



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



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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. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

Cover Image:

Prime Ministers Anthony Albanese, Narendra Modi and Fumio Kishida with President Joe Biden at the Quad Summit in Wilmington, Delaware, on September 21, 2024. Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida meet ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol in Seoul, September 6, 2024. Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan

INS Tabar, FS Suffren, French submarine and P-8I take part in 22nd Exercise Varuna in the Mediterranean Sea, September 2-4, 2024. Source: PIB

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

September 2024

Abstract

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Brunei and Singapore from September 03-05, and the US from September 21-23. India's ties with Brunei were elevated to an enhanced partnership and with Singapore to a comprehensive strategic partnership. The bilateral component of the visit to the US saw Prime Minister Modi meeting President Joe Biden and taking stock of the Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership. In the plurilateral component, he joined leaders from Australia, Japan and the US for the sixth Quad Summit hosted by President Biden. In the multilateral component, he addressed the Summit of the Future at the UNGA.

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida travelled to Seoul for his 12th summit meeting with President Yoon Suk Yeol from September 06-07. The visit signalled the intent of Japan and South Korea to continue growing security ties.

Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the National People's Power Alliance (NPP) was sworn in as the 10th President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on September 23, 2024. He appointed Ms. Harini Amarasuriya as the Prime Minister.

Shigeru Ishiba won Japan's LDP election on September 27, putting him in position to succeed Fumio Kishida as Prime Minister on October 01, once the Diet formally elects him to the post.

The 9th edition of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was convened in Beijing from September 04-06. China announced ten partnership initiatives with Africa over the next three years, for which it will provide about RMB 360 million (about \$ 50.7 billion) in financial support.

Defence and Foreign Ministers from Australia and Japan met in Melbourne for the 11th Australia-Japan 2+2 and decided to further strengthen their security cooperation in view of China's assertive actions in the East and South China Seas.

Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan made his first visit to India after becoming the crown prince of Abu Dhabi from September 9-10.

Outcomes from his visit encompassed cooperation in the nuclear, energy and food security fields.

UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan made his first visit to the White House on September 23. He and President Biden affirmed the enduring US-UAE Strategic and Defence Partnership. The US recognised the UAE as a major defense partner, the second country after India to be accorded this status.

The Taiwan Strait was in focus during the month, with the first transit by German warships through it since 2002 on September 13, a transit by a USN aircraft on September 17, and the first ever transit by a Japanese warship through the Strait on September 25.

The standoff between the China Coast Guard (CCG) and the Philippines Coast Guard (PCG) at Sabina Shoal took an unexpected turn when the latter withdrew PCGS Teresa Magbanua on September 15. The PCG claims it has not abandoned the Shoal, but the reality is that China possesses both the resources and the will to prevent redeployment of Philippines' ships.

Japan published the 50th edition of its annual Defense of Japan White Paper during the month. China, North Korea and Russia were identified as Japan's major security threats.

The Wilmington Quad Summit

Less than two months after assuming office in January 2021, US President Joseph R Biden convened the first Quad summit. The leaders of Australia, India, Japan and the US met virtually, affirming their commitment to quadrilateral cooperation and to promoting a free and open rules-based order rooted in international law, to advance security and prosperity and counter threats to both in the Indo-Pacific and beyond¹. They supported the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values and territorial integrity, and sought to address the most urgent of global challenges. These included the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, climate change and shared challenges in cyber space, critical technologies, counterterrorism, quality infrastructure investment, maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The Quad leaders launched three initiatives: the Quad Vaccine Partnership, the Quad Climate Working Group, and the Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group². The first in-person Quad Summit followed six months later, again hosted by the US³.

President Biden once again hosted the Sixth Quad Summit at the Archere Academy in his home town of Wilmington, Delaware⁴. As his presidential innings approaches its end, it is time to take stock of where the Quad stands.

