As the days get shorter, ANCORS is moving into high gear, with several projects in full swing.

The mid-term reporting for the Pacific Pathways project has just been completed, and a second cohort of participants in the Australia Africa Awards project are currently in Wollongong.

We are also in the middle of a series of short courses for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Border Force and Defence, seeing staff in multiple locations in South East Asia and the Pacific.

With this added work on, we are welcoming two additional staff on a fractional basis, Associate Professor David Letts AM CSC and Professor Rob McLaughlin, who will have joint appointments with the ANU. Both will add to our efforts at capacity-building around our region.

A recent piece of commentary suggests that the Australia–India ‘strategic relationship’ has been ‘put in the fridge’. In a somewhat glum assessment, the article refers to certain key issues on which these two countries appear to hold significantly divergent views, which ostensibly ‘expose strategic divergences’ in the bilateral relationship.

A closer look at these issues, and at the touchstones by which they’re being assessed, is essential to appreciate whether such a conclusion is correct. One of the most significant points of discord between the two countries, the article asserts, is the continued unwillingness on India’s part to allow the Royal Australian Navy to participate in the Malabar series of naval exercises. In the same breath, the article rueς recent remarks by the Indian navy chief on the Quad (the informal security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the US) as sounding the Last Post on this regional grouping. The instinctive connection drawn between multilateral naval exercises and its effect on a tentative regional grouping may provide an insight into the cause of divergence on this issue.

In May 2007, diplomats from these four countries met informally on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila, giving birth to the term ‘Quad’.

Australia–India relations not so gloomy

This article, written by former Indian naval officer and ANCORS PhD Student Prakash Gopal originally appears in the 5 April edition of The Strategist, an Australian Strategic Policy Institute publication. A link to the original publication can be found at the end of this article.

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In May 2007, diplomats from these four countries met informally on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila, giving birth to the term ‘Quad’.
In September of the same year, Australia, Singapore and Japan joined the Malabar naval exercises, which had hitherto been a bilateral exercise between the Indian and US navies. While the informal meeting between the diplomats of these countries had drawn a somewhat routine and muted démarche from China, this apparent manifestation of the Quad into a military grouping invited China’s full diplomatic wrath.

Whether the timing of the naval exercise was planned or accidental, it unwittingly lent a military image to the grouping, which at that stage was more of an interest group and far from being an alliance of any kind. The Quad seems to be waking up gradually after its sudden demise in 2008. Arguably, in order to avoid conflation of the Quad yet again with a military alliance, India is being overly cautious in denying Australia a place in the Malabar exercise.

An intense focus on the Australian participation (or lack of it) in Malabar detracts from some substantive headway being made in the bilateral interaction between the Indian and Australian navies. The third edition of the biennial AUSINDEX naval exercises is currently underway in the Bay of Bengal, with the largest Australian contingent for an exercise in these waters. The complexity of the exercises has also been enhanced, with an unprecedented focus on anti-submarine warfare. Underestimating the significance of this growing naval engagement, especially by comparing it to the Malabar exercise—a robust mechanism between Indian and US navies that has existed since 1992—is probably not reasonable.

The article also draws on apparent dissonance between Australia and India in the formulation of the Indo-Pacific strategic construct. The statement that the ‘Indo’ in Indo-Pacific is a mere attachment of India to Australia’s area of interest appears as an assumption without concrete basis. While the fact remains that both the Indian and Pacific Oceans vary in relative importance in Delhi and Canberra, the hypophenation is here to stay. The exact geographic contours of this construct may also differ between countries, but it has undeniable utility as a reference for framing strategic concerns in an interconnected world, dependent heavily on the free flow of trade, between and within the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

There is also little doubt that countries differ in the manner in which they interpret the ‘rules-based order’, especially on the question of whose rules that order is based on. But the fact that there’s near consensus on identifying the predominant threat to good order in the Indo-Pacific needs to be acknowledged.

There are other aspects that need to be considered while evaluating the bilateral relationship between Australia and India. The fact that both countries are democracies affords the positive narrative of shared values, but also makes them vulnerable to electoral cycles. The Australian political environment has been particularly volatile for many years now, probably causing a degree of uncertainty in Delhi on the best way to approach Canberra in a relationship that has remained lukewarm in the best of times. Both countries head for elections within the next two months, with a change of government that seems likely in one, and possible in the other. Despite these attenuating circumstances, the fact remains that relations between the political leadership of Australia and India have never been better.

There is no doubt that Australia–India bilateral relations are significantly hindered by a combination of historical baggage, geopolitical uncertainty, suspicion and skepticism. But there has been progress that is unremarkable in its speed, yet commendable in the circumstances in which it has accrued.

A key factor in all this is India’s naval diplomacy, which has a track record of consistency and resilience not seen in other facets of its national power. This is amply evidenced by the manner in which the Indian Navy built upon its engagement with the US Navy through some very turbulent times, defining the contours of what is today a significant strategic partnership.

