actors, including extremists, do not obtain WMD-related materials. Indonesia could potentially participate in existing U.S. programs aimed at reducing the global prevalence of radiological sources that terrorists could steal and use in radiological dispersal devices (RDDs, a.k.a. "dirty bombs").

However, Indonesian interlocutors explained that Indonesia's persistent refusal to join PSI and other U.S.-led initiatives is a political decision related to Indonesia's unwillingness to join a U.S.-led mechanism, rather than an objection to PSI's operating principles. In this context, Indonesia will remain outside of the agreement until Jakarta reassesses its views on the PSI.

A potential area for bilateral cooperation participants discussed relates to capacity-building to boost Jakarta's ability to impose "state-of-the-art" strategic trade controls. Improving such controls, some participants argued, is essential to Indonesia preserving its own interests related to the growth of its digital and industrial economy, defense technology transfer, and co-production opportunities with the United States and other Western powers. It would also enhance protection against security threats presented by Chinese regional military capabilities that "would be worsened by dual-use and military technology transfers and transshipments through shadowy international proliferation networks intended to evade various countries' national security export control restrictions." Nevertheless, the Indonesians were not keen on targeting China. Jakarta is unwilling to take any action, even action that supports its own security goals, that would indicate it is siding with either Beijing or Washington.

Responses to contingencies: lessons from scenario-based exercises

Participants played a scenario-based exercise during each dialogue to provide a bird's eye view of potential responses to crises in the region; to acknowledge each party's positions, policy, and operational responses and differences; and to generate insights on how Vietnam, Indonesia, and the United States can better coordinate should a similar event happen. Different scenarios were played to take into account the national security priorities of Vietnam and Indonesia. The exercise with Vietnam focused on the threat of Chinese coercion and potential use of force in the South China Sea. The exercise with Indonesia underscored Chinese threats related to navigational rights

and freedoms, and the potential implications of constant demand by Beijing to have veto power over joint military exercises conducted by Southeast Asian littoral states inside the nine-dash line.

Invasion of Itu Aba: Understanding Vietnamese and U.S. responses

Scenario in brief: For several months, at least 500 maritime militia vessels had been crowding the territorial sea of Taiwan-occupied Itu Aba. Under cover of night, PLAN's amphibious forces, led by CCG vessels, made their move. They passed the militia vessels, which provided cover, and assaulted Itu Aba. Defended by only 300 Taiwanese Coast Guard officers with 40mm anti-aircraft artillery and 120mm mortars, Taiwan struggled to repel the invaders. Located some 1,000 miles from Taiwan, reinforcements from the Taiwanese Navy and Marines had yet to arrive. The battle expanded to the territorial sea of nearby Sandy Cay, under Vietnamese control, as PLAN and CCG vessels dispersed to maneuver against the Taiwanese Air Force's counterattack. In the confusion, a Vietnamese naval vessel, on routine patrol in the area, was attacked and sunk. China warned Taiwan not to escalate and the United States not to intervene. As the attack on Itu Aba occurred, there were reports that China had mobilized PLAN crews and vessels in ports across from Taiwan, signaling an intent to invade Taiwan if escalation occurred and the United States intervened. Washington is considering its options.

Responses: Vietnamese and U.S. participants were not very enthusiastic about each other's responses, underscoring the complexity of dealing with Chinese aggression in the South China Sea. On the one hand, Vietnam refused to call out China's use of force outright, disappointing U.S. participants. On the other hand, some participants were perplexed when the United States made clear that letting China become the new occupant of Itu Aba was the "least bad option" if the alternative was Beijing's invasion of Taiwan itself and, potentially, a direct war between China and the United States. The loss of Itu Aba made some Vietnamese experts further doubt the United States' commitment to the South China Sea, but they admitted that they also did not want to see a direct, violent confrontation between Beijing and Washington.

Vietnam was very reluctant to be a direct player in the ongoing hostilities. In response to the situation, Vietnam ordered its forces to be combat-ready; to increase surveillance and reconnaissance; to gain accurate situational awareness; to deploy search and rescue forces, and, when possible, investigate the sinking of its vessel; to deploy Vietnam's Coast Guard and Fishery Surveillance Force in the area; and to warn fishing boats to avoid the vicinity. While an armed attack on Itu Aba may represent a "black zone" for Taiwan, the scenario remained a gray zone for Vietnam. Hence, Hanoi prioritized diplomacy, while also observing what the United States would do. Vietnam was concerned about the United States potentially disengaging. While they preferred the United States not escalate, they also wanted the United States to be active in galvanizing regional support for peaceful resolution to the crisis. Some Vietnamese participants were particularly interested in how the United States would respond to the situation that clearly changes the status quo of a disputed territory through China's use of force. When it became clear that a potential wider conflict over Taiwan was deterring the United States from intervening, the Vietnamese were even more reluctant to call out Chinese efforts to change the

status quo by force. In the end, Vietnam was keenly aware that it could rely only on itself.

The U.S. response revealed that, despite rhetoric on the China challenge, it is still risk averse. The United States' immediate responses to the crisis included moving forces in the region, demonstrating concern and messaging that it "wants to help," assisting with ISR, broadcasting the situation to the world, spreading the message of PRC aggression, engaging treaty allies in deployment, and expressing some level of support for Taiwan to increase deterrence. In the end, Taiwan lost Itu Aba, and Vietnam prioritized de-escalation and diplomacy. During the exercise, U.S. participants did not militarily assist Taiwanese efforts to repel invading Chinese forces and simply allowed China to occupy Itu Aba. Some U.S. participants argued that most political leaders in Washington would not go to war against China over Itu Aba if it meant avoiding Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