Outcomes of the Sixth Quad summit first⁵. On the health security front, the Quad plans to coordinate efforts to promote equitable access to safe, effective, quality-assured mpox vaccines, including where appropriate expanding vaccine manufacturing in low and middle-income countries. Leaders have also announced the Quad Cancer Moonshot – an initiative to end cancer in the Indo-Pacific, with a range of actions by the four countries as well as the private

¹ Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: "The Spirit of the Quad", March 12, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>

² Quad Summit Fact Sheet, March 12, 2021, https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33621/Quad_Summit_Fact_Sheet

³ Joint Statement from Quad Leaders, September 24, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/joint-statement-from-quad-leaders/>

⁴ Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Modi of the Republic of India, Prime Minister Kishida of Japan, and Prime Minister Albanese of Australia Before Quad Leaders' Summit Meeting, Claymont, DE (September 21, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/09/23/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-modi-of-the-republic-of-india-prime-minister-kishida-of-japan-and-prime-minister-albanese-of-australia-before-quad-leaders-summit-meeting-claymont-de/>

⁵ The Wilmington Declaration Joint Statement from the Leaders of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, September 21, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2057454>

sector directed to ameliorate the impact of cancer, starting with the preventable cervical cancer⁶. India's commitments under this initiative include sharing technical expertise in digital health through its National Non-Communicable Disease portal; providing HPV sampling kits, detection tools and cervical cancer vaccines worth \$ 7.5 million to the Indo-Pacific region; scaling up population-based screening for oral, breast and cervical cancers, expanding access to specialised cancer treatment centres; committing to affordable cancer treatment through the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), and research led by the Indian Council of Medical Research. In addition, the Serum Institute of India will support the procurement of up to 40 million doses of the HPV vaccine for distribution across the Indo-Pacific. The Cervical Cancer Elimination Consortium-India will collaborate with Government of India to pilot 100 cancer free districts.

On the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) front, the Quad partnership is working to ensure readiness to rapidly respond to natural disasters, including by pre-positioning of essential relief supplies from the Indian Ocean Region to Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The partners are presently working together to provide assistance to the people of Vietnam following the devastating Typhoon Yagi.

On the maritime security front, the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) has been scaled up across the Indo-Pacific, from the Pacific Islands to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean through IFC_IOR Gurugram. Quad partners intend to layer new technology and data into IPMDA in the coming year to continue to deliver cutting edge capability and information to the region. A new Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI) has been launched to enable regional partners to maximise tools provided through IPMDA to monitor and secure their waters, enforce their laws and deter unlawful behaviour. India will host the inaugural MAITRI workshop in 2025. A Quad maritime legal dialogue has been launched to support efforts to uphold the rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific. Coast Guard agencies of the four countries will launch the first ever Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission in 2025, to improve interoperability and advance maritime safety. Quad partners also announced the launch of a Quad Indo-Pacific Logistics Network pilot project, to pursue shared airlift capacity and

⁶ Fact Sheet: Quad Countries Launch Cancer Moonshot Initiative to Reduce the Burden of Cancer in the Indo-Pacific, September 21, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/09/21/fact-sheet-quad-countries-launch-cancer-moonshot-initiative-to-reduce-the-burden-of-cancer-in-the-indo-pacific/>

leverage their collective strengths to support civilian disaster response across the Indo-Pacific.

On the infrastructure front, the partners announced the Quad Ports of the Future Partnership, to harness the Quad's expertise to support sustainable and resilient port infrastructure development across the Indo-Pacific. A Quad Regional Ports and Transportation Conference is to be hosted by India at Mumbai in 2025. Quad infrastructure fellowships have been expanded to more than 2,200 experts. The Quad Principles for Development and Deployment of Digital Public Infrastructure have been published.

Under the Critical and Emerging Technologies pillar, the Quad announced expansion of its Open RAN project from Palau to the Philippines and Tuvalu. The US also intends to invest over \$ 7 million to support the global expansion of the Asia Open RAN Academy (AORA), including through establishing a first-of-its-kind Open RAN workforce training initiative at scale in South Asia, in partnership with Indian institutions. The Quad partners announced an investment of \$7.5 million in funding opportunities for joint research, and welcomed the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between their science agencies to connect research communities and advance shared research principles. They looked forward to launching the Quad BioExplore Initiative, which will support joint AI-driven exploration of non-human biological data across all four countries, underpinned by the forthcoming Quad Principles for Research and Development Collaborations in Critical and Emerging Technologies. A Semiconductor Supply Chains Contingency Network Memorandum of Cooperation has been signed between the four partner countries.

