



CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

INDO-PACIFIC NEWSLETTER



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

From Editor's Desk

Welcome back to the third edition of CAPS' Indo-Pacific bi-monthly newsletter. The last two weeks witnessed significant political momentum in the region, with choreographed visits by high-level Biden Administration officials to the region to add further impetus to Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy. US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin called for a new, "integrated deterrence" regional order, while US State Secretary Antony Blinken highlighted that the Delhi-Washington axis was quickly emerging as a central anchor in the region, particularly with India's increasingly active foreign policy. New Delhi announced that it will deploy four ships (including a guided missile destroyer and missile frigate) to the South China Sea for two months; it will participate in the annual Ex Malabar-21 with the Quad states and conduct joint naval drills with Brunei. In a sign of its budding capabilities, India began sea trials for its first indigenous aircraft carrier, expected to be inducted as INS Vikrant in early 2022. Importantly, the Modi government supplemented these maritime security manoeuvres with diplomatic ones; Prime Minister Modi chaired the UN Security Council's first-ever session on enhancing maritime security. He proposed a five-point roadmap (based on the UNCLOS) that was successfully adopted, highlighting India's bridging role in the forum. Meanwhile, the UK's Indo-Pacific 'tilt' further solidified as London became an ASEAN dialogue partner. Berlin is sharply navigating its China-dependency and Indo-Pacific outreach as German warships set sail to the region. Further, in this issue's Opinion section, we bring to you an excellent collation of expert commentaries from an array of viewpoints.

Indo-Pacific is the most consequential theatre in terms of India's security challenges; how the regional dynamics play out in terms of both US-China competition and India's strategic regional partnerships will remain a central theme in Indian foreign policy discourses. Check back in two weeks as we continue to bring you more updates on the rapidly changing geopolitical and geo strategic landscape of the Indo-Pacific!

Wishing everyone a very happy Independence Day

Jai Hind

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PEEP-IN

India and the US on Wednesday looked at ways to deepen their bilateral ties as visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described the India-US partnership as key to anchor the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/us-india-agree-to-expand-ties-blinken-says-partnership-key-to-anchor-indo-pacific-region-11627486440132.html>

QUOTE

"Beijing's claim to the vast majority of the South China Sea has no basis in international law"

-Lloyd Austin
U.S. Defense Secretary

Opinions/Review/Expert View

Southeast Asia forming the lynchpin in the US' Indo-Pacific strategy

United States Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin III, is currently on a three-nation tour through Southeast Asia to Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines. This visit is likely to show the Biden administration's commitment to demonstrate the importance given to Southeast Asia and ASEAN as an integral part of the Indo-Pacific architecture. Secretary of Defence Austin's visit follows the visit by Deputy Secretary of State, Wendy Sherman, last month. According to a statement issued by Pentagon Press Secretary, John F Kirby, "This trip will underscore the enduring US commitment to the region, and our interest in upholding the rules-based international order in the region and promoting ASEAN centrality." The same statement mentioned that in Vietnam, Austin is set to "meet key leaders to reiterate defense relationships and conduct bilateral meetings with senior officials". While in Singapore, he is scheduled to deliver a lecture at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). In Manila, there will be talks and progress on a revamped and renegotiated Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) that the US had signed with the Philippines in 1998.

The Biden administration's Southeast Asia strategy and its plans especially for economic and trade assignation and also military engagement has still not been disclosed.

Reinforcing ASEAN centrality

The first visit by one of the cabinet members of the Biden administration is significant as there is a growing perception in the minds of the Southeast Asian leaders that this region, in spite of being the hotspot for great power competition and Chinese belligerence, has been ignored and neglected by the previous and also by the current US administration. Moreover, there are still lingering doubts in Southeast Asia if the US is really serious and clearly defines 'ASEAN centrality' in its Indo-Pacific policy. This is especially for the push that is being given by the Biden administration

to the Quadrilateral Alliance (QUAD), which many feel is a mechanism to wade away from the 'ASEAN centrality' and the predominance of ASEAN in regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific.

The Biden administration's Southeast Asia strategy and its plans especially for economic and trade assignation and also military engagement has still not been disclosed. Considering how the Secretary of Defense, Austin, has himself emphasised, "You'll hear me talk a lot about partnerships and the value of partnerships. My goal is to strengthen relationships", it is pertinent for the US to use this visit as an opportunity to clearly lay out its policy and strategy for the Southeast Asian region. Getting ASEAN on board is very important for the US, especially given the US-

China contestation and also for how this region is fast engaging and developing closer ties with China during the ongoing pandemic. After the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017, though initially President Biden did underline his government's aim to rejoin these initiatives, still no progress has happened on this front. This conveys the wrong message that the only focus for the US has been to point out Chinese encroachment activities in the South China Sea and undertaking frequent Freedom of Navigations Operations (FONOPs) in the disputed waters.

The statements issued from the Pentagon as mentioned above, clearly use the term 'rules-based international order', therefore, it is no guess that the Secretary of Defense "will call out aggressive Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea and stress the importance of keeping the wider region free and open." Though with little effect on Beijing, the US has still consistently carried out the FONOPs in the South China Sea near Taiwan. Reinvigorating security ties with the three countries will be in the agenda. Aaron Jed Rabena, a research fellow at the Manila-based think tank Asia-Pacific Pathways to Progress and a member of the Philippine Council for Foreign Relations, noted that that Singapore and Vietnam have "an aligned political or defence agenda with the US". Though the

The Philippines is one of the oldest security allies of the US. The VFA of 1998 allows the US troops as well as their vehicles and equipment to move in and out of Philippines' territory.

US does not have a security agreement with Singapore, the country still has an access agreement and a strong defence cooperation with the US. Singapore provides significant access for naval and air assets (for training) to the US. Vietnam's relations with the US have come a long way. Vietnam is one of the rare ASEAN countries who has been vocal about the Chinese island reclamation and aggressiveness in the South China Sea and has also embraced the idea of external players having a stronger presence and role

when it comes to Chinese actions, especially in the disputed South China Sea. Singapore and Vietnam, thus, are important political and security partners of the

United States in this region.

The Philippines is one of the oldest security allies of the US. The VFA of 1998 allows the US troops as well as their vehicles and equipment to move in and out of Philippines' territory. The Philippines' President, Rodrigo Duterte, had warned of scrapping this agreement to show the Chinese his loyalty towards them and to mark his separation from the US. Though this decision has now been stalled, there are talks that during the visit, a new remodelled VFA with clauses more favourable to the Filipinos will be deliberated on. The focus on the part of the US will be to leave no stone unturned to get a final nod from Duterte about renewing this agreement.

Furthermore, to show more solidarity to the Filipino side, the US State Department last month approved the potential sale of more than US \$2.5 billion worth of military equipment to the Southeast Asian nation, including 10 Lockheed Martin F-16 fighter jets. This deal would be very substantial for the Philippines as there has been increasing presence of Chinese militia, coastguard, and naval vessels inside the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Though the security and defence talks are important for the US as it countering China at the core of its national security policy for years and the Biden administration has tagged the competition with Beijing as the “biggest geopolitical test of this century”, but at the same time, this visit should also stress and chart out a clear economic and trade policy for this region. Kurt Campbell, the National Security Council's Indo-Pacific coordinator, said at an Asia Society event recently, “For an effective Asia strategy, for an effective Indo-Pacific approach, you must do more in Southeast Asia.”

Vaccine diplomacy in Southeast Asia

The ongoing pandemic has only fanned the economic and vaccine dependence of these countries, where the virus outbreak is again peaking in China. China is increasingly being viewed as indispensable for the region's

public health and economic recovery from COVID-19. Though there is concern about China's growing power and assertiveness, but that is seen to take a backseat in light of the economic and trade benefits given by China. A vaccine diplomacy roadmap which has been discussed in the QUAD Leaders' Summit—where it was decided that the vaccine diplomacy will reach Southeast Asia—has to be communicated to these countries. This will help facilitate the trust factor in the US and also in the US-backed cooperative mechanisms of the Indo-Pacific like the QUAD. The US can also, along with the QUAD partner countries, come up with a working group to look at an economic recovery plan for the Southeast Asian countries. It will not be difficult to garner support on this proposal as all the QUAD countries stress on ASEAN centrality in their Indo-Pacific strategies. This announcement can also be made by Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin in this visit.

Keeping in mind that the ASEAN countries are still divided in their approach when it comes to the US FONOPs and of the US presence in the face of China's militarisation of the waterway and its vast coastguard and fishing fleet, it would be more beneficial for the present US strategy for Southeast Asia to emphasise more on the economic and the health pillar (vaccine diplomacy). The most

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noteworthy will be if a timeline of the US' willingness in rejoining pacts like the TPP are mentioned in the open. It has been rightly put by Abraham Denmark, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia that "Washington was saying all the right things on competition with China but there were questions about how it could translate words into actions and investments." In Southeast Asia, a careful balanced approach needs to be adopted whereby the China threat needs to be spoken of, and at the same time the message that US can be trusted both as a military and defence, as well as an economic partner needs to be brought out.

Source: Premesha Saha, ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/southeast-asia-forming-the-lynchpin-in-the-us-indo-pacific-strategy/>. 28 Jul, 2021.

Seeds of war in the South China Sea

War between China and the US is not inevitable. But it is becoming increasingly likely, and the South China Sea bears its seeds. In their meeting on Monday in Tianjin, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reportedly told US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman that China had three bottom lines: "The United States must not challenge or seek to subvert China's model of governance; it must not interfere in China's development; and it must not violate China's sovereignty or harm its territorial integrity." The US continues to do all three.

Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Xie Feng "expressed [China's] strong dissatisfaction towards the wrong remarks and actions of the US" regarding the origins of Covid-19, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Hong Kong and the South China Sea. US President Joe Biden has publicly identified what he considers a long-term existential threat to Americans' fundamental political beliefs and way of life. He says autocracies like China and Russia are betting that their systems will out-compete democracies in addressing the enormous complex challenges of the 21st century. He explained that they think democracies, with their unwieldy checks and balances, will not be able to function efficiently and effectively to meet these challenges. In short, they think that they can satisfy their populaces by providing continuity and stability and thus human security rather than Western-style unrestricted individual freedoms and resultant chaos and insecurity. So the two are on a fundamental collision course driven by competing ideologies and visions of the "international order." Although it is still possible to compromise and co-exist, neither is inclined to do so.

