



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

JULY 2024

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## INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR Volume V, Issue 7 July 2024

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### INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

This publication is a monthly analytical survey of developments and policy trends that impact India's interests and define its challenges across the extended Indo-Pacific maritime space, which has become the primary theatre of global geopolitical contestation. It is authored by Cmde. Lalit Kapur (Retd.), DPG Senior Fellow for Maritime Strategy, assisted by Ms. Divya Rai, based on open source reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to the author at [lalit@dpg.org.in](mailto:lalit@dpg.org.in). To subscribe, please [click here](#).

### Cover Image:

*Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and President of Russia Vladimir Putin meet at the presidential residence in Moscow, July 8, 2024. Source: President of Russia website.*

*Quad Foreign Ministers Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Ms Kamikawa Yoko, Ms Penny Wong and Mr. Antony Blinken with Japan's Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in Tokyo, July 29, 2024. Source: [Kantei.go.jp](https://www.kantei.go.jp)*

*Su-30MKI from the Indian Air Force (IAF) participates with aircraft from other countries in Exercise Pitch Black 24, in Darwin, Australia, August 2024. Source: [Royal Australian Airforce Twitter](#)*

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# INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

July 2024

## Abstract

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Moscow for the annual bilateral summit on July 08-09, signalling that India continues to prioritise its strategic autonomy in the face of Western pressures to cut links with Russia over the Ukraine conflict. The signal was reinforced by INS Tabar visiting St. Petersburg on July 25-30 to participate in Russia's Navy Day celebrations.

NATO celebrated its 75th anniversary at a summit in Washington D.C. from July 9-11. Four Indo-Pacific partner countries, Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, joined in the final day's deliberations for the third time.

Vietnam officially submitted its claim for an extended continental shelf in the South China Sea to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) on July 18, drawing a protest from China.

The Philippines and China reportedly reached an agreement on resupply arrangements by the Philippines in the Second Thomas Shoal on July 21. Differences, however, remained on the content of the agreement, with the two sides officially contradicting each other's version of what had been agreed to.

Three 2+2 dialogues took place during the month. The first was Japan-Philippines, which was held on July 08 and witnessed the signing of a Reciprocal Access Agreement. The Japan-US 2+2 followed on July 28, resulting in upgrading of the US Military Command and Control arrangements in Japan. The US-Philippines 2+2 followed on July 30.

Quad Foreign Ministers met in Tokyo on July 29, reaffirming their commitment to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient. They expressed serious concern about the situation in the South and East China Seas, as well as about militarisation of disputed features and coercive and intimidating manoeuvres in the South China Sea.

Meetings of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers and post AMM dialogues took place on July 27. Separate bilateral meetings between the Foreign Ministers of India, China and the US were held on the sidelines.



The July edition of the IMF World Economic Outlook projects world growth at 3.2% in 2024, rising to 3.3% in 2025. Emerging and developing Asia remain the world's fastest growing region, while India remains the fastest growing major economy, with growth projected at 7.0% in 2024 and 6.5% in 2025.

An IAF contingent comprising Su-30 MKI fighters and associated support aircraft arrived at Darwin, Australia to participate in Exercise Pitch Black-2024. The exercise runs from July 12 – August 02.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group exercised with the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force in the Arabian Sea on July 12.

The first three Royal Australian Navy officers began practical training on the UK's Astute-class submarines during the month.

The future INS Triput, the first of the two Project 1135.6 frigates being built by Goa Shipyard for the Indian Navy, was launched on July 23.

DRDO successfully flight-tested its Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence System on July 24.



## Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Moscow Visit

Hours before western leaders congregated in Washington for the NATO Summit, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Moscow for the 22<sup>nd</sup> India-Russia Annual Summit, from July 08-09. Critics fretted about the impact on western perceptions and questioned the visit timing, but the reality is that any timing would always have been found inappropriate. The unmistakable signal was that even though India had tilted towards the West, it was not turning away from understanding of the actions of the Russian special and privileged strategic partner and continued pursuing its national interests.

A joint statement of over 5400 words was issued on the occasion<sup>1</sup>. The statement records the agreement of the two leaders to make all efforts to unlock the full potential of the strategic partnership between their countries. It provides an overview of cooperation at the level of Foreign Ministers, parliaments and National Security Councils. It notes that the current level of bilateral trade is about double the target of USD 30 billion set by the leaders for 2025 (India's exports to Russia in 2023-24 were over \$ 4.26 billion, while imports were worth \$ 61.43 billion; total trade between the countries was thus worth over \$ 65.69 billion, with a trade balance of nearly \$ 57.17 billion in Russia's favour)<sup>2</sup>. The leaders set a target of \$ 100 billion of bilateral trade by 2030, stressing the need to increase India's exports to Russia through strengthening industrial cooperation and forging new technological and investment partnerships, especially in advanced high-technology areas, and finding new avenues and forms of cooperation. They also agreed to continue working together to promote the bilateral settlement system using national currencies. They appreciated an initial meeting in March 2024 to commence full negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement on goods between India and the Eurasian Economic Union, while directing officials to explore the possibility of commencing negotiations for a free trade agreement in services and investments.