On the climate and clean energy fronts, the leaders announced a focused Quad effort to boost energy efficiency, including the deployment and manufacturing of high-efficiency affordable cooling systems to enable climate-vulnerable countries to adapt to rising temperatures. India committed to an investment of \$ 2 million in new solar projects in Fiji, the Comoros, Madagascar and the Seychelles.

On the space front, India announced the establishment of a space-based web portal for Mauritius, to support the concept of open science for space-based monitoring of extreme weather events and climate impact. And on people-to-people initiatives, India announced an initiative to award fifty Quad scholarships, worth \$500,000, to students from the Indo-Pacific to pursue a 4-year undergraduate engineering program at a Government of India funded technical institution.

On the regional front, the leaders reaffirmed their consistent and unwavering support for ASEAN centrality and unity, as well as for the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. They committed to strengthening cooperation in the India Ocean region, strongly supporting IORA as the region's premier forum for addressing regional challenges. They recognised India's leadership in finalizing the IORA Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, and looked forward to India assuming the IORA Chair in 2025.

The Quad leaders expressed their serious concern about militarisation of disputed features and coercive and intimidating manoeuvres in the South China Sea. The wording used in their Joint Statement is significantly stronger than in previous statements, reflecting the gradual shift in India's position. They condemned for the first time the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels, and opposed efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities. They also reaffirmed that maritime disputes must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law, and underscored for the first time that the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea was the basis for peacefully resolving disputes between parties.

Quad leaders reiterated their unwavering support for the UN Charter and the three pillars of the UN system. They declared for the first time that they would reform the UN Security Council, with expansion of permanent seats to include representation for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. They retained a common position on the war in Ukraine, reiterating the need for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in line with international law. They condemned North Korea's destabilising missile launches and its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons. They expressed their concern about the worsening situation in Myanmar, including in the Rakhine State. They reiterated their condemnation for terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism. Condemning the terror attacks in the Middle East on October 7, 2023, they sought the release all hostages and expressed their commitment to a sovereign, viable and independent Palestine state taking into account Israel's legitimate security concerns as part of a two-state solution. They condemned the attacks perpetrated by the Houthis and their supporters against international and commercial vessels transiting through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. These aspects related to the Middle East find a place in the Quad Statement for the first time.

China's spokesperson reacted by identifying the Quad as the premier regional grouping that plays a leading role in the US' Indo-Pacific strategy, a tool that the US uses to contain China and perpetuate US hegemony. He said, "Though

the US claims that it does not target China, the first topic of the summit is about China and China was made an issue throughout the event. The US is lying through its teeth and even the US media does not believe it"⁷.

The Quad has no doubt made considerable progress in declaratory outcomes during the last four years. The initial three initiatives have been expanded to eleven, spanning health security, climate change, critical and emerging technologies, infrastructure and connectivity, space, cyber, maritime security, counterterrorism, nuclear stability, critical minerals, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. The partnership has not only stayed together, unlike Quad 1.0 which came to an unseemly halt in 2008, but has grown. There is no doubting now that the Quad is here to stay.

Of the many announcements during the 2024 summit, none is of a character that could make a significant difference to the Quad's stated objectives in the Indo-Pacific. None of them, for example, impinge more than marginally on the rule of law, including UNCLOS, the freedom of navigation or overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, or provide freedom from coercion, or support the territorial integrity or agency of regional states. This can only come from a military element. It has not escaped China's eyes that the Quad comprises Asia's three most powerful nations plus the US, the world's premier power, and Quad statements have become increasingly stronger in condemning China's actions over the years.

Seen through the prism of geopolitical security, however, the Quad has not lived up to expectations. Analysts, media commentators and China widely perceive the Quad as primarily a geopolitical security construct, directed against China. There can be little doubt that Quad discussions do include geopolitical developments and China's predatory behaviour. These, however, have not found mention in the Quad's statements since its resuscitation at the official level in 2017. The officials at that time ostensibly discussed issues of common interest including a free and open Indo-Pacific, as also the challenges of terrorism, proliferation linkages impacting the region and enhancing connectivity⁸. The first Quad ministerial meeting committed to cooperation on maritime security, quality infrastructure and connectivity, while discussing initiatives linked to counter-terrorism, cyber security and regional disaster

⁷ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian's Regular Press Conference on September 23, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/202409/t20240923_11495195.html

⁸ India-Australia-Japan-US Consultations on Indo-Pacific, November 12, 2017, https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29110/IndiaAustraliaJapanUS_Consultations_on_IndoPacific_November_12_2017

response⁹. Six Quad summit statements have failed to include any statement that might be construed as the four partners ganging up against China, even though China is probably the trigger for many of the Quad's initiatives.