The "threat" of China now drives US foreign policy. The US is applying "whole of government" pressure on China – instituting sanctions because of what it considers unfair economic practices, theft of intellectual property, cyber hacking, its harsh treatment of minorities in Xinjiang, its political crackdown

in Hong Kong and its bullying in the South China Sea. The US is also cobbling together political and military coalitions of like-minded democracies to contain and constrain China and, most dangerously, stepping up diplomatic and military relations with Taiwan. China is responding in kind. This clash of world visions, driven by duelling ideologies, is now being backed by their respective militaries. Something has to give.

There are three issue clusters where unilateral actions by either side could trigger war: Taiwan, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. The first two are the most dangerous. Both involve issues of sovereignty and China's arch-enemy Japan. Japan is tempting fate by approaching China's red lines, particularly regarding Taiwan. Yasuhide Nakayama, Japan's state minister for defense, said last month, "We have to protect ... Taiwan as a democratic country."

Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso said a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would threaten Japan's survival, so Japan and the US must defend Taiwan together. Japan has even urged Australia to join it in military exercises aimed at the China threat in the East China Sea. The latest taunt was the public broadcaster NHK's use of "Taiwan" in Japanese to announce the entry of the Chinese Taipei delegation in the Olympics opening ceremony. The US needs to rein

things in, and probably will. Precisely because these issues are the most dangerous and the red lines are clear, the antagonists will likely avoid kinetic conflict over them. This brings us to the South China Sea, where the red lines are more ambiguous – but just as real and dangerous.

During former president Donald Trump's administration, US-China relations rapidly deteriorated overall, and in particular in the South China Sea. Both countries engaged in belligerent rhetoric and military posturing. Each claimed to be responding to the other and neither wanted to make the first move to de-escalate. The Biden administration has trumped Trump's belligerent uncompromising policy in the South China Sea. The US is building a coalition of like-minded democracies to contain and constrain China, including in Asia – Japan, Australia, India and South Korea – and in Europe– the UK, Germany and France. The maritime focus of this coalition is on a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and in particular "freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea, which the US disingenuously claims is being threatened by China.

There are other strategic factors in play. The South China Sea is at the center of the US-China strategic contest for regional dominance. China and the US have converging strategic trajectories. These produce dangerous dynamics.

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For China, the South China Sea provides relative “sanctuary” for its nuclear-capable submarines based in Yulin on Hainan. These submarines are its insurance against a first strike – something the US, unlike China, has not disavowed. The US uses intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) probes to detect, track and if necessary target China’s nuclear submarines. China’s response has been to develop on some of the geographic features it occupies the capability to neutralize US ISR in a time of conflict. For China, its installations are critical to its defense. But the US is continuing these probes because they give it an overall strategic nuclear advantage. Any US move to diminish China’s defense capabilities significantly would likely be a “red line.” For the US, a corresponding “red line” might well be any serious attempt to disrupt its ISR probes.

There are other probable “red lines.” For the US, this would include blatant violations of commercial freedom of navigation, or an attack on the forces or territory of its ally the Philippines. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has warned that Washington’s mutual defense treaty with Manila covers an attack on Philippine forces in the South China Sea. A non-response by the US would destroy

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its credibility as the “leader” and protector of the “international order” and the region. Any attempt by China to occupy and build on the Philippines-claimed Scarborough Shoal is also a probable “red line.” Another might be China’s declaration and enforcement of an Air Defense Identification Zone over a large swath of disputed waters in the South China Sea. For China, whose body politic has become increasingly nationalistic, any national loss of face and resultant loss of respect for leadership could trigger a response to a crossed “red line.” This might include a US military confrontation that forces a public climb-down by China’s navy.

The current situation is tense. Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of the Global Times, which often reflects government views, has warned, “Don’t play with fire off China’s coast ... don’t overdo it in the South China Sea.” But the current US approach is to “meet China’s greater assertiveness with a more assertive use of force of its own.” On the eve of his visit to Southeast Asia, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said he intends to emphasize a commitment to freedom of the seas and push back on “unhelpful and unfounded claims” made by China in the South China Sea. He said he will be “working closely with our partners about how we’re updating and modernizing

our capabilities and their own capabilities to work together to tackle some changing forms of aggression and coercion that we're all seeing, and I'll be talking with our friends about how we'll work hand in hand to pursue our new vision of integrated deterrence." To China, this is about as "in your face" as you can get. It is bound to respond in like manner. Hold on to your hat.

Source: Mark Valencia, *Asia Times*

<https://asiatimes.com/2021/07/seeds-of-war-in-the-south-china-sea/>. 27 Jul, 2021.

Has Japan become the fulcrum of resistance to China in the Indo-Pacific?

Japan has mounted a successful diplomatic offensive against China in a short span of time by drawing attention to the threat that the communist regime poses to the region and to the world at large. Chasing European countries—Germany, France and even the UK, since last year and inviting the attention of the US repeatedly towards the deteriorating situation in the region, Tokyo has garnered promises from almost all of them to rein in China to maintain strategic balance in the region. The latest in this effort has been French President Emmanuel Macron who has promised to actively collaborate with Tokyo in the Indo-Pacific region on issues of security as well as climate change. In a joint

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statement during the French President's visit to Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, and Macron promised to enhance defence cooperation keeping China in the crosshairs even as Paris increases its footprint in the region.

Japanese efforts at lobbying climaxed this week as it hosted numerous high-profile visitors in the past few days—all of them aimed at rebalancing the delicate security architecture unhinged by China's visibly aggressive military showmanship in the region. Speaking with India Narrative, Prof. Baladas Ghoshal—former chairman of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, JNU, and former General Secretary at the Society for Indian Ocean Studies—

says that Japan is worried about China's territorial claims which have increased considerably after Xi Jinping came to power. "For Japan, Beijing has crossed a certain red line. It happened when China sent its ships to the Senkaku islands; when it threatened to take-over Taiwan and when its diplomats spoke in undiplomatic language with other nations. All this has created unease in the minds of the Japanese", says Ghoshal.

Japan has been working hard to ensure that the world knows about its concerns. Tokyo's dexterity in lobbying hard with the world has shown result with many nations

responding to its fears. Just a few days back, Tokyo had hosted Wendy Sherman, US Deputy Secretary of State, along with Choi Jong Kun, South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister. Tokyo and its two guests issued a statement that the three nations oppose

any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea. The trio also reiterated the importance of respecting international law

including observing the freedom of navigation, which has been impeded by China through its assertion of exclusive rights in the entire South China Sea (SCS). The US and Japan expressed concern over China's claims on Senkaku as well as SCS.

Last week, Ben Wallace, British Defence Secretary, announced during his Tokyo visit the permanent placement of two warships in the waters around Japan--a pointer to the heft that Tokyo carries with allies. The Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier will also hold exercises with the Japanese navy in the region. "I think, European countries are awakening to China's intentions", says Ghoshal. He adds: "Japan realised that it has to create an environment to take on China by roping in like-minded countries who also feel similar vibes from Beijing. If all these countries act together, it sends a signal to China. The Japanese have prepared themselves for any eventuality as they were feeling that their sovereignty

was under threat".

Persistent lobbying by Tokyo has resulted in other alliances coming to the fore to counter China. Besides the European allies, Tokyo is also part of the Quad—the four-nation Quadrilateral group with India,

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Australia and the US in the vast geographical region that spans the east African coastline to the Pacific Ocean. Japanese forces

have been holding war games and military exercises with a number of countries, notably the Americans. But Tokyo's troops have also held exercises with Indian, Australian and French forces. However, China's intentions cannot be underestimated as it is also cobbling up partnerships or attempting to do so with countries such as Pakistan, Turkey and even Iran.

Source: Rahul Kumar, [daijiworld.com](https://www.daijiworld.com)

<https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=856984>.

26 Jul, 2021.

Can a China-Russia-Pakistan-Turkey-Iran arrangement counter the Quad?

On July 28, the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, who was on a two-day visit to India, emphasised that the Quad is not a military alliance, but an arrangement to spearhead regional cooperation and security while maintaining international rules and values. In a similar vein, the Indian External

Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, added that certain countries must go beyond the idea that “other countries are doing things that are directed against them”. However, despite all this, China continues to react negatively and insecurely towards the Quad. Interestingly, a handful of countries also seem share this perspective in varying degrees.

As the Quad continues to cement its role in the Indo-Pacific and beyond, there have been discussions on a particularly interesting five-way arrangement. Since a proposal was made by an Iranian envoy to Pakistan last year, commentaries have been increasing about a potential China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey regional security arrangement. Moreover, it can also be speculated that such a grouping may also aim to counter the Quad’s growing influence. However, the effectiveness of such a team may still be highly questionable. The reality is that an arrangement between countries that do not share similar values and are compounded by mistrust, cannot go far in achieving a significant degree of cohesion. Moreover, this particular arrangement is merely defined by countries that loosely share narrowly defined strategic objectives. Given these factors, such an arrangement to counter

the Quad’s influence may not go according to plan.

Areas of convergence

What brings all five countries together is their varying degree of grievance and opposing strategic interests against at least one member of the Quad. China and Russia have been against the four-way arrangement due to their fears of being contained and isolated. Both countries have often collaborated in an attempt to balance against the Quad. As a reaction to the first Quad Summit this year, China lashed out by stating that, “enclosed small cliques with ideology as the yardstick is the sure way to destroy the international order”.

Russia, on the other hand, made similar comments by arguing that Western countries are engaged in “Anti-China games” by promoting “Indo Pacific strategies” and “the so-called Quad”. Moreover, heavy Western-led sanctions on Russia due to the situation in Ukraine in 2014 have led it to fall into China’s embrace as an economic alternative. Iran’s relationship with the US has been on the downward trend, especially as it is facing the negative implications of the crippling sanctions imposed by the Trump administration. Moreover, during such turbulent times, China

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has presented itself as a key partner by defying US sanctions and importing oil from Iran.

Furthermore, in March, both countries concluded a major strategic pact worth a whopping US \$400 billion to purchase Iranian oil, boost investments, and deepen military cooperation. Along with China, Russia has also cemented its position as Iran's important security partner.

Despite being a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Turkey's dissatisfaction towards the US stemmed from the Trump administration's decision to slap sanctions on it under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for importing S-400 Russian missiles last year. In addition, India's befitting push-back to Turkey's internationalisation and interference in its internal affairs in favour of Pakistan has also compelled it towards an anti-Quad group. Pakistan, on the other hand, will inevitably support any arrangement that will go against or challenge India's influence. According to the former Indian Ambassador, Mr. Vishnu Prakash, "Islamabad is happy to jump onto any bandwagon that it is even remotely prejudicial to India's interest."

China has been a fundamental pillar in Pakistan's attempts to balance against India. Moreover, Pakistan continues to support Turkey's ambition to take over the leadership

role of the Islamic world due to the latter being the most vocal supporter of Pakistan on Kashmir. Furthermore, Pakistan has been trying to strengthen its strategic relations with both Russia and Iran while taking advantage of India warming up to the US.