Standoff in North Natuna Sea: Understanding Indonesian and U.S. responses

Scenario in brief: The KN Tanjung Datu, a vessel of the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA), was navigating the North Natuna Sea in a recognized Indonesian exclusive economic zone (EEZ) toward Tuna Block, an offshore oil and gas field in which Indonesia had been drilling. Three CCG vessels and five maritime militia vessels posing as civilian fishing trawlers surrounded the Tanjung Datu. The Tanjung Datu is an unarmed, civilian-operated law enforcement vessel periodically assigned to patrol the Indonesian EEZ, inside the nine-dash line. Chinese operators ordered the Datu to change course, avoid the Tuna Block, and navigate southward or "suffer the consequences." Datu refused to change course. The five Chinese-flagged fishing trawlers sailed toward the Datu as CCG vessels monitored the situation. The CCG vessels sailed closer and positioned themselves in front of the Datu to block its path and force it to divert. USS Charleston (LCS-18) was already nearby, scheduled to participate in the Garuda Shield Joint Military Exercise with the Indonesian Navy scheduled in three days. It quickly maneuvered toward the area. A China-Indonesia standoff ensued with PLAN and U.S. Navy (USN) vessels on the horizon. The White House issued a statement criticizing China's "aggressive and unprofessional" behavior and accusing Beijing of flouting its obligations under UNCLOS. Beijing responded by issuing its own criticisms of U.S. behavior and policy, saying that it was the United States that had violated international and domestic Chinese law by "engaging in activities in China's waters in the South China Sea without China's permission," referring to the annual U.S.-Indonesia naval exercises.

Responses: The Indonesians were particularly resolute in safeguarding their interests while maintaining strategic autonomy. During the exercise, Jakarta's immediate responses included: establishing a crisis task force to get accurate information about the situation (fact-finding) and to ensure a single communication channel; establishing communications with China through diplomatic and defense channels; pursuing military posturing by continuing the Garuda Shield exercise preparation in coordination with the United States as planned, and considering additional exercises and limited asset (re-)deployment to adjacent areas to show strength and determination while avoiding incidents; increasing frequency of Indonesia's maritime law enforcement

patrols; and providing logistical support and protection for the crew and drilling site to prevent a Chinese fait accompli. Indonesia's determination to protect its interests, in particular, by choosing to continue the Garuda Shield exercise preparations as scheduled, despite pressure from China, pleasantly surprised U.S. participants. Nevertheless, the Indonesians also wanted the United States to carefully manage their engagement and avoid direct involvement in the standoff. Indonesia prioritized coordinating with the ASEAN Troika (ASEAN's current, former, and future chairs) to increase diplomatic pressure, and with the United States to ensure that Garuda Shield exercise did not affect the standoff.

U.S. responses were mostly in line with the Indonesian actions. In particular, the United States: wanted to ensure the Garuda Shield and other regional exercises took place

as scheduled; moved to immediately gather, share, and publicize information from intelligence and other sources about the specifics of the incident, and prioritize Indonesia and ASEAN states in information sharing; maintained the USS Charleston on location in the vicinity; issued a statement emphasizing the U.S. stance on Chinese maritime militias and Chinese patterns of behavior; and offered Indonesia additional support (i.e., capacity-building and expanded information sharing).

Unlike the scenario-based exercise with Vietnam, this exercise remained fully in the gray zone for all parties. Since there was no China team and no second move, the exercise ended with Indonesia fully asserting its rights, and the United States playing a flexible, supportive role welcomed by Jakarta.

ⁱ The White House, *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*. Washington, DC: National Security Council, 2021. Online, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf> (August 20, 2022).

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ⁱⁱⁱ Jeffrey Ordaniel, Robert Girrier and David Santoro, "The United States and Indonesia: Re-converging Security Interests in the Indo-Pacific," *Issues & Insights* Vol. 21, CR2 (September 2021). <https://pacforum.org/publication/issues-insights-vol-21-cr2-the-united-states-and-indonesia-re-converging-security-interests-in-the-indo-pacific>

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^v U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy fact sheet*. Online, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/NDS-FACT-SHEET.PDF> (August 20, 2022).

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Carl Baker a senior advisor for Pacific Forum. He previously served as the organization's Executive Director. He is a member of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) and engaged in promoting security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region as a participant in several CSCAP Study Groups. Current focus areas include preventive diplomacy, multilateral security architecture, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear security. Previously, he was on the faculty at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies and an adjunct professor at Hawaii Pacific University. Publications include articles and book chapters on U.S. alliances and political developments in South Korea and the Philippines. A retired U.S. Air Force officer, he has extensive experience in Korea, having served as an international political-military affairs officer for the UN Military Armistice Commission and as a political and economic intelligence analyst for U.S. Forces Korea. He has also lived for extended periods and served in a variety of military staff assignments in Japan, the Philippines, and Guam. A graduate of the U.S. Air War College, he also holds an M.A. in public administration from the University of Oklahoma and a B.A. in anthropology from the University of Iowa.

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APPENDICES

Program, Agenda and Participant List

- 1) U.S.-VIETNAM SECURITY DIALOGUE, 2022
- 2) U.S.-INDONESIA SECURITY DIALOGUE, 2022

Hanoi, Vietnam
August 3-5, 2022



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The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is a combat support agency within the United States Department of Defense (DoD). DTRA enables the DoD, the U.S. Government, and International Partners to counter and deter weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and emerging threats. DTRA experts bring a variety of skillsets and expertise, and a diverse range of perspectives to address critical challenges. DTRA's workforce includes an integrated mix of personnel from government, military, and industry, blending a variety of skillsets and expertise to prevent and counter WMD and emerging threats.

This Dialogue is sponsored by DTRA's Strategic Trends and Effects Department under its Strategic Trends Division whose activities include research, trends analysis, events, and tabletop exercises to generate operationally relevant, timely, credible, actionable insights into emerging threats within DTRA's mission space.

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UNITED STATES-VIETNAM SECURITY DIALOGUE



Leaving behind their past as Cold War adversaries, Hanoi and Washington upgraded their relations into a comprehensive partnership in 2013. The next logical step is to elevate the relations into a strategic partnership – that means a deepened security engagement. The many aligned security interests provide an opportunity, not only to make this strategic partnership a reality, but also to ensure that U.S.-Vietnam security relations have a positive impact on the strategic environment of Southeast Asia. Fully aware that most Track-2 U.S. engagements with Vietnam have mostly centered on development issues, empowerment, and historical reconciliation, Pacific Forum believes its existing DTRA-funded security-focused dialogue involving the two countries’ top strategic thinkers, need to be sustained to build on current gains, underscore opportunities for deeper defense cooperation, generate sound and actionable recommendations, and highlight the importance of the bilateral partnership to the peace and stability of Southeast Asia and broader Indo-Pacific.