Nevertheless, the military aspect has not been neglected. Exercise Malabar, remains a much looked at annual event that started long before the first Quad official level discussions and still remains excluded from the Quad agenda. A number of other bilateral exercises such as JIMEX and AUSINDEX as well as a network of arrangements to enhance reach and sustainability are in place. The Quad can be militarised at fairly short notice, as and when the leaders agree it is time to do so. Meanwhile, other security focused plurilaterals to counter China, such as AUKUS, the Security Quad (SQUAD, comprising the US, Japan, Australia and the Philippines), the US-Japan-South Korea partnership etc. have come up, addressing the security requirement. The Quad's joining them will not contribute significantly to deterring China, while it could prove a handicap throughout the smaller nations in the Pacific, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, all of which have their own relations with China. The approach of not forcing these nations to choose appears to be a wise one.

What then is the Quad's future? In the US, a bicameral and bipartisan Quad caucus has been announced just ahead of the Wilmington summit¹⁰, indicating that the Quad in its present form enjoys widespread support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The other three partners have all voiced strong support for the Quad, without any indication of dissent. With President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida on the way out, how much support their successors will give to the Quad will become evident at the next Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the Summit, both to be held in 2025. The Quad may conceivably evolve into a security partnership in the years ahead, but even if it does not, it seems to be doing enough and enjoys enough support to ensure it has a bright future.

The Japan-ROK Summit

The thrust towards improvement of Japan-South Korea relations continued when Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida travelled to Seoul for his 12th summit meeting with President Yoon Suk Yeol on September 6-7¹¹. The

⁹ Japan-Australia-India-US Ministerial, September 26, 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page3e_001112.html

¹⁰ On-the-Record Press Gaggle APNSA Jake Sullivan at the Quad Leaders' Summit, September 21, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2024/09/21/on-the-record-press-gaggle-apnsa-jake-sullivan-at-the-quad-leaders-summit/>

¹¹ Visit to the Republic of Korea, September 6, 2024, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/actions/202409/06korea.html

process was started when President Yoon visited Tokyo on March 16, 2023¹², and both sides agreed to the normalization of relations as well as “shuttle diplomacy”, in which both leaders frequently visit each other without being bound by formality.

The two leaders carried out a comprehensive review of bilateral relations¹³. They agreed to continuously enhance bilateral cooperation and exchanges next year, which will mark the 60th anniversary of normalization of Japan-ROK relations. They further agreed to consider measures to ensure the impact of improvement of relations percolates down to the people, including by discussing measures to facilitate smoother entry procedures of each other's nationals into their country. They also welcomed the signing of the Japan-ROK Memorandum on cooperation in evacuation of each other's nationals from third countries in crisis situations.

The two leaders exchanged views on regional security issues, including on the situation in North Korea. President Yoon reiterated his support to Japan on immediate resolution of the abductions issue. Prime Minister Kishida supported a unified Korean Peninsula that is free and at peace, as expressed in the joint statements at the Japan-ROK-US Trilateral Summit in Camp David last year¹⁴. Welcoming their expanding trilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the two leaders affirmed that the two governments would continue to communicate closely with one another.

Ties between South Korea and Japan, which had suffered due to the forced labour and sex slavery issues during the leadership of Moon Jae-In, have taken a remarkable turn for the better after Yoon became President and set out to mend fences with Japan in May 2022. He worked out a solution for the dispute in Korean courts, by which South Korean businesses benefiting from Japan's investment in South Korea from 1965 onwards would donate funds into a compensation account, which in turn would pay compensation to the Korean plaintiffs. 11 of the 15 plaintiffs have already been paid. Four, however, continue to reject the solution, demanding that the compensation come from Japan. Yoon's solution doesn't enjoy widespread popular support, due to a perception that South Korea has conceded too much and has received little by

¹² Japan – ROK Summit Meeting, March 16, 2023,

https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page1e_000593.html

¹³ Japan-ROK Summit Meeting (Summary), September 6, 2024,

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/diplomatic/202409/06rok.html

¹⁴ The Spirit of Camp David: Joint Statement of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States, August 18, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/the-spirit-of-camp-david-joint-statement-of-japan-the-republic-of-korea-and-the-united-states/>

way of benefit from Japan. However, Yoon will remain President till May 2027 and can be expected to sustain his policy till then at least.

