



# CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

## INDO-PACIFIC NEWSLETTER



A monthly Newsletter on Security and Strategic Issues on Indo-Pacific Region from  
Centre for Air Power Studies

### From Editor's Desk

September was an eventful month for regional geopolitics, with US President Joe Biden hosting the first-ever in-person Quad Leaders' Summit with Indian PM Narendra Modi, Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga and Australian PM Scott Morrison. Not only did the Quad release their second joint statement (after the first statement titled 'The Spirit of Quad' in March 2021), which reiterated the grouping's commitment to the Quad's three key areas of interest: vaccine diplomacy, emerging technologies, and climate change. Further, it also launched several new areas for cooperation, like building resilient and sustainable supply chains (especially in technology and semiconductors), and increased people-to-people exchanges. Further, Modi and Biden met bilaterally along the sidelines of the Quad, displaying continued synergy between both states. Moreover, September also saw the launch of a new trilateral in the Indo-Pacific, Australia-UK-US (AUKUS), that caused ripples in the region. AUKUS' plans to transfer nuclear propulsion tech to Australia for the development of nuclear-powered submarines resulted in the abrupt cancellation of the Franco-Australian 2016 submarine deal, causing intense friction between France and the US and Australia. Read some interesting perspectives on these developments, carefully curated for you!

Lastly, in our quest to continually improve and bring you the best of the month's publications, we bring you a new 'Cherry-picks of the Month' section with select excellent articles for your reading pleasure.

Jai Hind

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[https://www.icwa.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls\\_id=6424&lid=4415](https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=6424&lid=4415)

### QUOTE

*"The new U.S. strategy will reflect Southeast Asia's importance to the Indo-Pacific region and the critical role that ASEAN plays in determining the region's future"*

*-Antony Blinken  
U.S. Secretary of State*

## Opinions/Review/Expert View

## Using AUKUS to Brazen it out

Source: Sarosh Bana, VIF

<https://www.vifindia.org/article/2021/september/28/using-aukus-to-brazen-it-out>. 2e Sept, 2021.



The United States' and the United Kingdom's overtures to Australia to help it acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered general-purpose attack submarines (SSNs) infuse a perilous complexity into the strategic Indo-Pacific environment, rendering it more difficult to denuclearise the region.

Announcing the new trilateral security alliance for the Indo-Pacific on 15 September that they termed AUKUS (an acronym of the three partner countries), US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison jointly pledged to embark on a “next generation partnership” clearly aimed at checking China's influence in the region. As the first initiative to be pursued over the next 18 months, the US and the UK would collaborate on enabling Australia to build at least eight SSNs for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). They will be constructed in Adelaide, with the first expected to be built by

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2040.

Australia will be only the second country to be provided the naval propulsion reactor (NPR) technology by the US, which had produced the world's first SSN, the USS Nautilus, in 1954. The UK had been the first, when the US supplied it the S5W pressurised water reactor (PWR) design, complete propulsion machinery set, auxiliary equipment, as well as fissile material for core fabrication and the offer to reprocess spent fuel in the US. S5W powered the Royal Navy's first nuclear-submarine, HMS Dreadnought, launched in 1960. A third generation PWR, namely, PWR3, will now power the four successor Dreadnought class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) that will replace the Vanguard class submarines from 2028 onwards and will host the Royal Navy's nuclear deterrent.

The formation of AUKUS brought the region to a boil, as it was viewed as a challenge by both China, which is intently enlarging its profile in the region, and its affiliate, North Korea, which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) suspects to have revived its nuclear programme by restarting its Yongbyon nuclear reactor. The 5-megawatt reactor is widely believed to have produced plutonium for nuclear weapons and is at the heart of North Korea's nuclear programme, says the agency.

Even as the region was shaken yet again by missile tests being conducted by both North and South Korea, the former saw the AUKUS deal starting “a chain of nuclear weapons races” in the Indo-Pacific. It warned that if it perceived “even a slight” threat to its security, it would take

“equivalent counter-action”.

American nuclear submarines – and, as a corollary, also British - operate on reactors fuelled by weapons-grade highly-enriched uranium (HEU) having 93.5% of U-235, the only naturally occurring fissile isotope that makes it widely usable in nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons.

Though Australia has around a third of the world’s uranium resources, and is the world’s third ranking producer, accounting for a tenth of annual global production, it has neither a nuclear weapons’ nor civil nuclear energy programme.