The report from the inaugural (2021) dialogue is accessible here:
<https://pacforum.org/publication/issues-insights-vol-21-cri-the-united-states-and-viet-nam-charting-the-next-25-years-in-bilateral-security-relations>

AGENDA



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2022
IN-PERSON – VIETNAM TIME (UTC+7)

18:00 – 20:00

Welcome Dinner and Opening Remarks

Cocktail Reception (30 minutes)

Welcome remarks

Carl Baker

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Dr. Pham Lan Dung

Acting President, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Opening remarks

Kathleen Ellis

Research Manager, Strategic Trends Research Initiative (STRI), Defense Threat Reduction Agency



THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2022
IN-PERSON – VIETNAM TIME (UTC+7)

9:00 – 10:30

Session 1: Current Developments in the South China Sea: U.S. and Vietnam Views

Recent developments in the South China Sea, including land reclamation, militarization of artificial islands, new restrictions to movements at sea, and the coercion of oil and gas companies with operations inside the so-called nine-dash line, continue to threaten vital U.S. and Vietnamese interests. This panel will survey developments in the South China Sea over the past year, and examine U.S. and Vietnamese views on them, notably:

- 1) Do U.S. and Vietnamese views on recent developments in the South China Sea diverge or converge, and why?
- 2) What does each side anticipate will happen in the short and long terms? In particular, what are the threats in the coming years and what are potential solutions?

Chair:

Carl Baker

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Discussion Leads:

Greg B. Poling

Director of the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative Center for Strategic and International Studies

Lai Thai Binh

Deputy Director-General, East Sea (South China Sea) Institute, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

15 MINUTES

Break

AGENDA



THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2022
IN-PERSON – VIETNAM TIME (UTC+7)

10:45 – 12:15

Session 2: Maritime Security, Deterrence, and the South China Sea

The United States has a longstanding interest in keeping the South China Sea free, open, and rules-based. Operationally, the U.S. Navy has been pursuing this interest through freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs). In March 2020, Washington further clarified its position, to include explicit non-recognition of Beijing's territorial claims over several features that the 2016 Arbitral Award has determined to be low-tide elevations, notwithstanding the presence of militarized artificial islands. One of Vietnam's priorities is safeguarding its international law-mandated maritime entitlements, specifically access to resources within its exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, which is increasingly challenged by China.

This panel will address the following questions:

- 1) How do Vietnam and the United States gauge the current level of deterrence activity in the South China Sea?
- 2) What are ways and means each side could and should invest in, together and separately, to increase deterrence, notably to blunt future gray zone coercion (i.e., coercive operations below the threshold of an armed attack designed to achieve relative gains or political and security objectives without triggering an armed response) and ensure that crisis situations do not result in fait accompli, and preserve a rules-based order?
- 3) What would – should – constitute 'red lines' from the perspectives of Washington and Hanoi? If they make different assessments, why and how?
- 4) What are possible courses of action if red lines are crossed, and how would decisions to act one way or another be made?

Chair:

Vu Le Thai Hoang

Acting Director-General, Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Discussion leads:

Eleanor Freund

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Ambassador Dang Dinh Quy (Retired)

Senior Advisor, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

12:15 – 13:45

Lunch Break

14:00 – 15:30

Session 3: Understanding Regional Military Capabilities, Postures, and Expectations

A militarily capable Vietnam is in the interest of the United States. Vietnam People's Armed Forces (VPAF) aims to modernize by 2030. This involves not just acquiring defense hardware, but also reforming and modernizing its armed services. Hanoi has vowed to do this through increased cooperation with security partners, including the United States. Others in Southeast Asia have similar goals. For instance, the Philippine Military's ongoing modernization program is aimed at achieving 'minimum credible defense posture.' To be helpful, Washington needs a better understanding of its partners' short-term and long-term military posture, requirements and purpose. Vietnam and the other regional partners will also have to clearly articulate their expectations towards the United States and other regional actors on matters related to capacity-building. This panel will address the following questions:

- 1) What are the current capabilities, and short-term/long-term goals and postures of regional militaries?
- 2) What are Vietnamese and regional militaries' expectations towards the United States on capacity-building efforts? Are these expectations realistic?
- 3) What is meant by Vietnam's 2030 armed forces modernization goal and other similar goals of regional militaries? How can the United States and other partners assist?

Chair:

Vu Le Thai Hoang

Acting Director-General, Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Discussion leads:

Carlyle Thayer

Professor, The University of New South Wales, Australian Defense Force Academy

Sr. Col. Vu Van Khanh

Senior Advisor (ret.), Institute of Strategic and Military Studies, Ministry of National Defense

AGENDA



THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2022
IN-PERSON – VIETNAM TIME (UTC+7)

15 MINUTES

Break

15:45 – 17:15

Session 4: Nuclear Energy, Risk Reduction, and Nonproliferation

Hanoi and others in Southeast Asia have historically looked for alternative energy sources, including nuclear energy, to power their economic development, taking into account energy security and geopolitical considerations. As Small Modular Reactor (SMR) designs are approaching certification in the United States, the changing nature of the global civil nuclear industry is leading Vietnam and others in the region to re-examine their assumptions about the development of civil nuclear power generation. This new development could reshape the strategic environment in Southeast Asia and present new challenges to nonproliferation regimes and impact regional security. Beyond nuclear security, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian states have been exploring measures and arrangements to promote regional stability, enhance military transparency, and ensure that crises and major power confrontation do not grow into conflict. This panel will address the following questions:

- 1) What are the national-security, safety, and regional-security implications of SMR and floating nuclear power plants deployments in the region? Is Vietnam considering SMRs, including floating nuclear power plants?
- 2) What regional risk reduction measures in place? Should there be additional multilateral mechanisms that would benefit Vietnam and the broader Southeast Asia? If so, what?

Chair:

Carl Baker

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Discussion leads:

Richard Bitzinger

Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the Military Transformations Program at the S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Tran Chi Thanh

President, Atomic Energy Institute of Vietnam (VINATOM)



FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 2022
IN-PERSON – VIETNAM TIME (UTC+7)

9:00 – 13:00

Session 5: Table Top Exercise - Response to Regional Contingencies

A scenario-based exercise will be organized to command a bird's-eye view of potential responses to a crisis situation in the region; to acknowledge each party's positions, policy and operational responses, and differences; and to generate insights on how Vietnam and the United States (and potentially other regional players) could better coordinate to cope with crisis situations should a similar event happen in the real world.