In the context of Australia and India, it may be prudent to temper expectations, and acknowledge the small yet notable waypoints along this long, at times implausible voyage. [https://www.aspiestrategist.org.au/africa-india-strategic-relations-not-all-cold-and-gloomy/](https://www.aspiestrategist.org.au/africa-india-strategic-relations-not-all-cold-and-gloomy/)
Exploring the concept of social license to operate in the Blue Economy

At long last, the outcomes of the industry workshop on social license, held at the Sustainable Ocean Summit in 2017, have been released as a report—Social license to operate and the Blue Economy.

This workshop was organized by the World Ocean Council, the University of Wollongong, and The Environmental Policy Group at Wageningen University, Netherlands, to better understand what the concept of social license to operate means in practical terms for the industries that make up the Blue Economy.

The workshop and resulting report form part of the broader research on Blue Economy being undertaken by ANCORS Vice-Chancellors Post Doctoral Research Fellow Dr Michelle Voyer and Professor Judith van Leeuwen from Wageningen University.


A reference for the associated academic article based on this work can be found in the Publications section of this Newsletter.

Emeritus Professor named to ISSF Board of Directors

The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) announced three new Board of Directors appointments in April. ANCORS’ Emeritus Professor and former Centre Director Martin Tsamenyi, AM, was named as the Board’s Law of the Sea scholar and fisheries law and policy expert.

He joins 10 other board members, including ANCORS alumni Dr Transform Aqorau, to provide strategic direction for an organization that undertakes a range of science-based initiatives for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of global tuna stocks and associated ecosystems.

ANCORS alumni a strong presence at Forum Fisheries Officials Meeting

With ANCORS now in its 25th year, the Centre has a long history of graduating Masters and PhD students who go on to do great things around the world. Many see each other as family when the opportunity to meet up arises.

One such opportunity was at the recent 110th Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) Officials Meeting in Pohnpei, FSM in early May. The week-long meeting provides an opportunity for the 17-member Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), which is itself celebrating 40 years, to discuss strategic planning and policy priorities for regional tuna fisheries and to agree on actions to be put forward for endorsement to the upcoming FFC Ministers meeting.

A number of ANCORS alumni, as well as current PhD student Kamal Azmi, played an active role in this meeting as national and regional representatives.

With widespread concerns about slavery at sea in the global fishing industry, the headline decision of this meeting was to add Crew Employment Conditions to the regional harmonized minimum requirements for fishing licenses across all member countries.

For more on the meeting, see: https://bit.ly/2jIMOWS

Smiles all around as some of the ANCORS ‘family’ reunites at the 110th FFC meeting in Pohnpei. From L to R: Mr Allan Rahari (Solomon Is.), Mr Yohni Fepulaia (FFA), Mr Samoa Juno (FSM), FFA Director-General Dr Manu Tupou-Roosen, Dr Lara Matarangi-Trott (WCPFC), Dr Josie Tamate (Niue), current PhD Student Mr Kamal Azmi (Australia), and Ms Ana Taholo (WCPFC).
Australia Awards Africa participants come to UoW

This year’s cohort for the seven-week, Australian government-funded, short course Ocean Management: Sustainable Fisheries and Governance have completed their first two weeks in Mauritius, supported by ANCORS’ Professor Alistair Millgorm and Dr Karen Raubenheimer. This short course provides support for participants to become agents of change within their respective fields and government ministries, which include fisheries, aquaculture and the environment.

In Mauritius, participants discussed fisheries management in Africa and visited a marine park, an aquaculture facility and a tuna cannery to provide practical experience and industry networking opportunities. They also participated in a Blue Economy symposium, co-organised by ANCORS and the University of Mauritius, and attended a reception with the Australian High Commissioner to Mauritius.

Arriving in Australia, the group will spend the next five weeks at ANCORS in Wollongong and will visit Sydney, Canberra, Cairns, Port Stephens and Jervis Bay. Learnings in legal and governance issues at the local and global level will be shared through interactive classroom sessions and field visits.

ANCORS is also assisting the participants, who are from 11 countries across Africa, to develop ‘reintegration action plans’ that they will implement within 12 months of their return home.

ANCORS wishes the group a wonderful experience in Australia and is deeply appreciative of the assistance provided by the University of Mauritius and UoW College’s Alison Foley in course delivery.

— Dr Karen Raubenheimer

Law of the sea short courses go abroad

During March 2019, ANCORS delivered Law of the Sea training courses in Brunei and in Vietnam.

In Brunei, the one week course was hosted in the Attorney-General’s Chambers and attended by officials from across government departments.

In Vietnam, officials from the National Boundaries Commission in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the course.

Each course was tailored to meet the requests of the host and was delivered by Professor Stuart Kaye and Professor Greg Rose. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade supported the training.

First part of fisheries negotiation program delivered in Indonesia

Lecturer Ruth Davis and PhD Student Leonardo Bernard travelled to Jakarta for the week of 6-10 May to deliver the first part of the Cooperation Program on International Fisheries Negotiation, a joint initiative of the Australian government, Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) and ANCORS. MMAF Officer and soon-to-be ANCORS alumni Zaki Mubarok provided much-appreciated assistance.

The program, which is funded by the Australian government, was opened by MMAF Secretary General Nilanto Perbowo, who spoke of the critical importance on ocean law and policy, and fisheries regulation in particular, to Indonesia and its people.