Even its efforts in the 70s to acquire a nuclear-submarine had been abortive. Its largest market for its uranium is the US, which accounts for over half of final demand. Canberra’s nuclear cooperation agreements mandate the use of

**AUKUS partners stressed that the submarines would be nuclear-powered and not nuclear-armed to ensure full compliance under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), China took umbrage.**

Australian Obligated Nuclear Material (AONM) exclusively for peaceful purposes, and are tied to each country’s safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

Heeding US Congressional concerns over proliferation risks of HEU-powered submarines, the Office of Naval Reactors assessed the issue in 1995, as also in 2014, and concluded both times that while it was technically feasible to convert nuclear-powered vessels from HEU to low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel, it was “uneconomic and impractical”, and besides “offers no technical advantage to the Navy, provides no significant non-proliferation advantage, and is detrimental from environmental and cost perspectives”. LEU-power would also require more frequent refuelling and larger reactors, forcing a change in the overall submarine dimensions.

Chinese and French NPRs use LEU that contains less than 20% U-235, rendering it not weapon-useable. Russia and India use medium-enriched uranium. The US Congress was also concerned that non-weapon states, like Iran or Brazil for instance, which are interested in acquiring or developing SSNs, could well use the US example to justify producing and stockpiling weapon-usable HEU, thereby destabilising the non-proliferation regime.

Though the three AUKUS partners stressed that the submarines would be nuclear-powered and not nuclear-armed to ensure full compliance

under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), China took umbrage. It termed the move “extremely irresponsible” and said it would ‘severely damage’ peace and stability, and risk triggering an arms race in the Indo-Pacific.

Its Foreign ministry spokesman urged Australia to reflect on whether it perceived China as a ‘partner or a threat’. Despite recent trade frictions where Beijing has disdained Canberra’s foreign policies by imposing restrictive import tariffs on Australian wine, seafood, beef and barley, China remains Australia’s biggest export market. Australian exports accounted for US\$ 125 billion worth of the US\$ 188 billion bilateral trade in the 12 months to July.

“We have entered, no doubt, a new era,” announced Morrison, possibly mindful that his country’s landmark foray into nuclear propulsion will reset the already charged littoral RAN’s nuclear-submarines will eventually operate in. Rather coincidentally, he added, “The relatively benign environment we have enjoyed in many decades in our region is behind us.”

Submarines are becoming a favoured option in the projection of power by the regional players, and AUKUS's formation rubbed even the triad's allies the wrong way, as also stirred up criticism within. With the development conclusively scuttling Canberra's controversy-ridden US\$ 65 billion deal with France's Naval Group for design and construction, in Adelaide, of 12 Future Attack Class non-nuclear submarines. France recalled its Ambassadors to the US and Australia for consultations. Paris was moreover informed of the alliance mere hours before the public announcement was made. A subsequent phone call between Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron saw the French envoy back in Washington.

Maintaining that her country viewed foreign policy developments through the lens of what was in the best interest of the region, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, "New Zealand's position in relation to the prohibition of nuclear-powered vessels in our waters remains unchanged."

Australian Independent Senator Rex Patrick remarked: "If it's a US submarine, they have highly enriched uranium in their reactors and that creates a proliferation issue in terms of Australia standing up saying, no one should have this sort of fuel available to them."

The Biden administration's largesse towards Australia is opportune, as it emerges from a humiliating rout in Afghanistan where its world's "most powerful armed forces" were outwitted by rifle-waving Taliban insurgents cruising in pick-up trucks.

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The US has been a Pacific power for more than two centuries, its US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPAC) deploying some 375,000 military and civilian personnel across the littoral. However, its pre-eminence in the region and beyond has been challenged by Beijing's military posturing. China's energy-hungry export-driven economy is heavily reliant on raw material and fuel imports. To buttress its suzerainty over the regional Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC), which are critical to the survival of the wider Indo-Pacific community, China has been extending its blue-water presence through the establishment of a major surface fleet and nuclear-submarine base on Hainan Island in the South China Sea and through deploying precision cruise and advanced ballistic missiles that can target all current US bases and naval forces in the region. In a series of combative moves, it has also been creating islands and militarising them to further its access to marine resources.

Washington acknowledges its diminishing stature, as articulated by the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Annual Report to Congress on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China (PRC), 2020. Referring to the People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) objective to become a "world-class" military by the end of 2049, a goal first announced by General Secretary Xi Jinping in 2017, the report notes: "Although the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] has not defined what a "world-class" military means, within the context of the PRC's national strategy, it is likely that Beijing will seek to develop a military by mid-century that is equal to—or in some cases superior to—the US military, or that of any other

great power that the PRC views as a threat.”

The report finds China already ahead of the US in areas such as shipbuilding - where the PRC has the largest navy in the world, its overall battle force of approximately 350 ships and submarines outnumbering the US Navy's 293 ships, as of early 2020 – and land-based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles, where the PRC has over 1,250 ground-launched ballistic missiles (GLBMs) and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometres, in comparison to the US's one type of conventional GLBM with a range of 70 to 300 kilometres, and no GLCMs. China besides has one of the world's largest forces of advanced long-range surface-to-air systems - including Russian-built S-400s, S-300s, and domestically produced systems – that constitute part of its robust and redundant integrated air defence system architecture.