- Part 1: Presentation of issues by each party
Part 2: Breakout Session and strategy formulation
Part 3: Presentation of responses

Chair

Brad Glosserman

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

13:00 – 14:30

Lunch Break

14:45 – 15:45

Session 6: Plenary Discussion - Reflection Session

This session will reflect on the crisis scenario held in the morning. Representatives from each country team will present key findings and recommendations, followed by plenary discussions.

Chair:

Brad Glosserman

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Key findings and recommendations:

Country Group Representatives

AGENDA



FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 2022
IN-PERSON - VIETNAM TIME (UTC+7)

15 MINUTES

Break

16:00 – 17:30

Session 7: Advancing U.S.-Vietnam Relations: Concluding Session

Considering the issues raised and discussed in the previous sessions, this panel will examine prospects for future cooperation, not just between the United States and Vietnam, but also between Vietnam and other key regional players. This panel will address the following concluding questions:

- 1) What specific actions can each country undertake to promote peace and stability in the region?
- 2) What are some actionable recommendations to deter aggression in the South China Sea, counter gray-zone coercion from strategic competitors, better cope with crisis situations, promote nuclear security, stability, and nonproliferation regimes, and advance a more peaceful and secure Southeast Asia?

Discussion leads:

Carl Baker

Senior Adviser, Pacific Forum

Vu Le Thai Hoang

Acting Director-General, Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

17:30

End of Day 2 and Dialogue



PROFILES



Carl Baker

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Carl Baker is a senior advisor for Pacific Forum. He previously served as the organization's Executive Director. He is a member of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) and engaged in promoting security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region as a participant in several CSCAP Study Groups. Current focus areas include preventive diplomacy, multilateral security architecture, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear security. Previously, he was on the faculty at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) and an adjunct professor at Hawaii Pacific University. Publications include articles and book chapters on U.S. alliances and political developments in South Korea and the Philippines. A retired U.S. Air Force officer, he has extensive experience in Korea, having served as an international political-military affairs officer for the UN Military Armistice Commission and as a political and economic intelligence analyst for U.S. Forces Korea. He has also lived for extended periods and served in a variety of military staff assignments in Japan, the Philippines, and Guam. A graduate of the U.S. Air War College, he also holds an M.A. in Public Administration from the University of Oklahoma and a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Iowa.



Dr. Richard Bitzinger

Visiting Senior Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

Richard A Bitzinger is a Visiting Senior Fellow with the Military Transformations Program at the S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His work focuses on security and defense issues relating to the Asia-Pacific region, including military modernization and force transformation, regional defense industries and local armaments production, and weapons proliferation. Mr Bitzinger has written several monographs and book chapters, and his articles have appeared in such journals as International Security, The Journal of Strategic Studies, Orbis, China Quarterly, and Survival. He is the author of *Towards a Brave New Arms Industry?* (Oxford University Press, 2003), "Come the Revolution: Transforming the Asia-Pacific's Militaries," *Naval War College Review* (Fall 2005), *Transforming the U.S. Military: Implications for the Asia-Pacific* (ASPI, December 2006), and "Military Modernization in the Asia-Pacific: Assessing New Capabilities," *Asia's Rising Power* (NBR, 2010). He is also the editor of *The Modern Defense Industry: Political, Economic and Technological Issues* (Praeger, 2009). Mr Bitzinger was previously an Associate Professor with the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, Hawaii, and has also worked for the RAND Corporation, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Affairs, and the United States Government. He holds a Masters degree from the Monterey Institute of International Affairs and has pursued additional postgraduate studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.



Amb. Dang Dinh Quy (Ret.)

Senior Advisor, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Ambassador Dang Dinh Quy is Senior Advisor at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. From 2018-01/2022, he was the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations. Prior to that, Amb. Dang served as Deputy Minister at the Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and since 2016 in charge of strategic studies, review, and reporting, as well as strategic policy planning advice and training. In 2011, he was the President of the Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam, concurrently serving with intervals as Director General of the East Sea Studies Institute. Between 2007 and 2011, he served as Deputy Director General, Deputy Rector of the Institute for International Relations in Viet Nam's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, concurrently serving as the Director General of the Institute of Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies. A career diplomat, Mr. Dang joined the Foreign Ministry in 1989, working in the West Asia-Africa Department and the Department of Economic Affairs. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Diplomatic University of Viet Nam, a Master of Arts degree from Carleton University in Canada, and a doctorate from the Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences.



Eleanor Freund

PhD Candidate, MIT

Eleanor Freund is a Ph.D. candidate in security studies and international relations, with a substantive interest in Chinese statecraft and security policy. Her dissertation project seeks to explain within- and across-case variation in China's security partnerships with other states from 1949 to 2019. She holds an M.A. in global affairs from Tsinghua University in Beijing, where she was a Schwarzman Scholar, and a B.A. in political science with highest honors from the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to joining MIT, Eleanor was a research assistant and associate at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and a James C. Gaither Junior Fellow in China Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