Seventeen enthusiastic participants from a variety of Departments across MMAF spent the week learning the essentials of international law and the law of the sea in readiness for further training in international diplomacy and negotiations.

As part of the week’s activities, participants took part in practical negotiation exercises and were able to demonstrate their understanding of the course material as the negotiations progressed to a ‘final round’ on the Friday morning. ANCORS looks forward to the group reconvening in September for the second stage of the program.

— Ruth Davis
PhD Student Indra Alverdian recently spent a month as a visiting researcher at the University of Turku, Finland as part of the Abo Akademi University –University of Turku Sea Profile academic working group on the Baltic Sea, in line with Finland’s Strategy for the Baltic Sea region. As part of his research activities he also delivered a presentation related to the need for a balanced sea-land approach to address the root causes rather than symptom of inter-related maritime crime in the Sulu-Celebes Seas.

—Indra Alverdian

PhD Student Elizabeth-Rose Amidjogbe participated in an expert workshop held in Rome, Italy, from 6 to 8 May, hosted by United Nations FAO. The meeting was attended by 26 experts from around the world including members of the Convention of International trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Secretariat. The Expert Workshop was held as part of a continued collaboration between the CITES Secretariat and FAO – through its Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture as well as the Development Law Service of the FAO’s legal office - to explore the implementation of CITES through fisheries legislation.

The focal issues addressed in this workshop were:

a. The relationship between the fisheries sector and CITES, particularly, how fisheries legal frameworks can be useful for the implementation of CITES; and

b. The legislative implementation of CITES, specifically, what main issues, mechanisms and tools are needed to galvanize the legislation of the fisheries sector.

Ms. Amidjogbe gave a presentation on CITES implementation in Liberia. The presentation discussed the existing implementation of CITES in Liberia and the areas of potential use in the conservation and management of fisheries resources.

The findings of this workshop, as well as other products of this collaboration, aim to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal 14, especially 14.4 and 14.A.

—Elizabeth-Rose Amidjogbe

New Publications


ANCORS Around the World

ANCORS PhD Students Yulu Liu, Brooke Campbell, Leonardo Bernard and visiting student Hilde Woker took a short break from their studies recently to drive nearly 4000 km across the middle of Australia, from Adelaide to Darwin. Here they are just before sunset at Uluru, looking deceptively free of flies.

Upcoming courses and events

2019 CIL-ANCORS Workshop on Resolving Complex Maritime Boundaries
25–27 June 2019, Singapore
Following the success of its Workshop on Maritime Boundaries in 2017 and 2018, the Centre for International Law (CIL) of the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) of the University of Wollongong are organising the 2019 CIL-ANCORS Workshop on Resolving Complex Maritime Boundaries.

The 2019 Workshop will be held from 25 June (Tuesday) to 27 June 2019 (Thursday) at the NUS Bukit Timah Campus.

The 2019 Workshop is designed for government officials who are responsible for negotiating complex maritime boundary issues with their neighbours, including legal experts, technical experts and officers from government ministries. The workshop may also be of interest to academics and practitioners with a special interest in maritime boundaries.

The 2019 Workshop will be open to a maximum of 60 participants. The workshop fee of USD 1,500 per participant includes breaks, lunch and course materials.

Information on the application process and sponsorships: https://cil.nus.edu.sg/application-cil-ancors-workshop-2019/

ANCORS Professional Short Courses for 2019
Fisheries Management
25–29 March 2019
Law of the Sea
17-21 June 2019
Maritime Regulation and Enforcement
24-28 June 2019
Maritime Security
8-12 July 2019
International Fisheries Trade
12– 16 August 2019
International Fisheries Law
19-23 August 2019
A big welcome to the newest and tiniest members of the ANCORS extended family! Congratulations to PhD Student Genevieve Quirk, husband Owen Pascoe, and big brother Llewellyn on the recent birth of their baby boy, Emmanuel Winton.

Congratulations also to Professor Alistair McIlgorm, who is a grandfather for the first time, and to his daughter Rachael and son-in-law A.B. on the birth of their daughter Stacy Rhuba Conteh.

ANCORS also welcomes three new staff members! David Letts, AM CSC, joins as a part time Associate Professor in a teaching role. Professor Robert McLaughlin also joins in a part-time teaching role. The third new staff member is already a familiar face around ANCORS—Leonardo Bernard will soon transition from PhD student to Associate Research Fellow.

ANCORS farewells visiting student Hilde Woker, who has been at the Centre for 6 months as part of her PhD studies. She returns to K.G. Jebsen Centre for the Law of the Sea at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø, to complete her studies.

Congratulations to PhD Student Evelyn Ogbeta, who successfully defended her thesis proposal.

Our website is moving to a new—look format! Over the next month or two, the ANCORS website will be transitioned to a new layout and structure that is more consistent with the general look and feel of the broader UoW web presence. Most of our content (including the home URL) will remain the same, just arranged differently. If you’re having a hard time finding what you need as you learn to navigate the new format, or if you come across something that doesn’t quite seem right, please let us know by dropping us a line at ancors@uow.edu.au.