Kishida, the other architect of the rapprochement in bilateral relations has, however, announced that he will not stand for leadership of his party in the elections due on September 27. His term as Prime Minister will thus come to an end soon thereafter. His visit to South Korea at this stage signals his assurance of continuity in policy to President Yoon, and that he desires that his successor continues the cooperation even after his departure. The activities of North Korea and China, as well as US pressure, indicate that such cooperation will continue.

The 11th Australia Japan 2+2 Ministerial Meeting

Defence and Foreign Ministers from Australia and Japan came together in Melbourne, Australia for the 11th Australia-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations on September 5, 2024. The meeting marked continued progress of the efforts of the US and partner countries towards transformation of the regional security architecture into a multilateral alliance structure, with greater cooperation between the partner countries in addressing the strategic challenges of the day.

The ministers recognised that their cooperation is essential to ensuring a peaceful, stable and prosperous region¹⁵. They reiterated their commitment to uphold the international order based on the rule of law, and towards an Indo-Pacific that is free, open, inclusive and resilient. They reaffirmed their strong opposition to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion anywhere in the world, with a special mention of such actions in the East and South China Seas. They also discussed with serious concern the actions of Chinese military assets in Japanese territory (Chinese military aircraft had infringed Japan's airspace on August 26, while a survey ship operated in Japan's territorial waters on August 30). They underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and condemned North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

The ministers reiterated their commitment to strengthening collective deterrence, further building interoperability, enhancing regional communication and reassurance, and coordinating their national security

¹⁵ Eleventh Australia-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations Joint Statement, September 05, 2024, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/eleventh-australia-japan-22-foreign-and-defence-ministerial-consultations>

policies more closely than ever before, including in collaboration with the United States.

To strengthen their special strategic partnership, they decided to leverage an Australia-Japan Economic Security Dialogue to exchange information on economic and strategic risks, strengthen discussion on strategic infrastructure cooperation, enhance cybersecurity cooperation, strengthen accountability for irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour by states in cyberspace, deepen discussions on classified information sharing, and to cooperate during evacuation of their respective nationals from third countries during a crisis.

To promote security, connectivity and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, they decided to reinforce enhanced approaches to Southeast Asia including enhancing support for the Philippine Coast Guard; enhance trilateral dialogue between Japan, Australia and the Republic of Korea to advance shared interests in the region; continue working with Pacific Island countries; reaffirm their commitment to working with partners including the Quad; and advance their trilateral cooperation with the US.

To advance operational cooperation and joint training, Australia will participate in the US-Japan Exercise ORIENT SHIELD in 2025, increase air cooperation in the coming year, and increase the complexity of joint exercises, including through Exercise SOUTHERN JACKAROO. The two countries will explore how to cooperate to deter unilateral changes of status quo by force and maintain regional stability. They will also explore how the Japanese Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade can participate in US Marine rotations in Darwin every year¹⁶. Australia and Japan will nominate liaison officers to each other's joint headquarters, with the first Australian officer to be deputed to Japan's Headquarters Joint Operations Command in November 2024.

Initiatives were also announced on countering foreign information manipulation and interference; defence advanced capability and technology cooperation (in the areas of counter-strike capabilities, information warfare and robotic systems for undersea warfare); trilateral defence cooperation with the US, and on Indo-Pacific defence and security cooperation, including through a Quad maritime patrol aircraft collaboration activity on the sidelines of Exercise KAKADU.

¹⁶ Joint Pres Conference, Australia-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministers, September 05, 2024, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/transcript/joint-press-conference-australia-japan-22-foreign-and-defence-ministers>

The Joint Press Conference following the 2+2 witnessed a direct question to Japan's Defence Minister Kihara about joint development of Australia's new frigate¹⁷. As is known, Japan's Mogami-class frigate is among the four short-listed designs by Australia, the other's being Thyssenkrupp Marines Systems' Meko A-200, Navantia's ALFA-3000 and South Korea's Daegu Class FFX Batch II and III designs. Minister Kihara declined to comment, beyond stating that nothing has yet been decided as policy in Japan. A possible decision to jointly build frigates with Australia will involve a major change in Japan's arms export policies.