Russia is the only of the six countries operating nuclear-submarines that is largely absent from the Indo-Pacific, while the flags of the US, China, the UK, France and India are seen more often in the region.

Russia is also the only country that leases out its nuclear-powered submarines, and India is the only country that leases them. In a move that had then raised concerns globally, Moscow had leased out a Soviet-built Project 670 Skat (NATO classification Charlie-I class) nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine (SSGN) to India from 1988 to 1991. It was bereft of the cruise missiles to adhere to the NPT, but gained Indian Navy the crucial capability to operate a high technology vessel.

Though the NPT bans outright the sale of nuclear-submarines, it has no specific guidance on leasing or on trade in NPRs. In 2012, the Indian Navy took another SSN, of the Akula class, on a 10-year lease at a cost of \$2 billion. The double-hulled submarine was returned in June, a year earlier, owing to an explosion on board that damaged both its hulls. Russia is reportedly modernising another Akula class attack submarine that will be delivered to the Indian Navy by 2025 under a \$3 billion 10-year lease.

India has simultaneously pursued a classified programme to indigenously design and build three 6,000-tonne SSBNs, conceived way back in 1998. The first of the series, INS Arihant, however, joined service only in 2016, with its successor, Arighat, due to join next year.

India, however, has high stakes in the matter of submarine power-play, being a lessee as well a lessor, apart from being a builder of its own submarines as also those under technology transfer.

In December 2019, it helped the Myanmar Navy acquire its third dimension by transferring a 3,000-tonne 1988-commissioned Russian-built Kilo class Type 877EKM SSN, INS Sindhuvir, from its own fleet. The five-year lease was undertaken through a Line of Credit (LOC), and followed a two-year refit at an Indian defence shipyard.

This move was intended to checkmate China's strategic inroads into the Indian neighbourhood, and provide the Myanmar Navy an interim capability to train crews and prepare to expand its undersea fleet through a likely follow-up

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acquisition of two additional Kilo class submarines from Russia. INS Sindhuvir can be armed with a wide range of weapons, such as the 220 km-range 3M-54 Kalibr cruise missiles, torpedoes and DM-1 mines. India and China, alongside Russia, Israel, and Ukraine, are reportedly among the five top arms exporters to Myanmar.

This 676,575 km<sup>2</sup> country of 55 million people finds itself in a geopolitical quagmire, sharing a tripoint border that measures 2,129 km with China and 1,643 km with India. Myanmar also shares a 725 km maritime border with India. Myanmar is besides the only ASEAN country that adjoins India and provides it a gateway to Southeast Asia.

Beijing's 'string of pearls' strategy designed to encircle India has led it to sell Bangladesh two refurbished Type 035G Ming class submarines for \$204 million in 2017, and eight S20 submarines to Pakistan for about \$5 billion that will join the Pakistan Navy by 2028.

India also believes that the Maldivian island of Feydhoo Finolhu, which a Chinese company acquired in 2016 on a 50-year lease for \$4 million, may be used as a listening post to track Indian naval movements in this strategic part of the Indian Ocean and to berth nuclear submarines.

It is in this overwrought environment that Washington is vying for resurgence. To a network of Indo-Pacific partnerships, it has added AUKUS by co-opting the UK to refurbish London's standing in the region. Britain has announced its post-Brexit "Asia Tilt" that reckons on finalising trade deals in the Indo-Pacific to replace those lost from the European Union. To signal its outreach into the region, the Boris Johnson government

recently dispatched a carrier strike group led by its new £3-billion aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth into the contested South China Sea, while flanked by a US destroyer and a Dutch frigate and equipped with American F-35 air fighters. Britain's Defence Secretary Ben Wallace announced that following on from the strike group's inaugural deployment, the UK would permanently assign two ships in the region from later this year.

Australia, in turn, has "Pacific Step-up" as its high foreign policy priority for the region. First announced in 2016 as a 'step-change' in the way it would engage the region, the step-up

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has since been highlighted as of fundamental importance to Australia. In 2018, Morrison had foreseen the engagement being taken to a new level, launching a "new chapter in relations with our Pacific family". Apart from the AUKUS submarines, Canberra has unveiled a \$90 billion plan for building new naval ships and submarines, more than \$1 billion in modern shipyard infrastructure, and up to \$62 million in workforce growth and skilling initiatives to enable the delivery of these platforms.

Washington, of course, has its policy of 'pivot', or 'rebalance', envisaged by the Obama administration to rekindle the US's influence in the region. The succeeding Trump administration instead unveiled its Indo-Pacific Strategy under which was enacted the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) that authorised US\$1.5 billion of funding for various US programmes in East and Southeast Asia.