Are they enough?

Being authoritarian and theocratic in nature, these countries do not have enough room for flexibility in the long term.

However, these motivators are not enough to forge a robust regional security arrangement, let alone a formidable balancing coalition against the Quad. Despite certain objectives that bring them all together into one field, all five countries do not share common values and principles that can be drawn from to solidify their arrangement. Being authoritarian and theocratic in nature, these countries do not have enough room for flexibility in the long term. Furthermore, each of the countries has an ongoing dilemma of mistrust towards one another.

China and Russia may be crucial strategic partners in their quest for certain strategic objectives; however, a closer look shows

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that Beijing's engagement with Russia is significantly selective and based on its personal gains. China has shown its unwillingness to support Russia on multiple occasions including its refusal to back Moscow on Crimea and Ukraine. In addition, China has also been increasing its strategic clout in traditional Russian spheres of influence such as Central Asia. With China muscling

in on the former Soviet Republics through increased arms sales, training programs, and new military outposts, Russia's influence and interests may be significantly undermined in the long run.

While economic relations between Turkey and Iran are improving, the same cannot be said for the strategic realm. Turkey and Iran have mostly been on opposite sides in a number of regional geopolitical issues such as the Syrian conflict, the situation in Iraq, and engagements with Israel. Furthermore, when Turkey cut its purchase of Iranian oil, it sent mixed signals for the viability of their bilateral relationship. Turkey's relations with Russia are also not all that rosy. Despite attempts to warm-up, there are serious areas of mistrust between the two countries. Turkey's interests to deepen its influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia along with its active military support for Ukraine continue to provoke its relations with Russia.

Pakistan, on the other hand, also has considerable obstacles in narrowing the gap with Iran. Being largely dependent on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan finds it difficult to maximise its partnership with Iran on a wide variety of issues. Furthermore, China's relations with Turkey are also mired by controversies particularly due to the former's unjust treatment towards the Uighurs.

The reality of the situation is that the largely talked-about five-way regional arrangement

cannot go far in presenting itself as a formidable counter to the Quad, let alone a robust and united grouping, due to several issues of mistrust and the pursuit of narrow, self-centred strategic objectives. Whereas the Quad focuses on overall stability, transparent development, and order amongst all countries in the region, this arrangement may end up being caught in each other's ambitions, which in turn can compromise the goal of providing any significant positive benefits to the rest of the world. This will not only limit its scope but also prove to be catastrophic for the overall balance of.

Source: Don McClain Gill, ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/can-a-china-russia-pakistan-turkey-iran-arrangement-counter-the-quad/>. 07 Aug 2021.

China's Rise, South China Sea, and Rules-Based International Order: A View From the Philippines

Is China a revisionist power challenging the rules-based international order? How are China's Asian neighbors dealing with China's rise, including its actions in the South China Sea? For a perspective on these and other matters, Jongsoo Lee interviews Jay L. Batongbacal, a professor at the University of the Philippines College of Law and the director of the university's Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea.

It has been five years since the ruling in the Philippines vs. China arbitration case brought

under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). How would you evaluate the significance and the impact of the ruling?

The South China Sea Arbitration Award is the most legally significant development in the long-running, complicated, and multi-party territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS). It shows the way forward to a fair and equitable allocation of jurisdiction and resources of a common sea area between several competing nations, in accordance with the terms of one of the most important global multilateral agreements of modern times. It properly balances the interests of the regional claimants not only between themselves, but also between them and external powers that have their own interests in access, mobility, and participation in the use of that enclosed sea area.

In your opinion, did the Philippines make the right choice by participating in the arbitration case? What has the Philippines gained or lost from the participation?

Although I personally did not agree with the full extent of what was submitted for arbitration, as I would have preferred a more focused case, overall the right choice was made in bringing UNCLOS to weigh in on the issues, and establish legal guidance for what should be the ideal resolution of

the disputing parties' competing maritime claims. By submitting the threshold issue of maritime entitlement to an independent tribunal's judgment, the Philippines has established firm legal support for its refusal to abide by China's demands against the independent use and management of its own offshore resources, and secured its legal and moral position should China become more interventionist and aggressive at sea. In the fifth year since the arbitration, more nations have come forth to support the Award against China's insistence on its illegal and excessive

While the Philippines has not lost anything legally, the sad reality is that it has undoubtedly lost, and probably still is losing, physical resources and habitats.

claims, which is important because it further reinforces the Philippines' position in dealing diplomatically with the disputes. But while the Philippines has not lost anything legally, the sad reality is that it has undoubtedly lost, and probably still is losing, physical resources and habitats on account of China's retaliatory behavior and destructive activities, such as the construction of artificial islands and the deliberate deployment of its ravenous fishing fleets deeper into the exclusive economic zone. For this reason, the challenge against the rule of law in the SCS has also become somewhat more intense.

Is the ruling likely to encourage or discourage any future arbitration case against China in the South China Sea dispute or in other disputes involving China?

It is difficult to say, since each country is a different political, economic, and legal situation vis-à-vis China and must weigh its own interests, strategies, and options as events unfold in the specific contested area. At the very least, however, the case is instructive as a proof-of-concept exercise in that the current state of UNCLOS and international maritime law makes it possible to engage compulsory dispute settlement mechanisms and states do not need to be permanently deadlocked in maritime disputes. The possibility of legal resolution adds to the menu of diplomatic strategies and options available especially to smaller Southeast Asian states as they try to manage and deal with an increasingly assertive regional power.

In your view, is China a revisionist power challenging the rules-based international order?

Yes, although the revisions it seeks at this point appear to be modest, incremental, and exceptionalist insofar as the SCS is concerned. China's excessive claim based on alleged historic rights or titles or facts clearly requires a special case and exceptional international norms in order to work. Its actions point toward a need to establish extensive power and dominion – practically equivalent to the ability to exercise absolute sovereignty – over the SCS (and also the East China Sea). This means the subordination

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of smaller states' legitimate rights and interests in the enclosed sea area, denial of their exclusive sovereign rights and jurisdiction in their maritime zones, and recognition of a hierarchical order where China's maritime interests preempt and reign supreme over those of her neighbors. This means an exception to the general rules of UNCLOS and the creation of regional international law that provides for a different set of norms governing state entitlements and jurisdictions in the SCS.

Is there any plausible alternative to the rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific that the Philippines or others in the region would find acceptable?

No. UNCLOS and the system of international maritime law built around it is the only system that is acceptable to the ASEAN member states and the region. This is evinced by the very frequent and regular repetition of the need for States to abide by international law "including UNCLOS." The Philippines and ASEAN are committed to UNCLOS and the prevailing system as the principal basis for the peaceful settlement of their current disputes.

What do you think is China's vision of its place and role in the Indo-Pacific and in the world? Does China have what it takes to lead

its region or the world? Does it have enough “soft power”?

China seeks pre-eminence and to protect its own interests, which now include securing its maritime trade routes and perceived spaces. I think that common comparisons to re-establishing the Middle Kingdom of old are slightly misplaced, as modern times and international relations provide a totally different environment and context for the conduct of China’s foreign relations. But it is clear that China seeks to elevate itself as a pre-eminent and pre-dominant power to which other countries should defer. The preoccupation with always demonstrating strength and the inability to compromise by shedding excessive and arbitrary claims will work against its being recognized as a regional or world leader,

At its core, ASEAN was not designed to deal with regional political and security issues; the founding principles of non-interference in others’ domestic affairs.

because other countries will always see China as working for itself and not necessarily for others’ benefit also. And if current suspicions and negative views of China at governmental and private levels are any indication, it clearly has not yet generated sufficient “soft power” to change these perceptions.

In your view, what are China’s policy objectives in the South China Sea and the East China Sea? And how can China pursue those objectives while maintaining good relations with its Asian neighbors and the United States?

China’s policy objectives in the South

China and East China Seas are driven primarily by strategic and military interests first and economic interests second. It needs to dominate the SCS in military and paramilitary terms as part of its strategy to protect what it believes to be its vulnerable southern coastline from potential threats. It requires preemptive, if not exclusive, access to economic resources in the SCS in order to address the needs of coastal populations and keep their local economies running. It will be extremely difficult to pursue these objectives with its Asian neighbors and the U.S. because these require exclusive access to and ultimate control over the vast sea area,

as well as the permanent retreat of the U.S. and other external powers. None of these other countries is about to give up their legally established rights, and this

will always collide with China’s exclusionary expansion.

How would you characterize the current state of relations between China and the Philippines? And how would you assess its future prospects?

Although the Philippines and China initially sought to portray Philippine-China relations as another “golden age” similar to the state of relations under the administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, it is probably more appropriate to label it as a failed promise with dashed expectations,

in the same way that China's \$2 billion worth of promises in infrastructure failed to materialize. Although China's assistance and investments increased, they still lag behind those of the Philippines' traditional development partners. Negative public opinion against China has remained basically the same, if not gotten worse, during Duterte's term, and the pandemic wiped out any potential impact of whatever was left of China's economic initiatives in the Philippines. The SCS disputes still constantly serve as a reminder to the public that China's friendship comes at a great cost with little benefit. This does not bode well for the prospects of future relations.

Where do things stand between the Philippines and the ASEAN? Can the ASEAN as a group deal effectively vis-a-vis China in the South China Sea dispute or on any other issue?

The Philippines still tries to work with ASEAN through negotiations on the Code of Conduct for South China Sea. However, diplomats must do so within the parameters set by the political leadership, which unfortunately has not been as consistent through the different administrations. At its core, ASEAN was not designed to deal with regional political and security issues; the founding principles of non-interference in others' domestic affairs and the sacrosanct value of

national sovereignty hinder the compromises necessary for member states to fully invest in cooperative arrangements on matters of mutual concern. Problems tend to have to nearly cause a national embarrassment before the concerned member states realize the need for cooperation. But when they do, the outcomes tend to also become quite successful and effective. If ever the ASEAN claimant countries realize that they need to get on the same page and agree upon a common course of action on China or the SCS, it would probably have reasonably good chances of success. The problem, of course, is that until then, divisive tactics still tend to effectively hinder movement toward joint action.

Please comment on the role of the United States in the Indo-Pacific, including in the South China Sea. Is the United States effectively addressing the challenges posed by China? If not, how can it play a more effective role?