Both sides remain upbeat on transport and connectivity, including for implementation of the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor, the international North-South Transport Corridor and the Northern Sea Route. Both have agreed to explore new long term energy contracts and the possibility of increasing supply of coking coal to India, as well as opportunities for export of anthracite coal (it has the highest carbon density). Both are keen on

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Statement following the 22<sup>nd</sup> India-Russia Annual Summit, July 09, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2031946>

<sup>2</sup> Department of Commerce Country-wise Export Import Data Bank, <https://tradedat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/iecmt.asp>



intensifying trade and investment cooperation in the Far East and Arctic zones of Russia and welcomed the signing of the Program of India-Russia cooperation in trade, economic and investment spheres in the Russian Far East for the period 2024-2029. This is expected to foster cooperation in the sectors of agriculture, energy, mining, manpower, diamonds, pharmaceuticals and maritime transport, among others.

Both sides welcomed progress in construction of nuclear power plants at Kudankulam and agreed to continue discussions on the VVER 1200 reactor designed by Russia. They agreed to explore prospects for cooperation in rocket engine development, production and use.

Both agreed to hold the 21<sup>st</sup> round of the Intergovernmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC) in Moscow in the second half of 2024. Both agreed to encourage joint manufacturing in India of spare parts, components, aggregates and other products for maintenance of Russian origin arms and defence equipment through the setting up of joint ventures for meeting India's needs, as well as those of mutually friendly third countries. Such JVs could help India emerge as a regional MRO hub for Russian-origin military platforms.

The joint statement covers other areas of cooperation, including in education, science and technology; culture and tourism; in the UN and multilateral fora. Russia and India both seek comprehensive reform of the UNSC to reflect contemporary global realities and make it more representative, effective and efficient, and Russia remains a steadfast supporter for India's permanent membership of a reformed and expanded UN Security Council. Both sides have a confluence of views on counter-terrorism, calling for a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and for the expeditious finalisation and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

In a separate Leaders' Joint Statement, both sides planned to develop bilateral economic cooperation in nine key areas<sup>3</sup>: elimination of non-tariff trade barriers and liberalisation of bilateral trade, including the possibility of establishing an EAEU-India Free Trade Area; development of a bilateral settlement system using national currencies; increase in cargo turnover with India through the launch of new routes of the INSTC, the Northern Sea Route and the Chennai-Vladivostok Sea Line; increase of the volume of bilateral trade in agricultural products, food and fertilisers; development of energy

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<sup>3</sup> Leaders' Joint Statement on the development of strategic areas of Russia-India economic cooperation for the period up to 2030, July 09, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2031942>



cooperation including nuclear, oil refining, petrochemicals and energy infrastructure and technologies; industrial sectors such as infrastructure development, transport engineering, automobile production, shipbuilding and space; investment and joint projects across sectors of the digital economy; development and supply of medicines and advanced medical equipment, and expansion of interaction in education, science and technology, culture, tourism, sports, healthcare etc.

India's strategic partnership with Russia is among its oldest ones, dating back to October 03, 2000 when President Putin visited India and signed the "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership"<sup>4</sup>. This was elevated to the level of a special and privileged strategic partnership in December 2010<sup>5</sup>. Despite intentions and the evident geopolitical need, however, the two countries have not been able to realise the partnership's potential. Bilateral trade has shot up due to India's hydrocarbon imports: Russia was forced to find alternate markets after Western Europe cut off its energy trade with Russia and imposed a price cap, and discounted prices proved attractive for Indian companies. India's dependence on Russia for military platforms has reduced over the years, with India diversifying its procurement sources.

Five factors, however, continue to make the relationship an important one for India. First, Russia is vital to an Asian geostrategic balance. If sidelined, there is nothing to stop China from assuming hegemony over Asian heartland. The US alliance remains centred on the Indo-Pacific; it has virtually no influence in large parts of the Asian land mass. In contrast, Russian influence in India's geographic hinterland is substantial. Second, Russia remains a member of the UNSC and shares the aspiration for a multipolar world with India. Third, Russia provides India with technology that is not available from the west, including nuclear, space and air defence. Fourth, Russia remains among the world's largest exporters of affordable energy, vital for an energy-deficient India. And finally, Russia will remain vital for supply of spares for the large number of military platforms that are used by the Indian armed forces.

The pressure on Russia to turn completely towards China is evident. China's trade with Russia is already over \$ 240 billion, about four times Russia – India trade. Moreover, China has moderated the impact of western sanctions on

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<sup>4</sup> Declaration on Strategic Partnership Between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation, October 3, 2000,

<https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf/DeclarationStrategicPartnership.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Joint Statement: Celebrating a Decade of the India – Russian Federation Strategic Partnership and looking ahead, December 21, 2010, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5118/Joint+Statement+Celebrating+a+Decade+of+the+India+Russian+Federation+Strategic+Partnership+and+Looking+Ahead>





Russia. A turn would, however, make Russia China's vassal. That President Putin is conscious of his need to preserve an independent outlook is evident both from his recent visits to Pyongyang and Hanoi, as well as the signals from the Modi visit: that India provides Russia an alternative to China. Converting this to an upswing in India-Russia relations is work in progress. Much will depend on creation of the necessary India-Russia trade corridors.