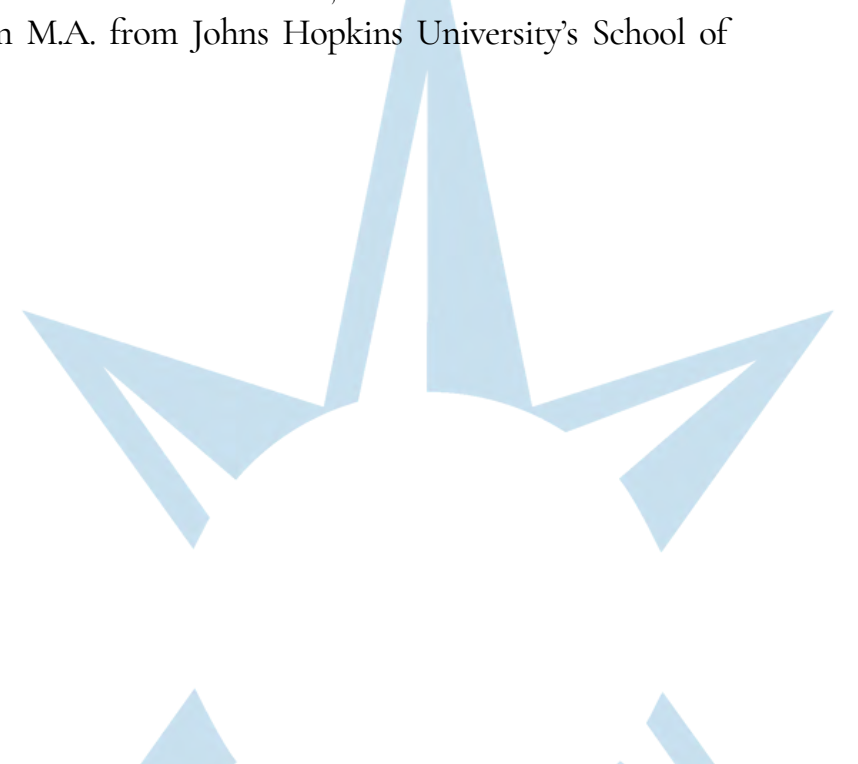


Brad Glosserman

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Deputy Director and Visiting Professor, Center for Rule-making Strategies, Tama University

Brad Glosserman is deputy director of and visiting professor at the Tama University Center for Rule Making Strategies and senior advisor for Pacific Forum, where, among other things, he co-edits *Comparative Connections*. For 15 years, he was the executive director of Pacific Forum. He is the author of *Peak Japan: The End of Grand Ambitions* (Georgetown University Press, 2019), and co-author, with Scott Snyder, of *The Japan-ROK Identity Clash* (Columbia University Press, 2015). He has authored dozens of monographs on topics related to U.S. foreign policy and Asian security. His opinion articles and commentary have appeared in media around the world. Prior to joining Pacific Forum, he was, for 10 years, a member of The Japan Times editorial board, and continues to serve as a contributing editor for the newspaper. Glosserman has a J.D. from George Washington University, an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a B.A. from Reed College.



PROFILES



Dr. Lai Thai Binh

Deputy Director-General of the East Sea Institute, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Dr. Lai Thai Binh is a Deputy Director-General of the East Sea (South China Sea) Institute, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. Prior to his current position, he served as the Deputy Consul-General of Vietnam in Houston (Texas), Deputy Director-General and Assistant Director-General at Americas Department in the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director of the American Research Division, Director and Deputy Director of the North America Division, and as a Vietnam-U.S. relations desk officer. Lai has participated in various research projects on U.S.-Vietnam relations, including the book project, "Vietnam-Americas: Challenges and Opportunities." He co-authored the book "U.S.-China Relations: Cooperation and Competition from the Perspective of Balance of Power." Before joining the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lai was a product manager for FPT Corporation, the largest IT company in Vietnam, and was a media supervisor for Goldsun Advertising and Printing Company. He earned a BA in International Economics from Hanoi Foreign Trade University, another BA in law from Hanoi National University, a postgraduate diploma in International Management from the International Management Institute in New Delhi, an MA in International Public Policy from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, and a Ph.D. in International relations from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam.



Dr. Jeffrey Ordaniel

Director for Maritime Security (Nonresident), Pacific Forum

Associate Professor of International Security Studies, Tokyo International University

Project Researcher, RCAST-Open Lab for Emerging Strategies, The University of Tokyo

Dr. Jeffrey Ordaniel is Senior Adjunct Fellow and Director for Maritime Security at the Pacific Forum. Concurrently, he is also Associate Professor of International Security Studies at Tokyo International University (TIU) in Japan. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations and specializes in the study of offshore territorial and maritime entitlement disputes in Asia. His teaching and research revolve around maritime security and ocean governance, ASEAN regionalism, and broadly, U.S. alliances and engagements in the Indo-Pacific. From 2016 to 2019, he was based in Honolulu and was the holder of the endowed Admiral Joe Vasey Fellowship at the Pacific Forum. His current research on maritime security in Asia is funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). With JSPS funding, he also serves as Project Researcher with RCAST- Open Lab for Emerging Strategies, The University of Tokyo.



Dr. Pham Lan Dung

Acting President, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Pham Lan Dung is currently the Acting President of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV); Vice President of Asian Society of International Law (ASIANLIL); and Vice President - Secretary General, Vietnam Society of International Law (VSIL). She served as Dean of International Law Faculty at DAV (2008 to 2015), and Leader of many MOFA Research Programs in International Law and International Organizations. She got her Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (2010-2014); Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy, at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Boston, MA, US, (2000 – 2002); Diploma in International Law, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Soviet Union, (1987 – 1993). Her most recent international research projects in international law of the sea include “Legal and practical issues in maritime delimitation and joint development with China in the area outside the mouth of the Gulf of Tonkin” (2016); “The Philippines-China UNCLOS Annex VII Arbitration case and its implication for Vietnam” (2013) and “The role of maps in maritime and land disputes under international law” (2013). Besides, she also has various publications and research projects in other fields of international law and international relations.



Gregory Poling

Director, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and Senior Fellow, Southeast Asia Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Gregory B. Poling directs the Southeast Asia Program and Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, where he is also a senior fellow. He is a leading expert on the South China Sea disputes and conducts research on U.S. alliances and partnerships, democratization and governance in Southeast Asia, and maritime security across the Indo-Pacific. He is the author of the recently-published “On Dangerous Ground: America's Century in the South China Sea”, along with multiple works on U.S. relations with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Southeast Asia at large. His writings have been featured in Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, the Wall Street Journal, and the Naval War College Review, among others. Mr. Poling received an MA in international affairs from American University and a BA in history and philosophy from St.Mary's College of Maryland.



Dr. Carlyle Thayer

Emeritus Professor

Carlyle Thayer is Emeritus Professor at the University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra and Director of Thayer Consultancy, a small business registered in Australia that provides political analysis of current regional security issues and other research support to selected clients. He was educated at Brown (BA, Political Science), Yale (MA, Southeast Asian Studies) and the Australian National University (PhD, International Relations). He is a Southeast Asia regional specialist with special expertise on Vietnam.

