

Abstract

By the turn of the twenty-first century, coast guard organizations in Southeast Asia have been emerging as the new maritime agency. The Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam have established or improved their respective coast guard organizations independent of the Navy. These agencies' mandates are not limited to maritime security and law enforcement but primarily include maritime safety and marine environmental protection. While there appears to be some momentum behind the creation of coast guards in the region, it is vital to comprehend the reasons of each state why a separate maritime force from the military was created. Given that these countries have existing naval forces, this thesis poses the question: Why are coast guard organizations being developed in Southeast Asia despite the existence of their Navies? The thesis argues that the emergence of the coast guard organizations, namely the Philippine Coast Guard, Vietnam Coast Guard, and Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency, results from how domestic and external factors shape national leaders' perception. This argument counters the existing studies that primarily focus on the coast guard organization's maritime security role and challenges the literature that fails to give a balanced analysis of domestic and international factors in understanding the rise of white hulls in Southeast Asia.