Geographically at least, the International North South Trade Corridor appears most promising. It cuts the distance from Mumbai to Moscow (and the more densely populated and industrialised western part of Russia) by over 9000 Km as compared to the sea route via Suez, and connectivity is already partially developed. Exploiting this connectivity imaginatively to increase India's exports to Russia is now the task of the mandarins in India's Ministry of Commerce. The Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor connects India to Russia's relatively less populated and industrialised far east. The Northern Sea Route appears to confer no connectivity benefits to India; it is substantially longer than existing routes between India and Russia/Europe, and will necessarily entail higher transportation costs.

That Modi was not insensitive about India's image came out from his public words to Modi, saying "when innocent children are killed, when we see innocent children dying, it is heart-wrenching". He also called for dialogue to end the war in Ukraine. "Solutions will not be found in the battlefield", he said, adding "Resolutions and peace talks don't succeed in the midst of bombs, guns and bullets".

In the event, there was an evident GOI judgment that the upsides from a visit to Moscow at this stage outweighed the downsides. It is not in India's interests to let the west dictate ups and downs in the India-Russia relationship. Western interests are necessarily driven by their own considerations. These may not survive a change in the US administration, with consequential changes in how the US sees Ukraine. India must pursue its own interests, managing western pressure as best as it can.

## **NATO's 75th Anniversary Celebration**

Ukraine and four Indo-Pacific countries: Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, joined the security discourse at the Washington NATO summit on July 11. The alliance had on July 09 & 10 celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and gone through the Women Peace and Security Roundtable, a Defence Industry Forum, and meetings at the level of Heads of State and Government. Created by 12 countries (two American, ten European) in April 1949, the alliance has



experienced ten rounds of enlargement, taking its current membership to 32 nations<sup>6</sup>. The most recent entrant is Sweden, in 2024.

NATO describes itself as a “defensive alliance”. The commitment is to defend each other and every inch of Allied territory at all times. Its three core tasks are deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security<sup>7</sup>. If the threat during the Cold War was the former Soviet Union, today “Russia remains the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security”. In addition, “Terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and prosperity”<sup>8</sup>. These threats are seen as global and interconnected.

The foremost agenda item at the summit was assisting the defence of Ukraine. “Ukraine’s fight for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its international recognised borders directly contributes to Euro-Atlantic security”, according to the summit communique. The leaders decided to establish a NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) organisation to coordinate the provision of military equipment and training for Ukraine by Allies and partners. The purpose of NSATU is to place security assistance to Ukraine on an enduring footing, ensuring enhanced, predictable and coherent support. NSATU is not intended to make NATO a party to the conflict, it is only to support the transformation of Ukraine’s defence and security forces, enabling further integration with NATO at a future date. They also decided to appoint a NATO senior representative in Kyiv, to deepen the relationship with Ukraine. These were seen as measures to ‘Trump-proof’ aid for Ukraine in the event of Donald Trump’s victory in the US elections at the end of the year.

The allies announced a pledge of long-term security assistance for Ukraine amounting to a minimum of €40 billion within the next year, to cover costs of purchase of military equipment, in-kind donated support, costs related to maintenance, logistics and transportation of military equipment, military training, operational costs associated with the provision of military support, investments in and support for Ukraine’s defence industry and infrastructure, and all contributions to NATO Trust Funds for Ukraine, including non-lethal aid.

The summit declaration stated “Ukraine’s future in NATO. Ukraine has become increasingly interoperable and political integrated with the Alliance”.

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<sup>6</sup> NATO member countries, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52044.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Washington Summit Declaration, July 10, 2024, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_227678.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



As Ukraine continues on its required democratic, economic and security reforms, the leaders committed to “support it on its irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership”<sup>9</sup>. This is a direct challenge to Russia, which has identified Ukraine’s joining NATO as a red line. However, membership was not offered at the present summit. The leaders reiterated a hard line stance about Russia bearing sole responsibility for its war of aggression against Ukraine, and there being no impunity (sic) for Russian forces’ and officials’ abuses and violations of human rights, war crimes and other violations of international law. The stance extended to seeking rolling back of the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014, and of withdrawal of its forces from Moldova and Georgia. NATO also states that the “all-domain threat Russia poses to NATO will persist into the long term, implying the expectation that there is no reasonable end to the conflict in the near term. Whether this stance and various commitments will survive the possible election of Trump at US President in November remains questionable. For the present, NATO has committed that it will develop recommendations on NATO’s strategic approach to Russia, taking into account the changed security environment, for the next summit<sup>10</sup>.

The next major task identified by NATO leaders was countering terrorism. They endorsed NATO’s Updated Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism and the Updated Action Plan on Enhancing NATO’s Role in the International Community’s Fight Against Terrorism.

Third priority was accorded to urging countries not to provide any kind of assistance to Russia’s aggression. Amongst the targets was Belarus, which “enables this war by making available its territory and infrastructure, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Iran, which are “providing direct military support to Russia, such as munitions and uncrewed aerial vehicles”.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) came in for special mention in the summit declaration. “The PRC has become a decisive enabler of Russia’s war against Ukraine through its so-called ‘no-limits’ partnership and its large scale support for Russia’s defence industrial base. The declaration added. “The PRC cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation”. Moreover, “The PRC continues to pose systemic challenges to Euro-Atlantic security. We have seen sustained malicious cyber and hybrid activities, including disinformation, stemming from the PRC”. NATO called upon the PRC to uphold its

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



commitment to act responsibly in cyber space, expressed concern about its space capabilities and activities as well as on the expansion of the PRC's nuclear arsenal.