Biden appears intent on taking the 'pivot' to the next level. He may be looking to AUKUS to impart him the vital means of getting there.

## From the periphery to the centre, India's maritime moment has arrived

Source: Darshana M Baruah, Hindustan Times

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/from-the-periphery-to-the-centre-india-s-maritime-moment-has-arrived-101632920783104.html>. 29 Sept, 2021.



*Maritime security has become a critical pillar of India's foreign policy engagements, institutionalising a foreign policy shift adopted by the government faced with dramatic developments in its immediate neighbourhood and strategic space (PTI)*

India's decision to hold an open debate on maritime security, during its Presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the month of August 2021, was significant and historic in many ways. Delhi has traditionally limited its engagements in the maritime domain, with little political interest in maritime security and collaborations. The UNSC debate on maritime security underscores the way maritime security has gone from the periphery to the center of Delhi's foreign policy priorities.

Today, maritime security has become a critical pillar of India's foreign policy engagements, institutionalising a foreign policy shift adopted by the government faced

with dramatic developments in its immediate neighbourhood and strategic space. This shift in Delhi's maritime reckoning underlines both the importance of maritime security in India's foreign policy engagements as well as the potential of the domain in promoting Delhi's foreign policy ambitions.

The maritime domain has often provided Delhi with opportunities to increase its strategic, military and political profile across the Indian Ocean. While, historically, the land border in the north has occupied India's security resources and priorities, Delhi's maritime geography and the nature of the domain has allowed the Indian Navy to deliver far above the meagre defence budget (approx. 14%) that it receives. Despite the capital and resource constraints while being ignored by the political class, the Indian Navy was able to establish itself as a key player and an important maritime partner for much of the Indian Ocean littorals and islands.

India's role in responding to humanitarian disasters in the region, whether it was the 2004 Tsunami or evacuation missions from the Gulf,

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awarded Delhi an opportunity to establish itself as a reliable player. Although India has its own share of political differences with its maritime neighbours such as Sri Lanka and Maldives, the current government has taken a number of steps to institutionalise its maritime initiatives.

One of the key steps forward was creating the Indian Ocean division within the Ministry of External Affairs in 2016 allowing Delhi to streamline its efforts with the Indian Ocean islands of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros. While

India still has much to do to cement its presence and engagements in the western Indian Ocean, Delhi today fully recognises the importance of the region for its strategic ambitions. India has also done well in formalising ad-hoc roles in the Indian Ocean through agreements such as White Shipping and creating the Information Fusion Centre — a much needed regional platform for the Indian Ocean.

Through these initiatives, Delhi has slowly but gradually implemented its shift toward a more active maritime foreign policy. These agreements and forums allow India to situate itself as a key regional security provider by investing resources and building capacity to address shared concerns and threats with its partners.

Going beyond its immediate maritime neighbours and island states, Delhi has also leveraged the Indo-Pacific framework to its advantage. Although hesitant initially, India since 2018 has been more welcoming of the opportunities in the maritime domain. The first in-person Quad summit in September 2021 reflects Delhi's growing political will, institutionalising frameworks that promotes India's role in a new security architecture.

It is only natural that, today, Delhi finally recognises the advantages of its maritime interactions in establishing itself as key security partner and regional player across the Indo-Pacific. While the Quad seeks to play a role in providing solutions to regional challenges across different domains, its maritime role will always be a critical factor, whether it be for addressing non-traditional security challenges

such as illegal fishing and the climate crisis or in promoting shared interests such as the blue economy. Moreover, the Quad nations remain some of the most critical partners for the Indian Navy, who also come together through Malabar exercises.

Throughout history, naval competition has played decisive roles in shaping great power competition and it is no different today. As the United States (US) and China, as well as India and China, engage and balance each other in stabilising an increasingly competitive strategic narrative, the maritime domain will take center stage in shaping this competition. After all, to be a global power, Beijing will not only have to secure its own communication routes at sea but also provide security to its key partners, bringing China all to close and present in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans.

**The first in-person Quad summit in September 2021 reflects Delhi's growing political will, institutionalising frameworks that promotes India's role in a new security architecture.**

India's new maritime collaborations are also a reflection of the challenges Delhi faces at sea and the unraveling competition with China. Delhi has gradually elevated its long-standing naval exercises with its key partners such as US, France, Japan, Australia, Singapore while forging new ties with European and Southeast and East Asia nations such as Germany, the European Union, Indonesia and South Korea. Further, Delhi's logistics facilities agreements with France, US, Australia and Japan among others provide the Indian Navy access to facilities in sustaining its presence across the Indo-Pacific.