PROFILES



Dr. Tran Chi Thanh

President, VINATOM

Dr. Tran Chi Thanh is currently President of Vietnam Atomic Energy Institute (VINATOM). He graduated from the Moscow Power Engineering Institute (MPEI), Russia, and got his PhD in the Division of Nuclear Power Safety (NPS), the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm, Sweden. After graduation, he spent many years working at the Vietnam National Institute for Science (now the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology – VAST), and took part in several electricity projects including the Thac Mo, Yaly hydropower plants, the 500 kV Electricity Transmission Line of the Electricity of Vietnam (EVN). In 2002, he started working at the Institute of Energy (IE), the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT). During his time at the IE, he was working on the Pre-Feasibility Study (Pre-FS) project for the construction of the first Nuclear Power Plants (NPPs) in Vietnam. He went on to work for the Vietnam Atomic Energy Institute (VINATOM) as its President from May 2012. Dr. Tran Chi Thanh has been working as the IAEA TC project leader in Reactor Safety Development Program (RSDP) for Vietnam (2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2020-2021, 2022-2023) and as the Director of the Project management Board (PMB) of the national project on the Center for Nuclear Science and Technology (CNST) with a new Research Reactor (RR)



Dr. Vu Le Thai Hoang

Acting DG, IFPSS-DAV

Dr. Vu Le Thai Hoang is current Acting Director General of the Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, the Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam. Before that, he served as the Deputy Director-General of the Americas Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and for six months (early 2018), was with the National Secretariat for ASEAN 2020 (ASEAN Department). From 2014 to 2018, he was Minister Counselor and Chief Political Officer at the Viet Nam Embassy to the United States. Before accepting his position with the Embassy in 2014, Hoang held several roles at the Viet Nam Ministry of Foreign Affairs; first as a desk officer, then as Deputy Director General of the Policy Planning Department. Earlier in his career, Hoang worked as a reporter for the Viet Nam Investment Review. Hoang holds a doctorate in Asian Studies from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. He received a Master of Science in Strategic Studies from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He completed his undergraduate studies in International Relations at the Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam, where he was also a fellow. In 2003, Hoang participated in the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Program (now called the International Visitor Leadership Program). He was named an Eisenhower Fellow in 2014, and participated in the American Jewish Committee's seminar for U.S.-based diplomats, in Israel in 2016.



Sr. Col. Vu Van Khanh (Ret.)

Senior Advisor, Institute For Defence Strategy, Ministry of National Defence.

Senior Colonel Vu Van Khanh is Senior Adviser at the Institute for Defence Strategy, Ministry of National Defence. He used to be Director of the Department of International Studies, Institute for Defence Strategy, Ministry of National Defence. Prior to that, he was Deputy Editor-in-Chief of The Military Science Review, Ministry of National Defence. He got an MA in Strategic Studies from Deakin University, Australia; Post Graduate Diploma at Australian Defence College; BA in English at Ha Noi University and BA in Press and Publication at Ha Noi University of Press. He is a visiting fellow at the Political Academy, the Viet Nam People's Army; Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences and Indonesia Defense University. He is a Journalist and a member of Viet Nam's Journalists Association.



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Founded in 1975, Pacific Forum International is an independent, private, non-profit, and nonpartisan foreign policy research institute based in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic and business issues and work to help stimulate cooperative policies in the Indo-Pacific region through analyses and dialogues undertaken with the region's leaders in academia, government, military, and industry. The Forum collaborates with a network of more than 30 research institutes around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, policymakers, and publics throughout the region. We regularly cosponsor conferences with institutes throughout Asia to facilitate nongovernmental institution building as well as to foster cross-fertilization of ideas.

Pacific Forum was listed among the "2020 Best New Think Tanks" in the 2020 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report; having recently returned to its former fully-independent status. This is an annual ranking produced by the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. The index looks at over 11,000 think tanks around the world.

In addition to ranking in the "2020 Best New Think Tanks" global category, Pacific Forum was listed in the top 100 "2020 Top Think Tanks in the United States." Even more competitively, the organization was recognized as one of only 17 US think tanks listed in the "2020 Think Tanks With the Most Significant Impact on Public Policy" in the world.

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FOREIGN POLICY COMMUNITY OF INDONESIA

Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI) is a non-partisan and independent foreign policy organization established to discuss and introduce international relations issues to many relevant actors in Indonesia such as diplomats, ambassadors, government officials, academia, researchers, businesses, think tanks, students and media. FPCI is also dedicated to study the most-pressing foreign policy issues related to ASEAN, geopolitics, middle powers, geo-economics and diaspora.

Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia was formed with the aim of developing Indonesian internationalism, making it more entrenched throughout the archipelago. FPCI is determined to form a large international relations community with mature and sensitive insights on bilateral, regional and global issues. FPCI aims to be a facilitator that can bring the "world" to the region and simultaneously bring grassroots and regional thoughts to the national and world stage.

Website: <https://www.fpcindonesia.org/>



U.S. DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is a combat support agency within the United States Department of Defense (DoD). DTRA enables the DoD, the U.S. Government, and International Partners to counter and deter weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and emerging threats. DTRA experts bring a variety of skillsets and expertise, and a diverse range of perspectives to address critical challenges. DTRA's workforce includes an integrated mix of personnel from government, military, and industry, blending a variety of skillsets and expertise to prevent and counter WMD and emerging threats.

This Dialogue is sponsored by DTRA's Strategic Trends and Effects Department under its Strategic Trends Division whose activities include research, trends analysis, events, and tabletop exercises to generate operationally relevant, timely, credible, and actionable insights into emerging threats within DTRA's mission space.

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UNITED STATES-INDONESIA SECURITY DIALOGUE



Despite common values and shared interests, U.S.-Indonesia relations have yet to realize their full potential, especially on the security front. There are many strategic imperatives that should underpin closer U.S. security engagements with Indonesia. These include Jakarta’s leadership role in ASEAN and other key regional dialogue institutions, its outsized role in promoting the security of vial sea-lines of communications and trading routes, its location being the archipelago that connects the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, its shared interest with the United States in countering violent extremism and other trans-national threat networks, and its activist and independent foreign policy. These realities, when leveraged, can facilitate a more coordinated and effective response to a multitude of geopolitical, economic, and security challenges in the region, and can advance a free, open and more rules-based Indo-Pacific. It is essential, therefore, to continue to build the foundations for U.S.-Indonesia cooperation to prosper, a key goal of round two of this track-2 effort.