In the Indo-Pacific, the leaders identified it as "important for NATO, given that developments in that region directly affect Euro-Atlantic security". Welcoming the contributions of Asia-Pacific partners, the leaders said they were strengthening dialogue to tackle cross-regional challenges and enhancing practical cooperation, including through flagship projects in the areas of supporting Ukraine, cyber defence, countering disinformation and technology.

The summit marked the approaching end of Jens Stoltenberg's term as Secretary General. He hands over the post on October 01, 2024, to Mark Rutte, former Prime Minister of The Netherlands. The Summit Declaration thanked Stoltenberg for his leadership of the alliance for over a decade, and pledged full support to his successor.

Despite appearances, Euro-Atlantic unity on Ukraine appears forced rather than arising from a deeply held belief. The Biden administration and its European partners may have propagated the line that Russia's action in Ukraine poses an existential threat to European and global security. Significant parts of the US don't however, buy this line, as is evident from the stated views of Presidential candidate Trump and his Vice-Presidential pick, JD Vance. Nor has the line found resonance in the third world, where the widely held view is that the war is a matter for Europe to resolve. Western weapon supplies to Ukraine prolong the conflict, while sanctions against Russia have not, despite claims, significantly harmed its economy: as per IMF statistics, Russia continues growing faster than Western Europe as well as the US and Canada. Western Europe lacks the means or the confidence to defend itself and must depend on the US.

There is agreement within the US that the strategic weight of the Indo-Pacific is far greater than that of any other part of the world. Involvement in Europe, however, prevents a US pivot / rebalance to the Indo-Pacific. The expectation, moreover, that NATO will be able to give more than passing attention to the Indo-Pacific is misplaced. Even today, ten of NATO's 32 members spend below the benchmark 2% of the GDP on defence. Social spending continues to make heavy demands on their budgets. European countries remain reluctant to risk trade relationships with China and continue to forge new links, despite the strong words in the Summit Declaration. To expect NATO or the EU to contribute meaningfully to Indo-Pacific security would appear to be far-fetched.



## The Second Japan-Philippines 2+2

Philippines' Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, and Défense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., met with their Japanese counterparts Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Défense Minister Minoru Kihara in Manila on July 08 for the 2+2 Japan-Philippines Foreign and Defence Ministerial meeting<sup>11</sup>. They shared views on the strategic environment and confirmed their collaboration towards the realisation of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Expressing their strong opposition to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China Seas, they shared serious concerns over China's dangerous and escalatory actions in the Second Thomas Shoal and called on China to abide by the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea<sup>12</sup>.

The Philippines appreciated the Official Security Assistance (OSA) provided by Japan and the two decided to continue cooperation on strengthening maritime and air domain awareness. They signed the Philippines-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), terming it a historic milestone in their overall bilateral defence cooperation<sup>13</sup>. They also decided to further develop defence capabilities and promote interoperability between the Japan Self Defense Forces and the Armed Forces of the Philippines through conduct of bilateral and multilateral exercises and cooperation on defense equipment and technology.

China's response was to say that exchange and cooperation should not undermine mutual understanding and trust between other countries in the region, and that the Asia-Pacific region does not need any military bloc, still less groupings that incite bloc confrontation or a new Cold War. The Chinese spokesperson also noted that Japan bears serious historical responsibilities for its aggression and colonial rule over the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries during WWII<sup>14</sup>. Whether any other regional countries will subscribe to this line is questionable.

Three types of agreements between countries cover aspects of taxation and customs duties, entry and exit procedures and criminal jurisdiction with regard

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<sup>11</sup> "Second Japan-Philippines Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting ("2+2"), July 8, 2024, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/s\\_sa/sea2/ph/pageite\\_000001\\_00001.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea2/ph/pageite_000001_00001.html)

<sup>12</sup> Joint Press Release on the Outcome of the Second Foreign and Défense Ministerial Meeting (2+2), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100694918.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Agreement Between Japan and the Republic of the Philippines Concerning the Facilitation of Reciprocal Access and Cooperation Between the Self Défense Forces of Japan and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100694772.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian's Regular Press Conference on July 8, 2024, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202407/t202407\\_08\\_11450025.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202407/t202407_08_11450025.html)



to forces from one country deployed in another. The most common is the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which is used when forces from one country are permanently based in another. The second is a Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which is used when forces from one country are temporarily positioned in another. Both these are extensively used by the US for deployment of its forces abroad. The third is the RAA, which is similar to the VFA except for the element of reciprocity. Its usage thus comes in when forces from one country are deployed in another for exercises. Japan has already concluded RAAs with Australia (in January 2022) and the UK (in January 2023) and is currently negotiating one with France. Its RAA with the Philippines is intended to “facilitate mutually beneficial defence cooperation between the two parties by establishing a framework for the conduct of such cooperation and defining the status of the visiting force”<sup>15</sup>.

The evident expectation is that Japan’s Self Defense Forces will now deploy to the Philippines for exercises. Australia has a Status of Visiting Forces Agreement with the Philippines, signed in 2007<sup>16</sup>. The RAA now permits forces from the US (a treaty ally), Australia and Japan to exercise together in Philippines territory. The recently concluded 2+2 may be seen as another step in the gradual transformation of the hub-and-spokes alliance framework in East Asia into a NATO-type mutually supporting alliance. It is, however, unlikely to moderate or otherwise influence China’s claims of sovereignty over the South China Sea or its aggressive actions in the Second Thomas Shoal.