The U.S. has only started to recover from the damage wrought by Trump's inattention and retreat from Asia and his preoccupation with the trade war with China. It will probably take well into next year before the U.S. is able to mount an effective multilateral strategy to address the many dimensions of China's challenges to the regional and global order. China has a good head-start in economic,

The U.S. is the only credible threat to China in many respects and can play a more effective role by re-establishing its leadership in the world community.

military, and political arenas but has suffered setbacks due to the pandemic and to self-inflicted wounds on account of its over-bearing diplomacy. The U.S. is the only credible threat to China in many respects and can play a more effective role by re-establishing its leadership in the world community. But to do so, it must return to the values that it promoted in the post-World War II reconstruction, which enabled the emergence and growth of many independent nation states aspiring for their own identity, self-determination, and equal place in the international community. China's vision for itself and the international community is an extension of its authoritarian political system, which would be a step back from the gains achieved since 1945.

What is the Philippines' position on the "Quad" (i.e., the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the U.S., Japan, India and Australia)? Is the Philippines interested in seeking closer ties with the Quad?

The Philippines has yet to enunciate a clear policy direction for the Quad. It formally abides by the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which views the Quad with a cautious eye and expresses ASEAN's reluctance and uncertainty about the substance, trajectory, and purpose of the "Indo-Pacific" strategy and perspective as more recently defined by the Quad. ASEAN as a whole does not

The Philippines has yet to enunciate a clear policy direction for the Quad. It formally abides by the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

welcome turning the region into an area of geopolitical competition, despite individual members' geopolitical partiality, and is wary of the Quad's potential for creating arenas for conflict. Yet, the Philippines has a formal alliance with the U.S., security partnerships with Japan and Australia, and is exploring possible ties with India. In the absence of a clearer definition of the Quad formation, though, the Philippines will likely not be as interested or purposive in its policies on the Quad or the greater Indo-Pacific as a whole, as it would be with its more concrete and immediate concerns with the SCS disputes. The Quad is still rather abstract in a sense, which makes it less easy for Philippine decision-makers to mount a concrete policy response.

Source: Jongsoo Lee, *THE DIPLOMAT*

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/chinas-rise-south-china-sea-and-rules-based-international-order-a-view-from-the-philippines/>
04 August 21.

Quad Infrastructure Diplomacy: An Attempt to Resist the Belt and Road Initiative President

Over the years, the competition between the great powers in the dual space of the Indian and Pacific Oceans has been rapidly increasing. In the face of the aggravation of relations between the PRC and the United States, the defence dimension of the rivalry

between the two contenders for global leadership traditionally comes to the forefront. However, in today's context, the parties will most likely not engage in military action for the strengthening of their dominance in the region, but they will try to achieve the goals by expanding of economic influence. In this context, along with the well-known trade wars, there is an infrastructure rivalry in the region, which is enforced on Beijing by Washington and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

The role of Infrastructure in Indian and Pacific Oceans' countries

The countries of Asia traditionally drawing the attention of the world community due to the high rates of economic, technological, and social development. In less than three decades, their per capita income has increased by 74%, millions of people have been lifted out of poverty, as well as a growing middle class has emerged in the region. All this became possible due to the multilateral cooperation institutionalization and the integration of the economies of the Indo-Pacific. However, the strengthening of trade and economic ties and the future prosperity of Asia largely depends on the infrastructure (ports, highways and railways, airports, pipelines, etc.), which contributes to a more active movement of goods on a regional and global scale. Moreover, back

The most prominent infrastructure initiative in recent years is the «Belt and Road Initiative» (BRI), which was launched by China's leader Xi Jinping in 2013.

in 2009, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) published a report according to which collective investments in infrastructure in the amount of US\$8 trillion will be required to maintain rapid economic growth in Asian countries.

The most prominent infrastructure initiative in recent years is the «Belt and Road Initiative» (BRI), which was launched by China's leader Xi Jinping in 2013. The BRI helped to fill numerous infrastructure gaps, but the United States and its partners increasingly paid attention to the geostrategic aspect of China's actions. It's no secret that the Belt and Road plays an important

role in the development and integration of China's provinces with neighboring countries. However, with the growing number of countries participating in the BRI, as well as the strengthening of China's influence on a regional and global scale, criticism of the strategic tools for expanding Beijing's economic influence gradually increased. The Belt and Road has faced a number of critical remarks, including those related to accusations of purposely involving the regional countries in the so-called «debt traps». Regardless of the degree of truthfulness or study of the issue, from year to year, media reports have contributed to the building of a contradictory attitude to China's BRI among the residents, experts, and political elites all over the world.

Moreover, as soon as Donald Trump

became the U.S. President in early 2017, Washington modified the nature of its policy towards China to greater confrontation. This trend has become a direct expression of the intensified great powers' rivalry and their struggle for hegemony in the Indo-Pacific, as well as a motivation for the revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which includes the United States, Australia, India and Japan. However, the interaction of the Quad has long been built on the basis of defence.

This trend continues nowadays, as evidenced by the frequent exercises and the growing Quad naval presence in the

Indo-Pacific but in 2021 the Quad countries expanded their range of issues on a multilateral basis. Now the agenda includes vaccine diplomacy (providing 1 billion COVID-19 vaccines

to Indo-Pacific countries, climate change, technological cooperation, maritime security, cybersecurity, and external development assistance. According to Kurt Campbell, Indo-Pacific policy coordinator at the National Security Council, Washington is looking to convene an in-person fall summit of leaders of the Quad countries with a focus on infrastructure in the face of the challenge from China.

It was clear that the Belt and Road Initiative is perceived by the Quad countries as the main factor in expanding the economic and political influence of the People's Republic of China.

Quadrilateral infrastructure diplomacy as the continuing vector of the Trump's administration

The infrastructure agenda also became an important part of the last summit of the G7 countries' leaders, during which the parties expressed their willingness to establish a BRI counterpart called Build Back Better World (B3W). In total, there are 22 mentions of infrastructure in the final G7 Summit Communiqué. Even despite the traditionally restrained position of India, which took the time to «study the specifics of the proposal», infrastructure diplomacy of Quad is becoming a new area of geostrategic competition in the Indo-Pacific.

There's one exception: the activities on the infrastructure track are not a new trend of U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, but a continuation of the foreign policy vector set during the presidency of Donald Trump. It was he who turned Sino-U.S. rivalry into a geo-economic level. Back in 2017, the Foreign Ministers of the Quad countries stated the need for high-quality infrastructure development in order to ensure freedom and openness of sea routes, as well as improve intra-regional ties. In 2018, MoU was signed between the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, aimed at implementing major infrastructure

projects in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, the Quad countries raised the question of the BRI countries' growing debt during their official meeting in Singapore. It was clear that the Belt and Road Initiative is perceived by the Quad countries as the main factor in expanding the economic and political influence of the People's Republic of China, as well as China's influence of the domestic political processes in the countries of Indo-Pacific. At the same time, the combination of economic and defence rivalry enforced on Beijing by Washington, as well as Quad's efforts to build a balance of power in the region actually indicates the explicit anti-China nature of the Quad.

In this case, it's important to note that each of the Quad countries has its own

levers of influence, which they can combine in infrastructure competition with Beijing. For example, in 2015, in response to

Despite the intentional exclusion of Russia from the survey, it approximately reflects the trends in the Indo-Pacific countries at the present stage.

the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) by China, Japan made the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (PQI). The United States, in turn, announced the infrastructure project Blue Dot Network (BDN), as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia established a new Partnerships for Infrastructure (P4I). All these initiatives are united by a commitment to inclusive economic growth, «quality infrastructure»,

climate change, disaster response, and social development. The capitalization of the Japanese, American and Australian initiatives is US \$110 billion (US\$50 billion from Japan and over US\$50 from the Asian Development Bank), US\$30-60 million, and US\$383 thousand (including access to US\$4 billion of foreign aid and \$US2 billion from the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific), respectively. Given the ongoing discussions about debt traps, the emphasis on «high-quality infrastructure» may give special features to the initiatives of the Quad but even the total amount of funding will not be able to compete with the US\$770 billion investments already made in 138 countries of the world and announced by China.

Anyway, Quad is stepping up its infrastructure diplomacy in at least three areas, including Southeast Asia, Oceania, and the Indian Ocean. For example, Australia, Germany and Switzerland have already allocated US\$13 million to the Mekong River Commission For Sustainable Development (MRC) to assist Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and, Vietnam to respond to pressing challenges while safeguarding the ecological function of the Mekong River and improving people's livelihoods. At the same time, Australia signed US\$300 million MoU with Papua New Guinea, aimed at the ports reconstruction in the major state of Oceania

(the ports of Vanimo, Kimbe, Motukea, Lorengau, Oro Bay, Daru, Lae, etc.). It is important to highlight that the increasing economic and infrastructural presence of China in the countries of Oceania, energize Australia's policy in the South Pacific, which is a traditional zone of influence of Canberra. At the same time, the expansion of Australia's aid and investment to the broader Indo-Pacific is due to the commitment of the current Australian government to the U.S. foreign policy.

In turn, the reaction of the Southeast Asian countries to the intensification of Quad infrastructure diplomacy will be more restrained. According to the latest Pew Research Center survey, the most unfavourable view of China is in the United States (76%), Canada (73%), Germany (71%), Japan (88%), Australia (78%), and South Korea (77%), while in Singapore — the only country representing ASEAN in the survey — the percentage of unfavourable views on China is at a low level (34%). Moreover, considering the aspects of infrastructure diplomacy in the region, we should definitely refer to the survey of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) of the political elites of the region Powers, Norms, and Institutions: The Future of the Indo-Pacific from a Southeast Asia Perspective, published in 2020. Despite the intentional exclusion of Russia from the survey, it approximately reflects the trends in the Indo-Pacific countries at the present stage. Thus,

American experts revealed that the political elites of Southeast Asia positively assess China's activities in the field of infrastructure development, which has brought tangible benefits to most Southeast Asian countries.

as a result of the survey, American experts revealed that the political elites of Southeast Asia positively assess China's activities in the field of infrastructure development, which has brought tangible benefits to most Southeast Asian countries.

Beijing's Response

China is actively reacting to verbal attacks from the United States and Quad. The infrastructure agenda was no exception, but China responded by modernizing its global

Belt and Road Initiative. In response to criticism about the involvement of the countries in debt traps, Beijing has developed a new Foreign Policy White Paper «China's International

Development Cooperation in the New Era». The document was published in early 2021. According to the provisions of the new White Paper, China will pay closer attention to the process of implementing projects within the aid framework, take an active part in evaluating projects in order to monitor their quality, maintain an appropriate level of confidence in its projects to China, as well as conduct bilateral consultations to identify difficulties with debt repayment and make sure that partners do not fall into a debt trap. It's possible that the new vision of the PRC will appear especially quickly in countries where the Quad will primarily try to implement their infrastructure projects.