Given the strategic location of India's maritime partners, such agreements provide the Indian Navy access to critical locations such



as Guam, La Reunion and Okinawa. These agreements also hold future possibilities for access to and missions from islands such as Diego Garcia, and Cocos Keeling, which, along with its own Andaman and Nicobar Islands, stand to provide critical geographic advantages to Delhi's anti-submarine warfare and maritime domain awareness missions.

As India takes its Indo-Pacific engagements forward, Delhi must continue to build on its maritime moment, leveraging opportunities and partnerships in addressing its concerns and challenges.

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## Assessing the EU's new Indo-Pacific strategy

Source: Garima Mohan, LSE

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2021/09/24/assessing-the-eus-new-indo-pacific-strategy/>. 24 Sept, 2021.

The EU has unveiled a new Indo-Pacific strategy which aims to strengthen cooperation with countries in the region. Garima Mohan assesses what the new strategy might mean for Indo-Pacific states and how it could impact on relations between the EU and China.

Joining a growing list of countries and actors around the world, the EU formally released its Indo-Pacific strategy on 16 September. Over the last two years, European policy has transitioned rapidly, from barely even using the term Indo-Pacific to reaching an EU-wide consensus that “the economic and political weight of the region makes it a key

player in shaping the international order” and that Europe needs to quickly reassess its engagement strategy.

For those who wonder why Europe should engage with a distant region on the other side of the world, the strategy's opening paragraphs make clear that the “futures of the EU and the Indo-Pacific are inextricably linked given the interdependence of the economies and the common global challenges”. Aimed mostly at a European domestic audience which might question why resources are being allocated to the Indo-Pacific when Europe faces many challenges in its own neighbourhood, the strategy makes clear that trade between the two regions is higher than anywhere in the world. The EU is the top investor and one of the largest trade partners for Indo-Pacific economies, and the region is the second largest destination for EU exports. As a result, the strategy argues, Europe has a stake in the region and needs to do more to “strengthen its strategic reach and its supply chains.”

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A key challenge in the Indo-Pacific however is the role an increasingly assertive China will play in the region. The strategy implicitly recognises China's attempts to alter the regional status quo, mentioning “tensions around contested territories and maritime zones”, and a “significant military build-up including by China”. It argues that crises in regional hotspots like the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait may have “a direct impact on European

security and prosperity”.

How exactly then does the EU plan to engage with the Indo-Pacific? There are three key instruments mentioned in the strategy: diversifying and strengthening partnerships with “like-minded partners”; making sure the EU’s existing engagements in the region serve Europe’s interests and align with the goals of its key regional partners; and finally, contributing not just to security and stability but also regional needs around infrastructure investments, resilient supply chains, and emerging technology where a lot of competition in the Indo-Pacific is unfolding.

The EU’s Indo-Pacific strategy marks a departure in its approach to the region, as it stresses diversifying partnerships beyond China. While Japan and the ASEAN have traditionally been Europe’s partners of choice in Asia, the strategy also shows how far the Europe-India partnership has come, and it makes several references to Taiwan, Australia, the US, Canada and South Korea as other “like-minded” partners.

Although the EU takes an “inclusive” and “cooperation based” approach to the Indo-Pacific, stressing the need to work with China on common challenges, it adds one important qualifier. The EU will pursue “multifaceted” engagement with China, encouraging it to play a peaceful role in the region. At the same time, the EU will “continue to protect its essential interests and promote its values” and will push back “where fundamental disagreements

exist, such as on human rights”. This is remarkable because almost no other European Indo-Pacific strategy has explicitly highlighted these tensions in Europe-China relations.

An important dimension of the Indo-Pacific is the emergence of flexible coalitions among like-minded partners, particularly the Quadrilateral between the US, India, Japan and Australia. While outlining its approach to China, the EU strategy also opens the possibility and willingness to work with other partners and coalitions. It explicitly mentions working with Quad working groups on vaccines, climate change and emerging technologies.

Finally, the EU mentions areas where it would like to work with these like-minded partners, and where Europe seeks to contribute to Indo-Pacific stability. This includes security and defence where the European focus seems to be on ensuring a “meaningful”

**Indo-Pacific is the emergence of flexible coalitions among like-minded partners, particularly the Quadrilateral between the US, India, Japan and Australia.**

European naval presence and making sure there is more intra-European coordination particularly through mechanisms like Coordinated Maritime Presences. It also mentions increasing joint naval activities including joint exercises, port calls, reinforcing EU naval diplomacy and participating in multilateral exercises.

Security in the Indo-Pacific is about more than just deploying frigates, where European navies face obvious limitations and resource constraints. The EU also wants to make sure its existing capacity building programmes function

more strategically. The strategy mentions many projects around maritime domain awareness and information sharing, such as the decision to expand the CRIMARIO project to Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, and working with regional information fusion centres.