## India’s Budget 2024-25

Introducing her seventh budget in parliament on July 23, Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman identified nine priorities of the roadmap to ‘Viksit Bharat’: productivity and resilience in agriculture, employment and skilling, inclusive human resource development and social justice, manufacturing and services, urban development, energy security, infrastructure, innovation and R&D, and next generation reforms<sup>17</sup>. This was the second time she was presenting a budget during the current year; she had earlier presented an

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Agreement Between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines Concerning the Status of Visiting Forces of Each State in the Territory of the Other State, signed 31 May 2007, entered into force 28 September 2012, <https://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/ATS/2012/31.html>

<sup>17</sup> Budget Speech of Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, July 23, 2024.



interim budget on February 1<sup>18</sup>. So, how is Budget 2024-25 different as compared to the Interim Budget 2024-25?

Budgets are necessarily about figures, so it is to these figures one must turn for an answer<sup>19</sup>. India's GDP for 2024-25 is estimated at ₹3,26,36,912 crores (about US\$ 3.93 trillion)<sup>20</sup>, about \$ 20 billion lower than the ₹3,27,71,808 crores estimated by the interim budget.

In 29 of the 56 ministries and independent departments, there is no change: the allocations remain exactly the same as in the interim budget. Overall capital allocation remains the same at ₹11,11,111 crores. Revenue allocation has been increased from ₹36,54,657.39 crores to ₹37,09,401.08 crores. The total budget thus increases from ₹47,65,768.39 crores to ₹48,20,512.08 crores, or by ₹54,743.69 crores. This amounts to 14.77% of the GDP.

Significant gains in revenue allocations have gone to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (₹5000 crores); the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (over ₹1054 crores); the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (₹2000 crores); Ministry of Finance (about ₹7930 crores); Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (₹1029 crores), Ministry of Home Affairs (total allocation increases by over ₹16,774 crores), Ministry of Heavy Industries (₹513 crores); Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (₹5051 crores); Ministry of Labour and Employment (₹10,000 crores); Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (₹6250 crores); and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (₹500 crores). There are no changes in the allocation for the Ministry of External Affairs.

The only changes in allocations for the Ministry of Defence are that MOD (Civil) gets ₹400 crores more under the head 'Secretariat General Services' (Establishment Expenditure of the Centre) and investment in BEML has been increased from ₹10.91 crores to ₹484.32 crores<sup>21</sup>. There is no change in revenue or capital allocations for the armed forces, or in allocations for pensions. India's defence spending (inclusive of pensions) is ₹621,940.85 crores, 1.9% of the GDP. If pensions are excluded, budgeted defence spending drops to 1.47% of the GDP.

<sup>18</sup> Interim Budget 2024-2025, Speech of Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, February 1, 2024, [https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/doc/Budget\\_Speech.pdf](https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/doc/Budget_Speech.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> All figures taken from Expenditure Budget 2024-25, July 2024, <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/doc/eb/allsbepdf>

<sup>20</sup> At an exchange rate of US\$1.00 = ₹83.00.

<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of allocations to the Ministry of Defence which remains essentially unchanged, see Lalit Kapur, "India's Interim Budget 2024-25", in the Indo-Pacific Monitor, February 2024, [https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads\\_dpg/publication\\_file/indo-pacific-monitor-5101.pdf](https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/indo-pacific-monitor-5101.pdf)



## Other Indo-Pacific Developments

World Economic Outlook July 2024. The July edition of IMF's World Economic Outlook projects global growth to remain steady at 3.2% in 2024, increasing to 3.3% in 2025<sup>22</sup>. India remains the fastest growing major economy, with growth projected at 7.0% in 2024 (up from 6.8% in the April 2024 outlook) and 6.5% in 2025. China is projected to grow at 5.0% in 2024 and 4.5% in 2025. Growth in the advanced economies is expected to average 1.7% over the next two years.

Vietnam Submission to CLCS on Extended Continental Shelf. Viet Nam officially submitted its claim for an extended continental shelf in the South China Sea to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) on July 18<sup>23</sup>. The submission drew protests from China's foreign ministry spokesperson who stated "such claims cover parts of China's Nansha Qundao, which infringes on China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, violates international law, including the UN Charter and UNCLOS, and breaches the Agreement on Basic Principles Guiding the Settlement of Sea-related Issues between China and Viet Nam and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) jointly signed by China and ASEAN countries, including Viet Nam"<sup>24</sup>.