China is the first country in the region, which pays significant attention to the issues of large-scale infrastructure development. Moreover, Beijing has a number of advantages over its opponent — Quad. First, the Belt and Road initiative is more structured and aimed at intensifying trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation with neighboring countries, while the emerging Quad infrastructure agenda is «dispersed» among numerous individual initiatives, doesn't have the same level of stability as the BRI, and even after 3.5 years of building the agenda is considered through the prism of expectations.

Second, China's initiative is aimed at a single infrastructure connection between the PRC and the rest of the world and acts as a potential basis for the intensification of global trade in the future. At the same time, today's projects of the Quad are of a «sporadic» nature and can't contribute to the infrastructure linkage between Europe, Africa, South and Southeast Asia on a global scale.

Third, China can already offer the Belt and Road members not only logistics infrastructure but also the opportunities in the field of green energy. At the end of 2019, China produced about a third of the world's solar energy and retained a leading position in the number of wind turbines. Within the

foreseeable future, the Quad countries, and especially the United States, will have to compete with China even in the field of the climate agenda, which is so close to the new administration of the U.S. President Joe Biden.

Finally, during his recent speech on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), PRC's Leader Xi Jinping confidently declared the great

Within the foreseeable future, the Quad countries, and especially the United States, will have to compete with China even in the field of the climate agenda

revival of the Chinese nation, its contribution to the progress of human civilization, and its readiness to build a new world, which undoubtedly indicates China's decisiveness

to respond to challenges to its address, including from the Quad.

Conclusion

The ongoing transformation of the regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific, both in the defence and economic areas, will be an important aspect in the post-pandemic era. China has repeatedly stated about the «covered» Quad activities to deterrence Chinese policy in the region, but the expansion of the Quad's agenda by infrastructure diplomacy allows us to speak about the evident vector of the Quad strategy against the PRC. However, nowadays the Quad countries had been left behind. China already has the world's most numerous land forces, the largest navy, as well as an ambitious global Belt and Road initiative that includes almost 140 countries

and a capitalization approaching US\$1 trillion. Of course, Quad is moving towards the institutionalization of its infrastructure cooperation and the potential expansion of the number of participating countries to the Quad Plus format. However, to reach China's achievements for the period 2013-2021, the new alliance will need at least a decade. At the same time, the rivalry of the Belt and Road with the Quad's infrastructure initiative will help the countries of the region to diversify their

infrastructure ties but will make their choice even more difficult, since it will primarily be regarded as support for the foreign policy vision of one of the parties, and not a

Xi believes that Beijing has an opportunity between now and 2035 to make China the world's top economic, technological, and potentially even military power.

pragmatic estimate of economic benefits. All this makes the regional environment in the Indo-Pacific increasingly complex and forces middle powers and smaller countries to adapt to new geostrategic realities.

Source: Artyom Garin, ORF, *Modern Diplomacy*

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2021/07/26/quad-infrastructure-diplomacy-an-attempt-to-resist-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>

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Why the Quad Alarms China

When former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe invited officials from Australia, India, and the United States to meet in Manila in November 2017, Chinese leaders saw little reason to worry. This gathering of "the Quad," as the grouping was known, was

merely "a headline-grabbing idea," scoffed Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. "They are like the sea foam in the Pacific or Indian Ocean: they get some attention but will soon dissipate." Beijing had some reason for such dismissiveness. The interests of the Quad's members were, Chinese strategists assessed, too divergent to allow for real coherence. Anyway, the Quad grouping had already been tried more than a decade earlier, with little in the way of real results. Within a

few years of that November 2017 gathering, however, Beijing had started to rethink its initial dismissiveness. By March of this year, when the Quad held its first leader-level summit and issued

its first leader-level communique, Chinese officials had begun to view the Quad with growing concern. Since then, Beijing has concluded that the Quad represents one of the most consequential challenges to Chinese ambitions in the years ahead.

As "strategic competition" with China has become a rare point of bipartisan consensus in Washington, Chinese President Xi Jinping has taken to warning that his country faces a "struggle over the future of the international order" with a United States determined to thwart China's rise. Xi believes that Beijing has an opportunity between now and 2035 to make China the world's top economic, technological, and potentially even military power. Integral to this push is persuading

countries in Asia and around the world that Chinese dominance is inevitable and that, accordingly, they have no option but to start deferring to Chinese demands. That would enable China to begin rewriting the rules of the international order—and entrench its global leadership position—without ever having to fire a shot.

The Quad is uniquely problematic for China's strategy because its aim of unifying a multilateral coalition of resistance has the potential to stiffen spines across the whole of the Indo-Pacific and possibly beyond. For Xi, the critical question is whether the Quad will evolve to be large, coherent, and comprehensive enough to effectively balance against China, thereby undermining any sense that its dominance, in Asia or globally, is inevitable. So far, Beijing has struggled to mount an effective response to the Quad challenge. Whether Chinese officials settle on a strategy that succeeds in undermining the Quad's progress will be one of the key factors in determining the course of U.S.-Chinese competition—and the fate of China's global ambitions more generally—in what has already become a “decade of living dangerously.” Abe's first attempt to launch the Quad came in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, when Australia, India, Japan, and the United States worked together on a disaster response. Abe saw the Quad as

Pompeo had earlier gathered New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam for what became known as the “Quad Plus” talks on trade, technology, and supply chain security.

a way to build the four countries' capacity to work together to meet shared regional security challenges. But the response in other capitals was tentative at best.

In Washington, President George W. Bush worried that such cooperation would unhelpfully alienate China when it needed Beijing in the “war against terrorism”; within a few years, as cables subsequently released by WikiLeaks showed, the administration was privately assuring regional governments that the Quad would never meet. In New Delhi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh repeatedly ruled out any real security cooperation with the Quad and categorized ties with Beijing as his “imperative necessity.” And in Canberra, the conservative government of John Howard worried about undermining

economically beneficial ties with China and also opposed expanding existing trilateral cooperation with the United States and Japan by adding India; in July 2007, Australia formally withdrew and announced the decision in Beijing soon after. When Abe, the driving force behind the Quad, unexpectedly resigned, in September 2007 (before becoming prime minister again in 2012), his successor, Yasuo Fukuda, formally consigned the Quad to the dustbin of history.

When Abe got the band back together a decade later, strategic circumstances had

changed dramatically. After years of growing U.S.-Chinese tensions, assertive Chinese behavior in the South China and East China Seas, and repeated clashes between Chinese and Indian forces along their contested land border, the strategic calculus on China had evolved in all the Quad capitals. Still, Beijing thought it had little reason to worry after the Quad reassembled, in November 2017, for a working-level meeting of diplomats on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Manila: they failed to issue a joint communique outlining a common strategic purpose, instead releasing uncoordinated individual statements that served mostly to highlight divergences on key concerns. Beijing remained largely indifferent even after the first meeting of the Quad's foreign ministers, in September 2019 in New York, and even when the ministers finally agreed to work together on what would become the Quad's mantra: to "advance a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Then, in June 2020, Chinese and Indian forces clashed along their shared border, leaving 20 Indian soldiers dead and causing New Delhi, heretofore the most reluctant member of the Quad, to reassess its strategic priorities and demonstrate new eagerness to balance Chinese power. When the Quad's foreign ministers met again, in October 2020 in Tokyo, Beijing began to

pay attention. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated bluntly that Washington's goal was to "institutionalize" the Quad, "build out a true security framework," and even expand the grouping at "the appropriate time" in order to "counter the challenge that the Chinese Communist Party presents to all of us." (Pompeo had earlier gathered New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam for what became known as the "Quad Plus" talks on trade, technology, and supply chain security.) Following the meeting, India invited Australia to join its annual Malabar naval exercises held with the United States and Japan. This was notable because India had previously refused to allow Australian participation in the exercises for fear of antagonizing Beijing. Now, thanks in large part to the June 2020 border clash, all remaining hesitation in Delhi was gone. From Beijing's perspective, the geopolitical wei qi board was suddenly looking less advantageous.

From Divide to Attack

At first, Chinese strategists seemed to think there was a relatively straightforward solution to the new challenge from the Quad: using a combination of carrots and sticks to drive a wedge between the economic and security interests of the Quad's members. By stressing each state's overwhelming dependence on the Chinese market, Beijing hoped to break the Quad apart. Following the

At first, Chinese strategists seemed to think there was a relatively straightforward solution to the new challenge from the Quad

October 2020 Quad ministerial meeting and the subsequent Malabar naval exercises, Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, changed his tone dramatically, slamming the effort to build an “Indo-Pacific NATO” and calling the Quad’s Indo-Pacific strategy “a big underlying security risk” to the region. Beijing also selected a target against which to use a stick. Chinese strategic tradition advises “killing one to warn a hundred.” In this case, the idea was to kill one (Australia) to warn two (India and Japan).

Beijing had previously seemed intent on improving relations with Canberra. But without specific explanation, it suddenly imposed restrictions on imports of Australian coal—and then meat, cotton, wool, barley, wheat, timber, copper, sugar, lobster, and wine. As the smallest of the four Quad economies, Australia would, in Beijing’s judgment, be the most vulnerable to economic pressure (and by dint of size and geography, less threatening to Chinese security interests). At the same time, China worked to repair relations with India and Japan. Following years of efforts to improve ties with Tokyo, Beijing tried to finalize a visit by Xi to meet with Abe’s successor, Yoshihide Suga. And it sought to de-escalate tensions with India by negotiating an agreement to pull back troops from the area where clashes had occurred and working quietly to secure the release of a captured Chinese soldier in

In Tokyo, aggravation over Chinese assertiveness in the East China Sea and concerns about human rights and Hong Kong had begun to throw the relationship into a deep chill.

order to avoid sparking a nationalist firestorm.

But Beijing had underestimated the effect of its own actions on Quad solidarity, and neither of these carrots had the intended effect. In Tokyo, aggravation over Chinese assertiveness in the East China Sea and concerns about human rights and Hong Kong had begun to throw the relationship into a deep chill. In Delhi, wariness of China had become deeply ingrained, no matter that the immediate standoff had been resolved.

As Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar explained, the border clashes had produced greater “comfort levels” in Delhi with the need “to engage much more intensively on matters of national security” with Washington and other partners. The arrival of a new administration in Washington, one that would bring a renewed focus on allied, regional, and multilateral engagement and move quickly to resolve Trump-era trade and military-basing disputes with Asian allies, added a further obstacle to Beijing’s plan. By early this year, Chinese officials had realized that neither ignoring nor splitting the Quad would work. So Beijing moved on to a third option: full-scale political attack.