The EU also wants to step up its defence diplomacy, deploy military advisors to EU delegations, and set up security and defence dialogues with more partners, including on challenges like counterterrorism, cyber security, maritime security and non-proliferation. It has already started pilot programmes to explore closer security cooperation with India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Vietnam. The EU also explicitly mentions doing more in the Indian Ocean, which is in its near neighbourhood and constitutes a “gateway to the Indo-Pacific”.

However, the EU can have the most impact on questions of economic security in the Indo-Pacific. Here the strategy takes a broader approach, going beyond concluding more free-trade agreements and aiming to work towards resilient and diversified supply chains, stronger rules against unfair practices such as economic coercion and forced technology transfers, and addressing strategic dependencies in supply chains (e.g. in relation to semiconductors) by working with partners like Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

There are other areas where the region is looking for alternatives to Chinese investments

and technology, and where Europe has something to contribute. The strategy for example mentions creating digital partnerships, including the recently concluded one with India which focuses on AI, 5G and quantum technologies. On infrastructure connectivity, the EU has just announced its “Global Gateway” to provide alternatives to China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Indo-Pacific partners like Japan and India have been the first to conclude a connectivity partnership with the EU, and it also wants to plug into and seek complementarity with existing initiatives by Australia, Korea, the US and Canada.

**EU has just announced its “Global Gateway” to provide alternatives to China’s Belt and Road Initiative.**

Similar to the Quad working groups, which seek to provide public goods in the region and deal with global issues, the EU strategy also focuses on climate change, ocean governance, health, and the response to Covid-19, including better access to and distribution of vaccines.

While it remains to be seen whether the new strategy will have a major impact, for Europe’s partners, the strategy does provide some clear answers on where Europe stands on key Indo-Pacific debates. It also gives some insight into the EU’s approach to dealing with China and the potential for the EU to work with like-minded partners and in flexible coalitions.

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## Snapshots

### Integrating AUKUS into the Indo-Pacific

Source: Ramesh Thakur, *The Strategist*

[https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/integrating-aukus-into-the-indo-pacific/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Daily%20The%20Strategist&utm\\_content=Daily%20The%20Strategist+CID\\_bac24e03660302c407bdbc2336549ea3&utm\\_source=CampaignMonitor&utm\\_term=Integrating%20AUKUS%20into%20the%20Indo-Pacific](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/integrating-aukus-into-the-indo-pacific/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20The%20Strategist&utm_content=Daily%20The%20Strategist+CID_bac24e03660302c407bdbc2336549ea3&utm_source=CampaignMonitor&utm_term=Integrating%20AUKUS%20into%20the%20Indo-Pacific). 28 Sept, 2021.



In its first comment on the new AUKUS partnership, *The Economist* said it represents the shifting of geopolitical tectonic plates. The defence implications for Australia and the regional and global geopolitical ramifications have been extensively covered by many security analysts and will continue to preoccupy them for some time yet. This article has the more modest aim of situating AUKUS in the plethora of groupings jostling to manage regional affairs.

The events of World War II forced home the recognition for Australia and New Zealand that the sun was about to set on the British Empire. Britain would steadily retreat inwards and could no longer ensure their security by dominating the

seas around them. ANZUS embedded deepening military ties and arrangements between the three partner countries until the mid-1980s when, forced by Washington to choose between anti-nuclear sentiments and the reality of an alliance that had nuclear deterrence at its core, Wellington reluctantly parted company. That drew Australia into an even tighter military embrace of the US.

AUKUS is both a strategic bet on a fundamental reorientation of American attention and resources from the North Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific as the emerging theatre of geopolitical contest and a step-change in Australia's military capability to bolster the other two allies' military footprints in the region. It creates a new subgroup within the Five Eyes arrangement on intelligence sharing, elevating Australia above Canada and New Zealand as a privileged defence ally of the US and the UK.

**Australia, Japan and the US were drawn to the 'Indo-Pacific' conceptual frame as a convenient analytical tool to incorporate India in a strategic construct that integrates geography, the 'free and open' principle and democratic values.**

AUKUS is both an acknowledgment of and a concession to the loss of US strategic primacy. It also relocates post-Brexit 'Global Britain' in the Indo-Pacific. Former Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer writes that the Anglo-American decision to help Australia develop nuclear-powered submarines is a substantial contribution 'to the stability of a balanced Indo-Pacific region'.

Australia, Japan and the US were drawn to the 'Indo-Pacific' conceptual frame as a convenient

analytical tool to incorporate India in a strategic construct that integrates geography, the ‘free and open’ principle and democratic values. The deep-seated reluctance of India and Japan to be drawn into an overtly anti-China collective defence arrangement, combined with the worsening maritime security environment around the Indo-Pacific, has prompted Australia to bet the house once again on joined-at-the-hip arrangements with its historical and post-1945 great and powerful protectors.

