Status of the Maritime Domain
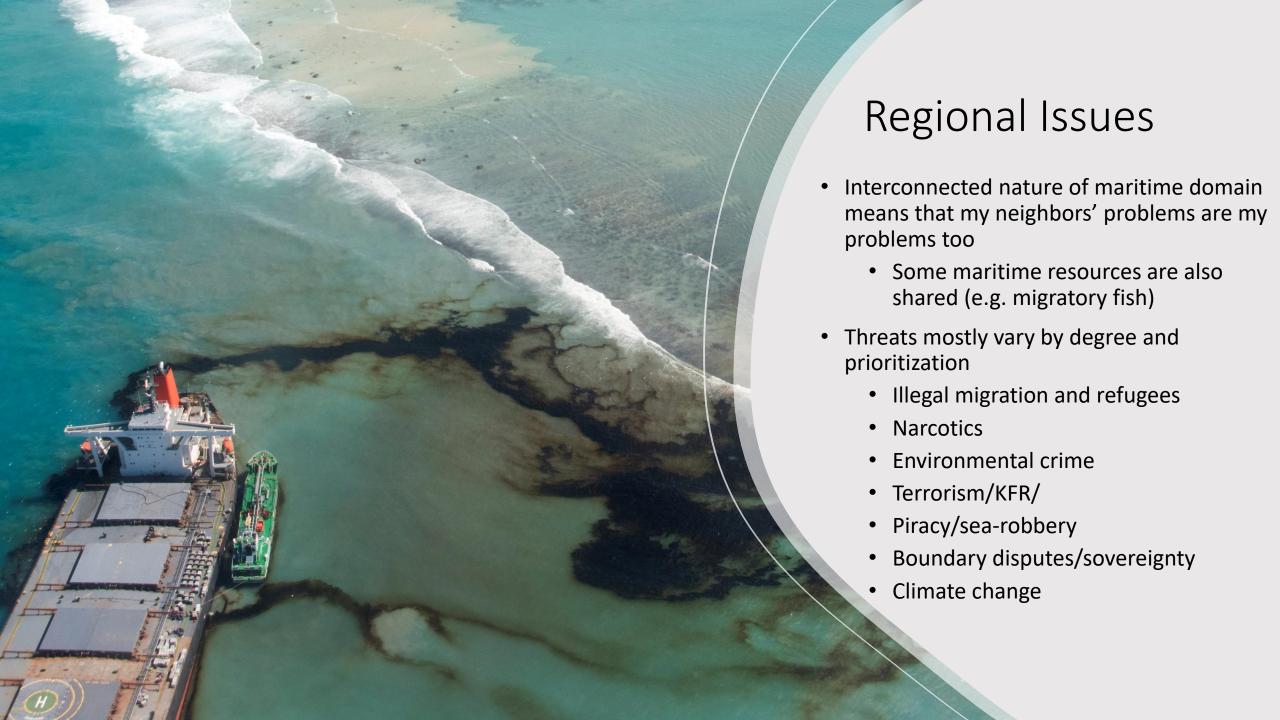
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Super-region Noodle Bowl

- Indo-Pacific is useful in some ways, but its vastness poses its own challenges
    - Indian Ocean Region, East Africa, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, Pacific Islands, Oceania
- Similar to trade agreement overlap, institutions and regional groupings are legion
    - There is no one-size fits all solution, but it can be confusing
- India, Japan, ASEAN, US, UK, EU and others all use the words but not necessarily the same meaning
- "Gaps and seams" are still pervasive

Regional Issues

- Interconnected nature of maritime domain means that my neighbors' problems are my problems too
    - Some maritime resources are also shared (e.g. migratory fish)
- Threats mostly vary by degree and prioritization
    - Illegal migration and refugees
    - Narcotics
    - Environmental crime
    - Terrorism/KFR/
    - Piracy/sea-robbery
    - Boundary disputes/sovereignty
    - Climate change

Threats Without and Within

- Framing matters
- Revisionist state behavior
  - But it's not just China
- Illegal fishing
  - But it's not just China
- Environmental degradation
  - But it's not just China
- The politics, even of issues like illegal fishing, are complicated.

Limited Capacity

- Effective maritime security begins and ends on land
    - Requires effective MDA, justice system, and regulatory frameworks
- Cooperation limited by human rights issues, funding availability, and focus on the side of providers
    - Traditionally Army-dominant defense cultures and mismatch of military-civilian capabilities are also items of concern that limit effective partnerships

Unshared Awareness

- Proliferation of information fusion centers is not an unalloyed good
    - Potential to overtax contributing states
    - Creates space for coordination issues
- Specific centers focus on specific issues, dictated by national interest (for better or worse)
    - IMB vs IMIC
- Multiple centers sponsored by both third parties and regional states – Madagascar, India, Singapore, Indonesia, Fiji, Thailand
    - Others considering
    - All vary by scope, mission, participation

Domain Awareness

- Need for a clearinghouse for capacity building, particularly in the technology space

- Things like space-based MDA moving to readily available, affordable models should enable more effective capacity building efforts
  - Alignment of major donors' efforts would multiply effects and reduce over-saturation of partners capacity to absorb assistance

- The future of MDA is space-based and cost-efficient

The Maritime Domain as a Battlefield

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- Larger powers should engage the various sub-regions on their own merits

- Attempts to enlist Southeast Asia in explicit efforts to counter China will backfire
  - "Theater Strategic Competition" is an unforced error already in motion
  - Warnings to the US to avoid forcing a choice on Southeast Asia are real

- Mirror imaging in assumptions on outcomes is pervasive

Concluding Thoughts

- Positive trends in some respects
  - Transparency, multilateralism, information-sharing
- Others less so
  - Interstate competition, environmental collapse, competition for scarce resources
- Technology is at the center of every issue, whether communications, cybersecurity, sensors, or monitoring/awareness
- The region has entered a pivotal period, may already be too late to arrest freefall in some key sectors