Philippines China Agreement on the Second Thomas Shoal. The Philippines and China reached a provisional agreement on managing resupply missions to the Second Thomas Shoal<sup>25</sup>. Manila had deliberately beached BRP Sierra Madre there in 1999 to reinforce its claims and has since maintained a small contingent of sailors on the ship. China's foreign ministry spokesperson, after stressing that the Philippines should tow away the warship, said that till then, China was willing to allow the Philippines to send living necessities to the personnel living on the warship, so long as China was informed in advance, on site verification conducted and China monitored the resupply process. China will not allow the sending of construction material or an attempt to build fixed

<sup>22</sup> World Economic Outlook Update, July 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2024/07/16/world-economic-outlook-update-july-2024>

<sup>23</sup> Government News- Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, July 18, 2024. <https://en.baochinhphu.vn/viet-nams-submission-on-extended-continental-shelf-beyond-200-nautical-miles-is-appropriate-with-unclos-111240718180411193.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PRC), "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian's Regular Press Conference, July 18, 2024. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202407/t20240718\\_11456267.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202407/t20240718_11456267.html)

<sup>25</sup> "China, Philippines agree on 'provisional arrangement' for South China Sea resupply missions, Manila says", July 22, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-resupply-ship-south-china-sea-shoal-without-us-help-2024-07-21/>





facilities or a permanent outpost<sup>26</sup>. The Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, however, said that China's statement regarding prior notification and on-site confirmation is inaccurate<sup>27</sup>. Nevertheless, the Philippines Foreign Secretary did acknowledge on July 30 that information would be provided to China prior resupply missions, and that one such mission has since been completed without incident<sup>28</sup>. The arrangement, if it holds, will tamp down tensions in the region, without addressing the question of sovereignty over the Second Thomas Shoal.

US Philippines Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement. The US-Philippines Agreement for Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy entered into force on July 02<sup>29</sup>. Signed in November 2023, the 123 Agreement establishes the legal framework allowing export of reactors, nuclear fuel and special nuclear material from the US to the Philippines. The Agreement is part of efforts to develop the Philippines civil nuclear sector.

Mekong US Partnership Ministerial Meeting. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Mekong-US Partnership (MUSP) Foreign Ministers' Meeting took place on July 27, as part of Secretary Blinken's visit to Laos. Member countries formally approved and adopted the MUSP Plan of Action 2024-2026<sup>30</sup>. The US continues efforts to advance shared interests and priorities in the Mekong sub-region, focusing on economic connectivity, sustainable water and natural resources management, non-traditional security and human resource development.

Quad Senior Officials Meeting. Senior officials from India Ministry of External Affairs, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the US State Department met by video conference on July 03 to review progress in achieving commitments made at the May 2023

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<sup>26</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on China Reaching Provisional Arrangement with the Philippines on Managing the Situation at Ren'ai Jiao, July 22, 2024, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2535\\_665405/202407/t20240722\\_11457495.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/202407/t20240722_11457495.html)

<sup>27</sup> DFA Spokesperson Response to Chinese MFA Spokesperson Statement, July 22, 2024, <https://x.com/DFAPHL/status/1815210400922968253>

<sup>28</sup> Secretary Antony J Blinken, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J Austin III, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique A Manalo and Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro Jr at a Joint Press Availability, July 30, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-philippine-secretary-of-foreign-affairs-enrique-a-manalo-and-philippine-secretary-of-national-defense-gilberto-teodoro-jr-at/>

<sup>29</sup> US-Philippines Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement Enters into Force, July 08, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-philippines-civil-nuclear-cooperation-agreement-enters-into-force/>

<sup>30</sup> Joint Co-Chair Statement on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mekong-US Partnership Ministerial Meeting, July 27, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/joint-co-chair-statement-on-the-3rd-mekong-u-s-partnership-ministerial-meeting/>



Quad Leaders' Summit<sup>31</sup>. No date was, however, set for the next Quad Leaders' Summit.

Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The Foreign Ministers of Australia, India and Japan and the Secretary of State of the United States met in Tokyo on July 29 for the Eighth Quad Ministerial Meeting<sup>32</sup>. Their meeting highlighted the Quad's continued relevance and importance. Reaffirming the Quad's commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient, they expressed their intent to collectively advance a positive and practical agenda to support the region's sustainable development, stability and prosperity, and respond to the region's needs. The areas of cooperation covered by the Quad encompass maritime security, critical and emerging technologies, cyber security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, health security, climate change, counterterrorism, infrastructure and connectivity, and addressing the debt crisis through sustainable, transparent and fair lending and financing practices. The Ministers expressed their serious concern about the situation in the East and South China Seas, reiterated their strong opposition to unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion, expressed their concern about the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels and described the award rendered by the Arbitral Tribunal on July 12, 2016 as a "significant milestone, and the basis for peacefully resolving disputes" between parties in the region. They announced their intent to launch a Quad maritime legal dialogue under the Quad Maritime Security Working Group to focus their expertise on international law of the sea issues in support of their efforts to uphold the rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific. They also announced their intent to expand the IPMDA to the Indian Ocean Region and said they were working for early operationalisation of the South Asia program through IFC-IOR Gurugram.

Japan US ROK Trilateral Ministerial Meeting. Defence Ministers from the US, Japan and Republic of Korea met in Japan in the first Trilateral Ministerial Meeting on July 28, 2024<sup>33</sup>. The three reiterated their commitment to strengthening trilateral security cooperation to deter nuclear and missile threats posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They renewed their commitment to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in the

<sup>31</sup> Quad Senior Officials Meeting, July 04, 2024, [https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37927/Quad\\_Senior\\_Officials\\_Meeting](https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37927/Quad_Senior_Officials_Meeting)

<sup>32</sup> Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting Joint Statement Tokyo, July 29, 2024, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/quad-foreign-ministers-meeting-joint-statement-tokyo>

<sup>33</sup> Japa UN ROK Trilateral Ministerial Joint Press Statement, July 27, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3852146/japan-united-states-republic-of-korea-trilateral-ministerial-joint-press-statem/>



Indo-Pacific. They also strongly opposed any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the waters of the Indo-Pacific, and share concerns about actions inconsistent with international law as reflected by UNCLOS. They signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework between their three defence ministries/ departments and announced that it has come into effect.