The report from the inaugural (2021) dialogue is accessible here:
<https://pacforum.org/publication/issues-insights-vol-21-cr-2-the-united-states-and-indonesia-re-converging-security-interests-in-the-indo-pacific>

AGENDA



TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022
IN-PERSON – INDONESIA CENTRAL TIME (UTC+8)

18:00 – 20:00

Welcome Reception and Opening Dinner

Welcome Remarks

Carl Baker

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Ambassador Dino Djalal (Retired)

Founder and Chairman, Foreign Policy Community Indonesia

Keynote Address:

Brigadier General Oktaheroe Ramsi

Director General for Defense Strategy, Directorate General for Defense Strategy, Indonesian Ministry of Defense



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2022
IN-PERSON – INDONESIA CENTRAL TIME (UTC+8)

9:00 – 9:45

Opening Session

Prior to discussing specific issue-areas U.S.-Indonesia security cooperation, it is helpful to review and compare each country's strategic outlook and priorities.

To be led by dialogue chairs, this brief opening panel will address the following questions:

- 1) How does each side assess the U.S.-Indonesia defense relationship?
- 2) How do Indonesians view the latest U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy?
- 3) What are the implications of the latest strategy to U.S. security engagements with Indonesia and the broader region?

Discussion Leads

Carl Baker

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Ambassador Dino Djalal (Retired)

Founder and Chairman, Foreign Policy Community Indonesia

9:45 – 11:00

Session 1: Comparative Security Assessment: Understanding U.S. and Indonesian Strategic Priorities

With an annual defense budget approaching US\$10 billion, Indonesia is committed to its Minimum Essential Force (MEF) Military Modernization Program. The United States has expressed interest in issues pertaining to the future of Indonesia's defense capabilities, and Jakarta's enhanced role in regional security and stability. This panel will address the following questions:

- 1) How do the United States and Indonesia perceive developments in the security environment in the Indo-Pacific over the past year?
- 2) How does a stronger and more modern Indonesian military contribute to improve regional security and stability?
- 3) How can the United States and regional states contribute to achieving Indonesian defense goals, notably through capability acquisitions?

Discussion Leads

Prashanth Parameswaran

Research Fellow, the Wilson Center

Eris Herryanto

Former Secretary General, Ministry of Defense of Indonesia



AGENDA



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2022
IN-PERSON – INDONESIA CENTRAL TIME (UTC+8)

10 MINUTES

11:10 – 12:30

Break

Session 2: Challenges to Maritime Security and Regional Stability: U.S. and Indonesian Views

Freedom of navigation underpins the region's maritime security and stability. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) allows for 'innocent passage' for foreign military vessels in Coastal State territorial waters without prior notification or authorization. Likewise, international law provides for 'high seas' freedoms in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). But the rules-based maritime order and internationally recognized navigational rights and freedoms have been increasingly challenged in recent years. Understanding U.S. and Indonesian views related to this growing challenge is imperative. There is also a growing need for an effective response to other maritime security threats in the region, such as militarization of disputed land features, and the use of gray-zone strategies (i.e., coercive operations below the threshold of an armed attack designed to achieve relative gains or political and security objectives without triggering an armed response) to change the status quo. This panel will address the following questions:

- 1) Do Indonesian and U.S. views converge or diverge on navigational rights and freedoms, and why?
- 2) What could they do jointly, or with other regional players to ensure freedom of navigation in the region is preserved?
- 3) What constitute 'red lines' for Jakarta and Washington and, if such lines are crossed, what are the possible courses of action each side could take? How would decisions to act one way or another be made in this regard?

Discussion Leads

John Bradford

Senior Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Dr. Evan Laksmiana

Senior Fellow, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore

12:30 – 13:45

14:00 – 15:30

Lunch Break

Session 3: Strengthening ASEAN's Regional Security Mechanisms

Indonesia sees ASEAN as essential to its national security and regional stability. Indonesia hopes to maintain the region's strategic autonomy by keeping ASEAN united and free from any 'sphere of influence.' The United States has expressed interest in ASEAN centrality and in strengthening ASEAN's security mechanisms. These would ensure Southeast Asia remains free, open, and rules-based, not subject to malign influence from America's strategic adversaries. Indonesia is the designated coordinator of U.S.-ASEAN relations in 2021-2024. This creates opportunities for strengthened U.S.-Indonesia cooperation, as well as with other non-ASEAN regional players. This panel will address the following questions:

- 1) Are there potential multilateral and 'minilateral' military activities that Washington and Jakarta can jointly push through ASEAN?
- 2) How can the two countries (and potentially others) strengthen ASEAN's security institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus?
- 3) What are various ways and means ASEAN can complement other multilateral security mechanisms such as the rapidly evolving Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the new Australia-United Kingdom-United States Trilateral Security Partnership (AUKUS)?

Discussion Leads

David Stilwell

Board Director, Jamestown Foundation; Former Asst. Secretary of State for East Asia & Pacific Affairs

Ambassador Rizal Sukma (Retired.)

Senior Fellow, CSIS Indonesia; Former Indonesian Ambassador to the UK

AGENDA



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2022
IN-PERSON – INDONESIA CENTRAL TIME (UTC+8)

15 MINUTES
15:45 – 17:15

Break

Session 4: Counter-proliferation, Countering WMDs, and Regional Risk Reduction

Indonesia has been successful in counterterrorism (CT) operations. Nevertheless, Indonesian authorities remain worried about the potential for violent extremists to gain access to biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials. Jakarta also needs to strengthen stronger safeguards and trade controls to manage dual-use technologies. Additionally, Indonesia and others have been exploring measures and arrangements to promote regional stability, enhance military transparency, and ensure that crises and major power confrontation do not grow into conflict. This panel will address the following questions:

- 1) What are current trends related to terrorism in Indonesia, and are current efforts to keep violent extremists and other bad actors away from CBRN materials sufficient? Why or why not?
- 2) How can U.S. assistance in these areas create opportunities for cooperation in other security issues? Could, for instance, stronger intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance capabilities for CT and CBRN management purposes be used in other areas?
- 3) What regional risk reduction measures are in place and are new ones needed? If so, what are they?
- 4) Can the United States and Indonesia cooperate on this regard, considering Jakarta's traditional nonalignment?