The March meeting of the Quad’s leaders confirmed growing Chinese concerns about the grouping’s significance. By convening the Quad’s top leaders for the first time (albeit virtually) so early in his administration, U.S. President Joe Biden signaled that the group

would be central to his strategy in the Indo-Pacific. And for the first time, the meeting produced a unified communique committing to promote “a free, open, rules-based order, rooted in international law” and to defend “democratic values, and territorial integrity.” The Quad also pledged to jointly manufacture and distribute one billion COVID-19 vaccine doses throughout the region. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to what may be Beijing’s worst fears when he declared, “Today’s summit meeting shows that the Quad has come of age. It will now remain an important pillar of stability in the region.”

Beijing has moved to full-scale political attack.

Since then, there has been an explosion in Chinese condemnations of the Quad as a “small clique” of countries trying to “start a new Cold War.” In May, Xi denounced efforts to use “multilateralism as a pretext to form small cliques or stir up ideological confrontation.” China has begun to portray itself as the champion of “genuine multilateralism” and as the leading defender of the United Nations system. Xi and other Chinese officials have started talking more frequently about “great-power responsibility” and China’s status as the “responsible great power.” Beijing is also doubling down on its efforts to develop alternate trade frameworks by promoting its membership in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), attempting to finalize

the EU-Chinese investment agreement, and flirting with the idea of joining the CPTPP (the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which evolved out of the U.S.-driven Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations). Beijing’s hope is that it can isolate and marginalize the Quad by diplomatically and commercially outflanking it on the global stage.

Yet such denunciations have so far done little to stall the Quad’s progress. Biden’s June trip to Europe—where Australia and India joined a gathering of the G-7 and U.S. discussions with the EU and NATO included a heavy China component—

China has considerable reason to worry about such developments and what they could mean for its regional and global prospects.

reinforced fears that the Quad could integrate itself into a broader anti-Chinese alliance. And U.S.-South Korean interactions, including President Moon Jae-in’s May visit to Washington, reinforced fears that the Quad could bring in South Korea and become “the Quint”; although Seoul has usually been reluctant to side explicitly with the United States against China, the two countries’ joint statement agreed that they “acknowledge the importance of open, transparent, and inclusive regional multilateralism including the Quad.”

Reason to worry

China has considerable reason to worry about such developments and what they could mean for its regional and global prospects. On the security front, for example, the Quad changes Beijing’s thinking about various scenarios in the Taiwan Strait and the

South China Sea and, to a lesser degree, in the East China Sea, as China's sense of the likelihood of Australian, Indian, or Japanese military involvement in any conflict involving the United States grows. Especially significant would be the Quad's coordination with the United States' Pacific Deterrence Initiative. A distributed network of land-based antiship missiles and other precision-strike capabilities stationed in allied countries in the region could hinder Beijing's ability to threaten Taiwan with an amphibious invasion, a blockade, or land-based missiles—although political agreement on such deployments in individual Quad countries is far from guaranteed. Another Chinese concern is that the Quad will move toward an intelligence-sharing arrangement with the Five Eyes intelligence partnership, which would allow for sensitive information on Chinese strategy and behavior to be more widely disseminated.

But the worst-case scenario from Beijing's perspective is that the Quad could serve as the foundation of a broader global anti-Chinese coalition. If the Quad were to draw other Asian countries, the EU, and NATO into efforts to confront or undermine China's international ambitions, it could over time swing the collective balance of power definitively against China. The Quad could also lay the groundwork for a broader allied economic, customs, and standards union,

which could reshape everything from global infrastructure funding to supply chains to technology standards. The Biden White House's senior Asia official, Kurt Campbell, has already spoken of the need to provide a "positive economic vision" for the Indo-Pacific; Beijing fears that the Quad could become the fulcrum for such an effort.

One bright spot from Beijing's perspective is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is likely to keep its distance from the Quad, as part of its general neutrality on U.S.-Chinese tensions.

China will also double down on strategic and military cooperation with Russia. Moscow and Beijing have already committed to expand bilateral nuclear energy cooperation.

Chinese officials also take comfort from continued protectionist sentiment in both Washington and Delhi, which means that neither is likely to join the CPTPP (or even RCEP) any time soon. Indeed, the gravitational pull of the Chinese economy will remain the greatest tool for weakening the Quad and subverting anti-Chinese efforts more broadly: for Beijing, China's continued economic growth and increasing share of the global economy remain its most important strategic advantages, as they were in the past.

China will also double down on strategic and military cooperation with Russia. Moscow and Beijing have already committed to expand bilateral nuclear energy cooperation, and in a May call with Xi, Russian President Vladimir Putin called Chinese-Russian relations "the

best in history.” From China’s perspective, Russia serves as a useful military partner and, with respect to the Quad, offers a way to expand China’s field of strategic options geographically. Russia’s proximity to Japan and its continued occupation of Japan’s Northern Territories, for example, could make Tokyo think twice before joining with the United States in any future military scenarios involving China.

The continued consolidation of the Quad will also drive further increases in Chinese military spending. Even if some Chinese analysts are doubtful about the actual impact of the Quad on the hard business of warfighting, military officials will argue that they must be ready for worst-case scenarios involving the Quad. Chinese officials are wary of repeating the Soviet Union’s mistake of military overextension at the expense of the civilian economy. But if they see the correlation of forces with the United States and its allies shifting against China, Beijing’s military spending will increase accordingly, turbocharging the regional arms race in Asia.

Ultimately, the biggest question may be what all of this means for Xi, especially in the run-up to the 20th Party Congress, in the fall of 2022, where Xi hopes to secure his own long-term political dominance. There is some chance that the Quad’s progress will offer

Xi’s detractors additional evidence of his inclination to strategic overreach. More likely, however, is that Xi will ultimately manage to strengthen his own hand by pointing to the Quad as proof that China’s adversaries are circling the Motherland, thereby further consolidating his hold on power.

Source: Kavin Rudd, FOREIGN AFFAIRS

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-06/why-quad-alarms-china>. 06 Aug 2021.

Xi’s Message to the US

What may be routine from the Chinese perspective holds implications for global politics as China being a rising power, has the capacity to shape the world. Thus, for the world, President Xi’s speech commemorating 100 years of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the completion of China’s one of the centennial goals of national rejuvenation- ‘to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects’, is being watched with interest, seriousness and even caution. As China continues to rise in power and influence, the centenary speech will only gain more attention as a point of reference to the Chinese actions. While the speech holds a message for the allies and adversaries alike; however, set in the context of shifting geopolitical trends, especially the US leading from the front to counter an assertive China via the Indo-Pacific, a relative

As China continues to rise in power and influence, the centenary speech will only gain more attention as a point of reference to the Chinese actions.

US decline, the Sino-US rivalry and an evolving Post Pandemic world order, its significance is accentuated for the US' China watchers. Albeit implicit, four takeaways stand out in this context.

First, on a profound level, the speech brings forth the contrast between the ideologies of the US and China and how they operate on two completely different sets of values. Marxist-Leninist evolved into Chinese socialist values and party primacy on the one hand; and the values of individual liberty and capitalism on the other. Expressions such as 'Imperialism-imperialist' 'semi-colonial, 'unequal', 'feudal', 'privileges of the imperialist powers over China' and the CPC's toppling of the evils of capitalist-imperialist ideology is well aligned to, 'Xi's hard-line foreign policy that has been repeatedly framed... as a defence against Western oppression or provocation'. Additionally, by stating that the Chinese nation does not 'carry aggressive or hegemonic traits in its genes...and care about the future of humanity', President Xi has presented the world with an option of an alternative model of development. Furthermore, a skilful highlighting of China's economic transformation and self-reliance enabled by the CPC; has drawn the world's attention to the Chinese intention of ensuring a stable international order. In one way, President Xi has inferred- just like socialism could save...and develop China, the same could be envisaged for others as well. Thus, China is pained as a successful

The speech was also a forceful pronouncement of zero tolerance on issues related to sovereignty and Chinese global interests.

alternative to the West. Undeniably, at prima facie, the presentation of the CPC as an archetype of governance – 'a single-party reign' that has significantly contributed to overturning the painful historical baggage of a century of humiliation to create economic prosperity was aimed at reassuring the domestic audience; however, this should also be viewed as an assertive reiteration of the Chinese values and principles, to demonstrate how China brings prosperity not only to self but also to others.

Second, the speech was also a forceful pronouncement of zero tolerance on issues related to sovereignty and Chinese global interests. There is a message indeed when President Xi said that, 'no one should underestimate the resolve, the will, and the ability of the Chinese people to defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity', and that any 'intimidation by the threat of force' would only invite 'collision (course) with a great wall of steel ...of over 1.4 billion Chinese'. By indicating such a possibility, he put across an uninhibited political resolve to uphold and secure core national interests. Furthermore, the reference to Taiwan, while directly addressing the Chinese nationals, mention of Hong Kong and Macau remains the most direct for the West. In the light of the recent US military posturing vis-à-vis Taiwan and the US position on various issues that directly touch upon the Chinese territorial

sensitivities is clear signaling of red lines that need not be crossed. This should be viewed as nothing less than a warning.

Third, the emphasis on the pursuit of Belt Road Initiative (BRI)- one of China's most crucial economic integration project, that also undermines the US pre-eminence in several ways; the acceleration of the modernization of national defense and the armed forces to not only safeguard national sovereignty, security but also development interests, hints at the widening of the definition of China's core security interest. The positioning of development interests along with national sovereignty and security indicates the length and breadth the leadership can go to protect its interest; it also implies the incorporation

The combat capability of the aircraft carrier is expected to add formidable capabilities and help secure India's maritime interests in the region.

of a wider range of issues such as BRI, CPEC or any similar Chinese project in future. It is to be reiterated that, as per the US Department of Defense (DoD) Report 2020, the PLA too figures in the CPC's strategy as a "practical instrument of statecraft with an active role in advancing Chinese foreign policy ... including the larger aim of revising the aspects of international order". All this adds to the messaging that China would not stand any opposition to its endeavor of maximizing its global influence. It is important to restate here that the BRI not only involves a series of commercial contracts but it's also a strategic tool to reshape China bilateral relations with

countries outside of its immediate regional environment. Additionally, the promotion of 'mutual benefits over zero-sum gains' and the building of a new 'type of international relations' goes hand in hand in supporting the larger objective of countering the US global pre-eminence.

Finally, to conclude, the Chinese intent to respond to the US' role as a security balancer in the Asia Pacific was most evident. President Xi's speech was indeed an official stamp to the country's current world view and how this would likely guide the conduct of its foreign-security policy in the coming years.

The message to the US was both- revisionist as well as revolutionary and might be viewed as nothing less than a cue to China's vision towards the year 2049.