US Japan 2+2 Meeting. US Secretary of State Blinken, US Secretary of Defense Austin, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Kamikawa and Japan's Minister for Defense Kihara convened the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2 ministerial dialogue) in Tokyo on July 28<sup>34</sup>. The Ministers concurred that the People's Republic of China (PRC) foreign policy seeks to reshape the international order for its own benefit at the expense of others. They highlighted that the PRC employs political, economic, and military coercion of countries, companies and civil society, as well as facilitates its military modernisation through the diversion of technology to achieve these objectives. They reiterated their strong objections to the PRC's intensifying attempts to unilateral change the status quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea, as well as to its unlawful maritime claims, militarisation of reclaimed features, and threatening and provocative activities in the South China Sea. They decided to upgrade alliance coordination and command and control. They announced that the United States intends to reconstitute US Forces Japan as a Joint Force Headquarters reporting to the Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, and assuming primary responsibility for coordinating security activities in and around Japan along with the JSDF's Joint Operations Command. They reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate cooperation on Japan's acquisition of Tomahawk missiles, their goal to increase bilateral presence in Japan's Southwest Islands. They also reconfirmed the importance of the Quad and their commitment to furthering the public goods Quad partners deliver to the region through the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) and other activities.

US-Philippines 2+2 Meeting. The Fourth US-Philippines 2+2 Ministerial Meeting took place at Camp Aguinaldo, Manila on July 30, 2024. US Secretary Antony J Blinken, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J Austin III, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique A Manalo and Philippines Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodor Jr participated. A joint statement was issued on completion<sup>35</sup>. Both sides acted to modernise Philippines' defense and

<sup>34</sup> Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee ("2+2"), July 28, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-of-the-security-consultative-committee-22-2/>

<sup>35</sup> Joint Statement on the Philippines-United States Fourth 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, July 30, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-philippines-united-states-fourth-22-ministerial-dialogue/>



civilian law enforcement capabilities. They committed to allocate USD 500 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to the Philippines from the FY 2024 Indo-Pacific Supplemental Appropriations Act, working with the US Congress. They agreed to implement the Philippines-Security Sector Assistance Roadmap, finalised the previous day in Manila. They agreed to increase investment in EDCA agreed locations and to conclude the General Security of Military Information Agreement by the end of 2024. They also agreed to bolster maritime cooperative activities to promote security cooperation and expand operational coordination with other likeminded partners, including Australia and Japan.

Calls on Anniversary of South China Sea Award. On the eighth anniversary of the Permanent Court of Arbitration Award on the South China Sea, the US repeated its call on China to abide by the ruling, cease its dangerous and destabilising conduct, and comport its conduct as well as its territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea to the international law of the sea as reflected in UNCLOS<sup>36</sup>. The call was echoed by Japan, which noted that the award was final and legally binding on parties to the dispute, and noted that China's claim that it would not accept the award was against the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law. Japan also renewed its objections to maritime claims in the South China Sea that are inconsistent with UNCLOS<sup>37</sup>.

US China Foreign Ministers' Meeting. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and China's Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi met on the sidelines of ASEAN-related ministerial meetings at Vientiane, Laos, on July 27, to discuss bilateral, regional and global issues. Readouts of the two sides projected their own versions of discussions. The US readout emphasises the need for enhanced military communication<sup>38</sup>, resolving cases of US citizens wrongfully detained or subject to exit bans in China, resolve to advance the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, concerns about China's actions in the South China Sea and particularly the Second Thomas Shoal, China's support for Russia's defense industrial base and

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<sup>36</sup> Eighth Anniversary of the Philippines-PRC South China Sea Arbitral Ruling, July 11, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/eighth-anniversary-of-the-philippines-prc-south-china-sea-arbitral-tribunal-ruling/>

<sup>37</sup> Eight years since the issuance of the Arbitral Tribunal's award as to the disputes between the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China regarding the South China Sea (Statement by Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko), July 12, 2024, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite\\_000001\\_00430.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00430.html)

<sup>38</sup> Secretary Blinken's Meeting with People's Republic of China (PC) Director of the CCP Central Foreign Affairs Office Wang Yi, July 27, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-meeting-with-peoples-republic-of-china-prc-director-of-the-ccp-central-foreign-affairs-office-wang-yi-3/>



DPRK's provocative actions. China's readout<sup>39</sup>, on the other hand, emphasises US containment and suppression of China resulting in rising risks to China-US relations, Taiwan being a part of China, the need for the Philippines to honour its commitments in the Second Thomas Shoal, the need for the US to stop using unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction with regard to Ukraine, and an exchange of views on Gaza, the Korean Peninsula and Myanmar.