This means that India and Japan—the latter a US treaty ally—will need to reassess the relevance and importance of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue forum of the four major Indo-Pacific democracies. The AUKUS announcement came on the eve of the first-ever in-person Quad leaders’ summit in Washington. At one level, the concrete evidence of a strengthened US commitment to the Indo-Pacific will be welcomed by India—the country left most exposed by the abrupt and chaotic US exit from Afghanistan if Taliban 2.0 revert to exporting terrorism—and Japan. The Indo-Pacific’s vast maritime space is the Quad’s origin and main focus of attention. The four navies are therefore at the heart of the forum.

Unless Japan embraces nuclear propulsion, will the other three navies form a de facto subgroup within the Quad? Also, seeing as how we are talking about the Indo-Pacific, was any

consideration given to including India in the new constellation, not least to soften the optics of three Anglosphere leaders proclaiming their intention to take charge of Asian affairs?

France is the only European nuclear power with territorial interests in the Pacific. The recalled and now restored French ambassador to the US, Philippe Etienne, says that ‘much more’ than a business deal, the cancelled French submarine contract with Australia was ‘an essential part of our Indo-Pacific strategy and engagement’. As advisory council member of the French–Australian Chamber of Commerce

**The nuclear-power-tinged AUKUS has established a de facto hierarchy among US allies that is likely to increase Japan’s and South Korea’s interest in nuclear-powered submarines.**

and Industry Zoe McKenzie points out, France viewed the 50-year naval partnership as a much broader ‘strategic play: a skin-in-the-game investment in the Indo-Pacific but, equally, an elevation of the Australian market to a level it had never been granted by a European economy’.

With France furious at its perceived shabby treatment and its continuing strategic interest in the region, the development could be an opportunity for Paris to reroute its regional engagement through New Delhi and Tokyo rather than Canberra. That may be especially attractive to India, which has steadily deepened its relationship with France over several decades, including major defence purchases for the Indian navy and air force. Historical connections notwithstanding, France not Britain is India’s most important partner in Europe and the gateway

to India's engagement with the continent. There would be a certain symmetry to a reciprocal India bridge for French strategic engagement with the Indo-Pacific.

The nuclearisation of Australia's navy could create ripples of unease in East Asian countries and spark a regional race for nuclear naval propulsion. Chung-in Moon, chair of the Sejong Institute and former special adviser on national security and foreign policy to South Korean President Moon Jae-in, reveals that the Trump administration had rebuffed Seoul's request to share highly enriched uranium and technology for nuclear-powered submarines, citing proliferation concerns. The nuclear-power-tinged AUKUS has established a de facto hierarchy among US allies that is likely to increase Japan's and South Korea's interest in nuclear-powered submarines, he says. Will the relationship between the Quad, AUKUS and bilateral US–Japan and US–South Korean security treaties meld into a mutually reinforcing set of diplomatic–military arrangements within the variable geometry of the regional order?

AUKUS will also play into ASEAN's fears about Southeast Asia becoming a battleground for Sino-US rivalry. Former Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa warns that AUKUS represents an escalation in regional 'stealth underwater capability' and 'adds to the perception of an Indo-Pacific lacking nuclear stability and prone to costly miscalculation'. Along with the revitalisation of the Quad, AUKUS is a sharp reminder to ASEAN 'of the cost of its dithering and indecision on the complex and fast evolving

geopolitical environment'. He calls on ASEAN 'to reassert its relevance'.

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### **India is at the core of Indo-Pacific strategy, military confrontational blocs not a solution, says France**

Source: ANI News

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/india-is-at-the-core-of-indo-pacific-strategy-military-confrontational-blocs-not-a-solution-says-france20210928194530/>. 2 Sept, 2021.



*India is at the core of Indo-Pacific strategy, military confrontational blocs not a solution, says France*

New Delhi [India], September 28 (ANI): Referring to the recently inked AUKUS pact, France has said that military confrontational bloc is not the answer to problems in the Indo-Pacific region and a much broader approach is needed.

Speaking exclusively to ANI on implications of the AUKUS pact, French envoy to India Emmanuel Lenain said: "You know our approach. We don't think the logic of blocs being military confrontational is the answer to our problem. We feel that we need a much broader approach with much more partnership between countries, we need to provide an alternative to order pushed by certain countries in the region, we need a positive agenda."

AUKUS is a trilateral security agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States for the Indo-Pacific region announced on September 15 this year. France views Quad as a broader global group in comparison to security alliance AUKUS, the envoy said.

“If I look at the statements including by the Indian officials, there is a clear difference between military alliance AUKUS and a more broader, global group of countries which is Quad. How do we interact with Quad depends on the way it is evolved. Right now we are pretty comfortable with the way how Quad is making announcements and working, we will see they deliver on it and decided to be very pragmatic on that. We are result-oriented and it will depend. We are absolutely not against any cooperation on a case-to-case basis, as you may have seen in the month of April, the Quad navies joined French military exercise and it was quite a success.”