While the mainstream media in the US seemed to have 'missed an important message sent to America' or may have chosen to deliberately downplay it in the light of its 245th Independence Day only three days later, needless to say, Xi's speech has registered its presence. Additionally, viewed from the US perspective, an acknowledgement of the same may not be necessary as it would only legitimize the Chinese rhetoric. As the PRC strides ahead in power and influence in international politics while achieving its own domestic objectives, a continuous examination of its capabilities and intent has assumed

immense significance in the global security discourse and will continue to remain so. It is in this context that President Xi's message needs to be decoded not only for the US but also for the world as it has clearly announced the foreign policy direction which the People's Republic intends to take in the near and long future.

Source: Dr Hina Pandey, NIICE

<https://niice.org.np/archives/7185>. 26 JULY 21

Recent Developments

India's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant sets off for sea trials from Kochi

India's first indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC 1), which is expected to be inducted into the Indian Navy as INS Vikrant during the first half of 2022, has set off for sea trials from Kochi on Wednesday. The Navy in a tweet described the moment as a proud and historic day for the nation. It is the largest and most complex warship ever to be designed and built in India.

The design of the aircraft carrier began in 1999, and the keel was laid in February 2009. The carrier was floated out of its dry dock on 29 December 2011 and was launched on August 12, 2013. The basin trials were completed in December 2020. The combat capability of the aircraft carrier is expected to

add formidable capabilities and help secure India's maritime interests in the region. The 40,000 tonne vessel set off from Kochi Port at 9.30 am on Wednesday. A big team of 1,200 people, comprising Navy officers, engineers from Cochin Shipyard, original equipment manufacturers and experts have boarded the aircraft carrier and the team will be analysing the performance of various equipment on board the vessel for the next three months. The functioning of propulsion system, power generation and distribution system, turbines and other equipment will be evaluated.

The 40,000 tonne aircraft carrier was built at Cochin Shipyard at a cost of Rs 23,000 crore. The vessel has 75 percent indigenous equipment and is the most complex warship ever built by India. After completing sea trials, the Navy will start flight trials of fighter jets and helicopters to be operated from the deck of IAC. The Navy will be operating Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), Chetak helicopters, MH-60R multirole helicopters and MiG-29K fighter jets from the deck of the aircraft.

Source: INDIAN EXPRESS

[HTTPS://WWW.NEWINDIANEXPRESS.COM/NATION/2021/AUG/04/INDIAS-FIRST-INDIGENOUS-AIRCRAFT-CARRIER-INS-VIKRANT-SETS-OFF-FOR-SEA-TRIALS-FROM-KOCHI-2340044.HTML](https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2021/aug/04/indias-first-indigenous-aircraft-carrier-ins-vikrant-sets-off-for-sea-trials-from-kochi-2340044.html). 04 AUG 2021

UK Becomes Dialogue Partner Of ASEAN In Indo-Pacific Push

The UK has agreed to a new partnership with ASEAN which the British government said on Thursday will lead to closer cooperation with the strategically important Indo-Pacific region on a range of issues such as trade, investment, climate change and science and technology. The UK's Dialogue Partner status, which is the first such pact Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has agreed to in 25 years, puts the country at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, it said.

The 10 member countries of ASEAN are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia.

The partnership will lead to closer cooperation between the UK and the region on a range of issues such as trade, investment, climate change, environment, science and technology, and education.

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab joined a virtual ceremony with ASEAN Foreign Ministers where they welcomed the UK as an ASEAN "Dialogue Partner". "I am delighted that the UK has, today, formally become a Dialogue Partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc - the first new country in 25 years," said Raab. "This is a landmark moment in the UK's tilt

towards the Indo Pacific. Our closer ties with ASEAN will help create green jobs, reinforce our security cooperation, promote tech and science partnerships, and safeguard key pillars of international law like the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea," he said.

India is a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the ASEAN economic bloc and the UK submitted its application to become a Dialogue Partner in June 2020. Since then, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said Raab has attended two UK-ASEAN Ministerial Meetings and hosted the ASEAN Chair at the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers meeting in May.

The FCDO described ASEAN as an influential group of 10 member countries

The CPTPP is one of the largest free trade areas in the world, accounting for 13 per cent of global GDP in 2019

in the Indo-Pacific and with its new status, the UK will formalise its relations with the group - including through attending annual Foreign and Economic Ministers meetings along with other ministerial engagements. It said that the UK will work with ASEAN and its members on key shared challenges such as maritime security and transnational crime, boost our economies through trade, and strengthen our cooperation on issues such as COVID-19 and climate change.

The new agreement will also help the UK to deepen economic links with ASEAN, which has a combined GDP of USD 3.2 trillion. Total

trade between the UK and ASEAN was 32.3 billion pounds in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2021 with huge potential to boost this trade, creating jobs at home. “This is great news and shows Global Britain in action, forging stronger relationships around the world as an independent trading nation,” said UK International Trade Secretary Liz Truss. In June, the UK formally launched accession negotiations with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) nations.

The CPTPP is one of the largest free trade areas in the world, accounting for 13 per cent of global GDP in 2019. Four ASEAN states - Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei - are members of the CPTPP. “Along with CPTPP accession and deals with countries like Singapore and Vietnam, this will help unlock opportunities for British businesses in a high-growth region of more than 650 million people, allowing them to expand and create jobs across the UK,” said Truss.

Raab has visited Southeast Asia five times since becoming Foreign Secretary, demonstrating the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific, as set out in the Integrated Review. The FCDO said the ASEAN announcement comes at a time of growing UK defence and security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, as the UK’s Carrier Strike Group, led by Queen Elizabeth, is in the region and has completed

a series of engagements, including with the Indian Navy.

The ties between India and ASEAN have been on an upswing in the last few years with focus being on ramping up cooperation in the areas of trade and investment as well as security and defence. The ASEAN region along with India together comprises a combined population of 1.85 billion people, which is one fourth of the global population and their combined GDP has been estimated at over USD 3.8 trillion.

Source: NDTV

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/uk-becomes-dialogue-partner-of-asean-in-indo-pacific-push-2503604>.

05 AUG 2021

US and China Lock Horns at India-led Trailblazing UNSC Debate on Maritime Security

“In the South China Sea, we have seen dangerous encounters between vessels at sea and provocative actions to advance unlawful maritime claims

As India initiated the first-ever standalone discussion on ‘Maritime Security’ in the United Nations Security Council on Monday, the US

and China took on each other over the issue of freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region. China hit out at the Quad, accusing a “few countries” of “pursuing an exclusive regional strategy in the Asia Pacific region in an attempt to create intensified maritime conflict.” The Quad, formally known as the “Quadrilateral Security Dialogue,” is a forum for exchanging strategic intelligence

and conducting joint military exercises between four countries - the United States, India, Japan, and Australia. Officially, the organisation was conceived as a place for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific area to protect shared security and other interests. Observers, on the other hand, believe the Quad is designed to challenge China's recent military and economic development.

The US, represented by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in an oblique reference to China, said the international rules-based order was "under serious threat." "In the South China Sea, we have seen dangerous encounters between vessels at sea and provocative actions to advance unlawful maritime claims," Blinken said. China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. "The United States has made clear its concerns regarding actions that intimidate and bully other states from lawfully accessing their maritime resources. And we and other countries including South China Sea claimants have protested such behaviour and unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea," he said. "Some may assert that resolving the dispute in the South China Sea is not the business of the United States or any other country that is not a claimant to the islands and waters. But it is the business, and even more, the responsibility

of every Member State to defend the rules that we've all agreed to follow and peacefully resolve maritime disputes. Conflict in the South China Sea or in any ocean would have serious global consequences for security and for commerce. What's more, when a State faces no consequences for ignoring these rules, it fuels greater impunity and instability everywhere," the leader said.

China's Deputy Permanent Representative Dai Bing, speaking last in the meeting, said that he wishes to "point out that the Security Council is not the right place to discuss the issue of the South China Sea. The US just mentioned the South China Sea issue and China firmly opposes this act." He said that at present "with the joint efforts of China and ASEAN countries, the situation in the South China Sea remains generally stable. All countries enjoy freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with international law. The Chinese diplomat said that Beijing is "determined and able to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea." Hitting out at Washington, he said the US itself is not qualified to make irresponsible remarks on the issue of the South China Sea. "The US has been stirring up trouble out of nothing, arbitrarily sending advanced military vessels and aircraft into the South China Sea as provocations and publicly trying to drive a wedge into regional countries, especially countries concerned.

The Chinese diplomat said that Beijing is "determined and able to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea"

This country itself has become the biggest threat to peace and stability in the South China Sea. The US itself does not join the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) but considers itself a judge of the Convention pointing fingers at other countries,” he said, adding that Washington has no credibility on maritime.

Beijing’s claim to the vast majority of the South China Sea has no basis in international law” and treads on the sovereignty of other states.

Source: NEWS 18

<https://www.news18.com/news/india/us-and-china-lock-horns-at-india-led-trailblazing-uncs-debate-on-maritime-security-4064873.html>. 09 AUG 2021

Military Strategy/ Diplomacy

Pentagon chief calls for new regional order in Indo-Pacific

The U.S. defense secretary has called on allies in the Indo-Pacific to force a new regional order, during his first visit to the area since taking up his post under the Biden administration. Lloyd Austin was speaking Tuesday in Singapore at the 40th Fullerton Lecture, organized by the International Institute of Strategic Studies, when he outlined his vision of “integrated deterrence.” That effort, he said, involves working with partners to deter coercion and aggression across the spectrum of conflict, including in the so-called grey zone that falls below the threshold of an all-out war.

The U.S. should use “every military and nonmilitary tool in our toolbox, in lockstep

with our allies and partners. Integrated deterrence is about using existing capabilities and building new ones, and deploying them all in new and networked ways,” he added, “all tailored to a region’s security landscape and in growing partnership with our friends.” “We’re aiming to coordinate better, to network tighter and to innovate faster. And we’re working to ensure that our allies and partners have the capabilities, the capacities and the information that they need,” he noted.

The Pentagon chief cited American efforts to improve interoperability with regional allies, pointing to a recent large-scale exercise in Japan that culminated with the first-ever firing of a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System on Japanese soil. Austin also mentioned the exercises Pacific Vanguard as well as Talisman Sabre off Australia, which involved the United States, Japan, Australia and South Korea carrying out “integrated, high-end maritime operations.” He also touched on Singapore’s acquisition of the Lockheed Martin-made F-35B Joint Strike Fighter, which he says will “boost our collective capabilities and open up new opportunities for high-end, combined training.”