US Embassy in Vanuatu. The US officially opened its embassy in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on July 18<sup>40</sup>. Diplomatic relations were established in 1986. Ann Marie Yastishock is the US Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

AUKUS Pillar I Training. The first three Royal Australian Navy officers began practical training on the UK's Astute-class SSNs after graduating from the Royal Navy's Reactor Course<sup>41</sup>. 28 Australian civilian personnel from ASC Pty Ltd (formerly the Australian Submarine Corporation) began training on aspects of Virginia-class SSN maintenance at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility on July 18<sup>42</sup>.

Theodore Roosevelt CSG Exercises with IN and IAF. USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Daniel Inouye exercised with IN ships Visakhapatnam, Aditya and two Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft of the IAF in the Indian Ocean on July 12<sup>43</sup>. The exercise focused on information sharing and improving shared maritime domain awareness, enhancing replenishment and logistics interoperability and improving combined air-to-air capabilities.

Exercise Pitch Black. An IAF contingent comprising 150 personnel along with SU-30 MKI, C-17 Globemaster and IL-78 refuellers arrived at Darwin, Australia to participate in Exercise Pitch Black on July 11<sup>44</sup>. The exercise runs from July

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<sup>39</sup> Wang Yi Meets with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, July 27, 2024, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/wshd\\_665389/202407/t20240727\\_11461723.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202407/t20240727_11461723.html)

<sup>40</sup> Vanuatu Embassy Opening, July 18, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/vanuatu-embassy-opening/>

<sup>41</sup> Visit to the United Kingdom, July 12, 2024, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2024-07-12/visit-united-kingdom>

<sup>42</sup> Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility Welcomes ASC Personnel, July 18, 2024, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3844942/pearl-harbor-naval-shipyard-and-intermediate-maintenance-facility-welcomes-asc/>

<sup>43</sup> The Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group conducts joint maritime activity with Indian Forces, July 12, 2024, <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/3837914/the-theodore-roosevelt-carrier-strike-group-conducts-joint-maritime-activity-wi/>

<sup>44</sup> Indian Air Force Contingent Lands in Australia to Participate in Ex Pitch Black 2024, July 11, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2032498>



12 to August 02, and will involve over 140 aircraft and 4400 personnel from 20 countries. The IAF had earlier participated in the 2018 and 2022 editions.

GRSE to Build Ocean Going Tug for Bangladesh Navy. GRSE Kolkata signed a contract to build an ocean-going tug for the Bangladesh Navy on June 30, 2024<sup>45</sup>. The 61 metre long vessel will be used for towing ships at sea, assisting them during berthing and casting off, and for rescue and salvage operations at sea. The vessel will cost \$ 21 million and is to be delivered within 24 months of the signing of the contract.

Future INS Tripud Launched. The first of the two Project 1135.6 frigates being built by Goa Shipyard for the Indian Navy was launched on July 23, 2024<sup>46</sup>. The ship is GSL's first major war vessel and is scheduled to be delivered towards the end of 2026.

INS Tabar Participates in Russian Navy Day Celebrations. INS Tabar arrived in St. Petersburg, Russia, on July 25 to participate in Russia's Navy Day celebrations<sup>47</sup>. The visit, coming close on the heels of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia earlier this month, signals that India-Russia relations remain as strong as ever. Tabar visited Alexandria (June 27-30)<sup>48</sup>, Casablanca (July 8-11)<sup>49</sup> and Hamburg (July 17-20)<sup>50</sup> enroute. Among visitors to Casablanca when Tabar was in port were China's destroyer Jiaosuo and supply ship Honghu, ships forming part of China's 46<sup>th</sup> naval escort task force deployed in the Gulf of Aden, which arrived on July 10 for five-day R&R halt. One frigate remained in Gulf of Aden for patrol<sup>51</sup>.

Flight Test of DRDO BMD System. DRDO successfully flight-tested its Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence System on July 24, 2024<sup>52</sup>. The test met all trial objectives validating the complete weapon system comprising long range

<sup>45</sup> Boosting Defence Exports – GRSE to Build Advanced Ocean-Going Tug for Bangladesh Navy, July 01, 2024, <https://www.grse.in/press-releases-2024-25-quarter2/>

<sup>46</sup> Launch of 'Tripud' First of Two Additional P1135.6 Follow-on Ships, July 24, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2036157>

<sup>47</sup> Indian Navy's Stealth Frigate Arrives in St. Petersburg for Russian Navy Day Celebrations Despite Few Concerns, July 27, 2024, <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/indian-navy-frigate-ins-tabar/>

<sup>48</sup> Indian Naval Ship Tabar Reaches Alexandria, Egypt, June 27, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2029177>

<sup>49</sup> INS Tabar Enters Casablanca, Morocco, July 9, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2031971>

<sup>50</sup> Indian Naval Ship Tabar Arrives in Hamburg, Germany, July 18, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2034171>

<sup>51</sup> 46<sup>th</sup> Chinese naval escort taskforce stops in Casablanca for replenishment, July 12, 2024, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/ARMEDFORCES/Navy/News\\_209162/16323957.html](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/ARMEDFORCES/Navy/News_209162/16323957.html)

<sup>52</sup> DRDO successfully flight-tests Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence System, July 24, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2036561>



sensors, low latency communication system, the missile control complex and advanced interceptor missiles, demonstrating indigenous capability to defend against ballistic missiles of the 5000 Km class. There was, however, no indication of when the system would be productionised or fitted on India's major war vessels.

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