Discussion Leads

Christopher Ford

MITRE Fellow and Director of the Center for Strategic Competition, the MITRE Corporation; Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation

Beni Sukadis

Program Manager, LESPERSI/Indonesian Institute for Defense & Strategic Studies



THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2022
IN-PERSON – INDONESIA CENTRAL TIME (UTC+8)

9:00 – 13:00

Session 5: Table Top Exercise: Response to Regional Contingencies

A scenario-based exercise will be organized to command a bird's-eye view of potential responses to a crisis situation in the region; to acknowledge each party's positions, policy and operational responses, and differences; and to generate insights on how Indonesia and the United States (and potentially other regional players) could better coordinate to cope with crisis situations should a similar event happen in the real world.

- Part 1: Presentation of issues by each party
Part 2: Breakout session and strategy formulation
Part 3: Presentation of Responses

Chair

Brad Glosserman

Senior Advisor Pacific Forum

13:00 – 14:30

Lunch Break

AGENDA



THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2022
IN-PERSON – INDONESIA CENTRAL TIME (UTC+8)

14:45 – 15:45

Session 6: Plenary Discussion - Reflection Session

This session will reflect on the crisis scenario held in the morning. Representatives from each country team will present key findings and recommendations, followed by plenary discussions.

Chair

Brad Glosserman

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Key findings and recommendations:

Country Group Representatives

15 MINUTES

Break

16:00 – 17:30

Session 7: Advancing U.S.-Indonesia Relations: Concluding Session

Considering the issues raised and discussed in the previous sessions, this panel will examine prospects for future cooperation, not just between the United States and Indonesia, but also between Indonesia and other key regional players. The panel will address the following concluding questions:

- 1) How do we enhance bilateral defense cooperation to promote the region's strategic autonomy amidst challenges posed by strategic competitors?
- 2) What are some actionable recommendations to improve the U.S./Indonesian ability to advocate nuclear security and nonproliferation regimes, address strategic and geopolitical challenges in the region and advance a more peaceful and secure Southeast Asia?
- 3) What are the necessary steps to achieve a 'strategic partnership'?

Discussion leads:

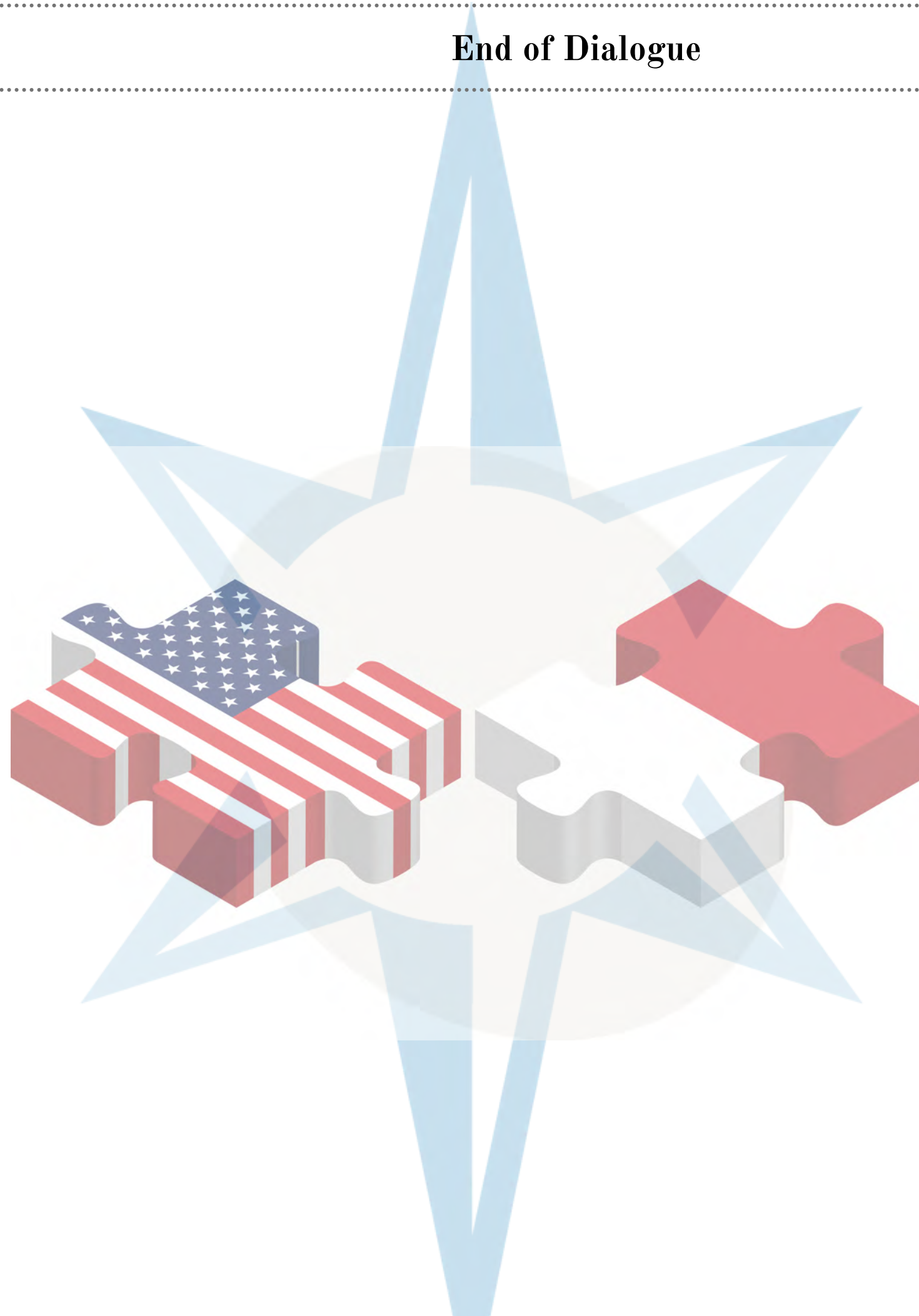
Carl Baker

Senior Advisor, Pacific Forum

Ambassador Dino Djalal (Retired)

Founder and Chairman, Foreign Policy Community Indonesia

End of Dialogue



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Maj. Gen. Endang Hairudin (Ret.)
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