The first in-person Quad summit, hosted by US President Joe Biden, was held in Washington last week. The grouping includes Australia, India, Japan and the US.

Critics say that AUKUS has diluted the relevance of Quad. However, India has already clarified that AUKUS is a security alliance and Quad is a group of like-minded democracies.

Ever since AUKUS was signed there has been multiple interactions between India and France at the highest levels. French President Emmanuel Macron had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his French counterpart on the sidelines of UNGA in New York.

Pointing at AUKUS, the envoy said there are two ways to face challenge - either develop strategic autonomy or rely on other nations for security.

“My President, your Prime Minister spoke, ministers spoke. India is at the core of our Indo-Pacific strategy as we have the same approach.

**AUKUS is a trilateral security agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States for the Indo-Pacific region announced on September 15 this year.**

When you’ve challenges like these, you have two solutions. Either you develop your strategic autonomy, give yourself means to be independent or you just rely on other country to provide you security,” he said.

“Obviously some countries have taken second approach. India France, it’s nothing new, are taking the first approach since the beginning. We want to get strategic space, strategic autonomy and we feel the best way to do it is to work together as we have been doing for more than fifty years now on defence, critical technology, space, cyber, on AI, energy in many areas. I mean that’s the way we want to develop our cooperation and we also want to be trusted partners which we areas you know. France

has been on India's side each time you needed us, whether it is 1998 nuclear tests we didn't condemn, (be it) Kargil and very recently during COVID crisis, that's how partners should be," he added.

The envoy termed the signing of AUKUS as a breach of trust between allies.

"My country was surprised. It was a breach of trust between allies and also it's a major strategic inconsistency. When you want to face an issue, a challenge, usually you try to rally countries which are like-minded, you don't try to exclude major partners and my country within the EU is the most involved in the Pacific," he said.

"We feel we are also a country of Pacific. Also, we are India's neighbour. We have territories, we have a second exclusive economic zone worldwide. We have 2 million French people in the area. Compared to India it's few, for France it's quite something and we have troops we have thousands of troops, 7000 troops in the region," he added.

France recalled its envoys from the US and Australia after AUKUS was signed. Later after discussions between Macron and Biden, it was decided that the envoy to the US will return. (ANI)

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## Social Media Corner

### Cherry-picks of the Month

1. *Changing geometry: QUAD and a triangle* - <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/changing-geometry-quad-and-a-triangle/2340272/>
2. *France (and Britain) should join the Quad* - <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/574195-france-and-britain-should-join-the-quad>
3. *In a call with Stoltenberg, Chinese FM Wang Yi tells NATO to stay out of Indo-Pacific* - <https://www.wionews.com/world/in-a-call-with-stoltenberg-chinese-fm-wang-yi-tells-nato-to-stay-out-of-indo-pacific-416929>
4. *China's Frantic Scramble for 'Common Prosperity': Premise, Promises and Problems* - <https://orcasia.org/chinas-frantic-scramble-for-common-prosperity-premise-promises-and-problems/>

### Interviews / View Points

1. *Former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao's interview on AUKUS* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W47Y6aLXMI>
2. *C Raja Mohan on how Quad makes India stronger & a more vital ally for Biden's US with China's rise* - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v\\_fsOczACdk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_fsOczACdk)
3. *China is the 'strategic problem' in the Indo-Pacific region, says Peter Jennings of Australian Strategic Policy Institute* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPVqlusZB3I>
4. *EU Is Determined to Play a Key Role in The Security Of The Indo-Pacific: Charles Michel* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGJbT4fwBjg>

### Debates

1. *Why Australia-UK-US nuclear submarines will prowl Indo-Pacific to counter China* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyhqOdSJ-BE>
2. *Partnership for a Rules-based Order in the Indo-Pacific* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEwpUhu04hc>



## Podcasts

1. US Perspectives on Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region - <https://rusi.org/podcasts/bridging-the-oceans/episode-24-us-perspectives-maritime-security-indian-ocean-region>
2. AUKUS and the Indo-Pacific: Geopolitics, Technology, and Deterrence - <https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly90aGVkaXBsb21hdC5jb20vP2ZlZWQ9aXR1bm>
3. How Washington Sees Southeast Asia and ASEAN, A conversation about why the Quad matters - <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/how-washington-sees-southeast-asia-and-asean/>

## Video Links

1. Indo-Pacific QUAD alliance holds first in-person meeting - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHuFL78kBIM>
2. Indo-Pacific: AUKUS alliance causes anger in France and EU - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RqjM2ij5dc>
3. US, Britain, and Australia form Indo-Pacific 'AUKUS' security alliance - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiUJKO1HY6o>



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