Austin specifically mentioned China as an assertive actor in the region, saying that “Beijing’s claim to the vast majority of the South China Sea has no basis in international law” and treads on the sovereignty of other

states. He reaffirmed the United States' commitment to its treaty with Japan over the Asian nation's claim to the Senkaku Islands, which are also claimed by China, and to its partnership with the Philippines, which also has competing claims in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, Austin said, the U.S. is "working with Taiwan to enhance its own capabilities and to increase its readiness to deter threats and coercion ... upholding our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act."

He also attacked China's "unwillingness to resolve disputes peacefully and respect the rule of law" across all domains, accusing the country of having undertaken "aggression against India, destabilizing military activity and other forms of coercion against the people of Taiwan, and genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang." On the coronavirus pandemic, the defense secretary said the U.S. "has been rushing urgently needed assistance across the Indo-Pacific" that includes testing equipment, oxygen supplies, personal protective equipment, ventilators and storage for vaccines.

He also outlined the Biden administration's donation of vaccines to countries in the region, noting that Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia and Vietnam have received 40 million doses of vaccines from the U.S. and that President Joe Biden is committed to delivering 500

million more doses worldwide over the next year. Austin stressed that the vaccines were delivered free, with "no conditions, no small print and no strings attached." Following his visit to Singapore, Austin's itinerary will next take him to Vietnam and the Philippines.

Source: DEFENSE NEWS

[HTTPS://WWW.DEFENSENEWS.COM/PENTAGON/2021/07/27/PENTAGON-CHIEF-CALLS-FOR-NEW-REGIONAL-ORDER-IN-INDO-PACIFIC/](https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2021/07/27/pentagon-chief-calls-for-new-regional-order-in-indo-pacific/). 27 JULY 2021.

Report to Congress on Chinese Naval Modernization

In an era of renewed great power competition, China's military modernization effort, including its naval modernization effort, has become the top focus of U.S. defense planning and budgeting. China's navy, which China has been steadily modernizing for more than 25 years, since the early to mid-1990s, has become a formidable military force within China's near-seas region, and it is conducting a growing number of operations in more-distant waters, including the broader waters of the Western Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and waters around Europe.

China's navy is viewed as posing a major challenge to the U.S. Navy's ability to achieve and maintain wartime control of blue-water ocean areas in the Western Pacific—the first such challenge the U.S. Navy has faced

Consistent with these goals, observers believe China wants its navy to be capable of acting as part of a Chinese anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) force.

since the end of the Cold War. China's navy forms a key element of a Chinese challenge to the long-standing status of the United States as the leading military power in the Western Pacific. Some U.S. observers are expressing concern or alarm regarding the pace of China's naval shipbuilding effort and resulting trend lines regarding the relative sizes and capabilities of China's navy and the U.S. Navy. China's naval modernization effort encompasses a wide array of ship, aircraft, and weapon acquisition programs, as well as improvements in maintenance and logistics, doctrine, personnel quality, education and training, and exercises.

China's navy has currently has certain limitations and weaknesses, and is working to overcome them. China's

military modernization effort, including its naval modernization effort, is assessed as being aimed at developing capabilities for addressing the situation with Taiwan militarily, if need be; for achieving a greater degree of control or domination over China's near-seas region, particularly the South China Sea; for enforcing China's view that it has the right to regulate foreign military activities in its 200-mile maritime exclusive economic zone (EEZ); for defending China's commercial sea lines of communication (SLOCs), particularly those linking China to the Persian Gulf; for displacing U.S. influence in the Western Pacific; and for asserting China's status as

the leading regional power and a major world power.

Consistent with these goals, observers believe China wants its navy to be capable of acting as part of a Chinese anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) force—a force that can deter U.S. intervention in a conflict in China's near-seas region over Taiwan or some other issue, or failing that, delay the arrival or reduce the effectiveness of intervening U.S. forces. Additional missions for China's navy include conducting maritime security (including antipiracy) operations, evacuating Chinese nationals from foreign countries when

The U.S. Navy in recent years has taken a number of actions to counter China's naval modernization effort

necessary, and conducting humanitarian assistance/disaster response (HA/DR) operations.

The U.S. Navy in recent years has taken a number of actions to counter China's naval modernization effort. Among other things, the U.S. Navy has shifted a greater percentage of its fleet to the Pacific; assigned its most-capable new ships and aircraft and its best personnel to the Pacific; maintained or increased general presence operations, training and developmental exercises, and engagement and cooperation with allied and other navies in the Indo-Pacific; increased the planned future size of the Navy; initiated, increased, or accelerated numerous programs for developing new military technologies and acquiring new ships, aircraft, unmanned vehicles, and weapons; begun development

of new operational concepts (i.e., new ways to employ Navy and Marine Corps forces) for countering Chinese maritime A2/AD forces; and signaled that the Navy in coming years will shift to a more-distributed fleet architecture that will feature a smaller portion of larger ships, a larger portion of smaller ships, and a substantially greater use of unmanned vehicles. The issue for Congress is whether the U.S. Navy is responding appropriately to China's naval modernization effort.

Source: USNI NEWS

<https://news.usni.org/2021/08/04/report-to-congress-on-chinese-naval-modernization-10>. 04 AUGUST 2021

Act East Policy: Indian Navy's Eastern fleet heads towards Indo-Pacific on way Guam for Ex Malabar

The deployment of the Indian Naval ships is focused on ensuring stronger bonds between India and Indo-Pacific countries; to ensure peaceful presence and good order in maritime domain; and commitment towards Freedom of Navigation at sea.

The bilateral drills between the two navies will conclude with a Passage Exercise with Royal Brunei Navy at sea on August 12, 2021. In an effort to deepen maritime cooperation with ASEAN member countries, Indian Naval ships — Shivalik and Kadmatt have sailed to

Brunei as part of their deployment to South East Asia. "The ships have reached at Muara, Brunei on August 9, 2021 and in pursuance of India's Act East Policy' will be participating in various bilateral professional interactions with Royal Brunei Navy," according to the Indian Navy. The aim of the drill with the Royal Navy of Brunei is first and foremost to enhance interoperability. Also this will give the navies of both countries a chance to develop a common understanding of procedures for Maritime Security Operations and to gain from best practices.

To deepen maritime and military cooperation in the region with the friendly nations in the region. The deployment of the Indian Naval ships is focused on ensuring stronger bonds between India and Indo-Pacific countries.

In view of the ongoing global pandemic of COVID-19, all the activities and exercises will be contactless. INS Shivalik (multi-role Guided Missile Stealth Frigate) and Kadmatt (Anti-Submarine Corvette) are both indigenously designed and built at the Indian shipyards. These latest ships represent India's warship building capabilities. They are equipped with a wide range of weapons and sensors. They have the capability to carry multi-role helicopters also. They are from the Eastern Fleet which is based at Visakhapatnam and under the Eastern Naval Command.

Earlier this month, more indigenously designed and equipped Indian Naval ships proceeded on a two month long overseas deployment to South East Asia, Western

Pacific and South China Sea. The Indian Naval task group sailing towards the region as part of India's 'Act East Policy' included Guided Missile Destroyer Ranvijay, Guided Missile Frigate Shivalik, Anti-Submarine Corvette Kadmatt and Guided Missile Corvette Kora proceeded on an Overseas Deployment to South East Asia, the South China Sea and Western Pacific from early Aug 2021 for over two months. While deployed in the Indo Pacific, these are scheduled to conduct drills at bilateral level with Indonesian Navy (Samudra Shakti); Royal Australian Navy (AUS-INDEX); Vietnamese Peoples' Navy, Republic of Philippines Navy, and Republic of Singapore Navy (SIMBEX).

To deepen maritime and military cooperation in the region with the friendly nations in the region. The deployment of the Indian Naval ships is focused on ensuring stronger bonds between India and Indo-Pacific countries; to ensure peaceful presence and good order in maritime domain; and commitment towards Freedom of Navigation at sea. At the end of the drills with the Royal Navy of Brunei, these ships will be heading for Ex MALABAR-21. Act East Policy: Indian Navy's Eastern fleet heads towards Indo-Pacific on way Guam for Ex Malabar. The deployment of the Indian Naval ships is focused on ensuring stronger bonds between India and Indo-Pacific countries; to ensure peaceful presence and good order in maritime domain; and commitment towards

Freedom of Navigation at sea.

Source: FINANCIAL EXPRESS

[HTTPS://WWW.FINANCIALEXPRESS.COM/DEFENCE/ACT-EAST-POLICY-INDIAN-NAVYS-EASTERN-FLEET-HEADS-TOWARDS-INDO-PACIFIC-ON-WAY-GUAM-FOR-EX-MALABAR/2307493/](https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/act-east-policy-indian-navys-eastern-fleet-heads-towards-indo-pacific-on-way-guam-for-ex-malabar/2307493/). 09 AUG 2021.

Social Media Corner

Interview / View Point

1. U.S. National Security Policy in the Indo-Pacific: A Conversation with Senator Tammy Duckworth - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OCqYF4OqPw>.
2. The View from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command - Speaker: John Aquilino, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTCwA8uwxco>.

Debates

1. What's the outcome of U.S.' rekindled policy in the Indo-Pacific region? - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yal1qe7aLY>.
2. India's leadership and strategy in maritime security - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBiwaUMHpDo>.

Podcast

1. The Far Side of the Indo-Pacific - <https://shows.ivmpodcasts.com/show/all-things-policy-Rx64RVpQImivrNQ8/episode/ep-629-the-far-side-of-the-indo-pacific-ztz4-loNZILJcEYeznmjw>.
2. Indo-Pacific International Security Challenges - <https://podcast.janes.com/public/68/The-World-of-Intelligence-50487d09/d4bfa949>.
3. National Security Podcast: Indo-Pacific Futures – Critical technology - <https://www.policyforum.net/national-security-podcast-indo-pacific-futures-critical-technology/>.

Video links

1. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chairs UNSC High-Level Open Debate on 'Enhancing Maritime Security - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QxQtFqo3GQ>.
2. India's maritime strategy decoded - India presented a holistic approach to maritime security at the UN Security Council - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEkKBCwGV6o>.
3. German warship sets sail for Indo-Pacific region -Germany

is walking a tightrope between its security and economic interests as China has become Berlin's most important trading partner - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rh3b9MB79FE>.

4. Australia partners with India to take on China – With India handling a tense military standoff with China and Australia fighting a fierce trade war with the paper Dragon, it makes sense for both New Delhi and Canberra to join hands and

tame the People's Republic of China - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8dzlh0mJKo>.

5. Indian warships in the South China Sea -India has deployed 4 warships to the South China Sea as part of its 'Act East' policy. The ships will join forces with the QUAD navies for a military drill in the Indo-Pacific - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4jObTUARDU>.



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