The hub-and-spokes alliance network in the Western Pacific, comprising bilateral alliances between the US and regional nations, is trending towards a multilateral alliance framework as regional US partners (Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia) integrate their defence and security policies more closely with each other, including in bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral formats. The most advanced in this regard is the 'quasi-alliance' between Australia and Japan. The two countries are special strategic partners. They share a common vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific led by the US, underpinned by a rules-based order where states resolve their disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law, and where sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected. They both seek a favourable strategic balance that deters aggression, an open, stable and secure maritime domain in which States can exercise their freedom of navigation and overflight and are not subject to coercive or destabilising actions, and continuing regional economic integration underpinned by a rules-based and market-oriented trade and investment systems, as well as diverse and resilient supply chains. Their 2022 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation commits them to consult each other on contingencies that may affect their sovereignty and regional security interests, and consider (joint) measures in response¹⁸. Their Reciprocal Access Agreement enabling deployment of forces and equipment into each other's territory¹⁹ entered into force in August 2023²⁰. In the event of any contingency in North Korea, the East China Sea or the South China Sea, the two countries will both be involved.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, October 22, 2022, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/countries/japan/australia-japan-joint-declaration-security-cooperation>

¹⁹ Agreement Between Japan and Australia Concerning the Facilitation of Reciprocal Access and Cooperation Between the Self Defence Forces of Japan and the Australian Defence Force, January 06, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100283786.pdf>

²⁰ Exchange of Diplomatic Notes for the Entry into Force of Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, August 08, 2023, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000453.html

The reality that both are middle powers and the distance between the two countries (they are separated by over 5000 Km), however, means that their alliance, especially against action by China, becomes viable only with the US providing the backbone.

Of considerable interest to India will be progress in the Japan Australia defence technology cooperation projects, as well as the potential transfer of Mogami-class frigate technology to Australia. Both will provide a precedent that could impact on India's defence relations with Japan.

As Japan's Foreign Minister Kamikawa noted in an Op Ed on the eve of the 2+2 ministerial, both countries "are at a turning point in history. The peaceful and stable international environment faces serious threats, including unilateral attempts to change the status quo through the use of force and coercion". She added, "now is the time to continue to further strengthen the already resolute security cooperation between Japan and Australia"²¹. The recently concluded 2+2 ministerial meeting has undoubtedly contributed towards strengthening this cooperation.

Advancing India UAE Relations

Bilateral relations between India and UAE continued on the growth path with the visit of the UAE Crown Prince, Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to India on September 09 & 10. This was Sheikh Khalid's first visit to India after becoming the Crown Prince in March 2023. He was accompanied by ministers, senior officials and a large business delegation.

Five visit outcomes can be identified²². The first is an MoU for the operation and maintenance of UAE's Barakah Nuclear Power Plant between the Emirates Nuclear Energy Company and the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL). It encompasses sourcing of nuclear goods and services from India, as well as exploring mutual investment opportunities and capacity building. Second is an agreement between Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) for long-term supply of one million metric tons per annum of LNG. IOCL and GAIL have earlier signed supply agreements with ADNOC for 1.2 MMTPA and 0.5 MMTPA respectively. Third is an MoU between ADNOC and the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited to explore additional opportunities for crude storage in India, as well as renewal

²¹ "Japan and Australia face a turning point in world history", September 05, 2024, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100720927.pdf>

²² List of Outcomes: Official Visit of HH Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India, September 09, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2053210>

of their storage and management agreement. Fourth is a production concession agreement for Abu Dhabi Onshore Block 1 between ADNOC and Urja Bharat, a joint venture of IOCL and Bharat Petro Resources Limited. Urja Bharat had been awarded an exploration concession for the Block in 2019. The concession will allow it to bring crude oil produced from the Block to India, it is a first such concession for any Indian company in the UAE. Finally, there was an MoU between the Government of Gujarat and Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company PJSC on the development of Bavla, Ahmedabad as the site for the food park project, to be commenced in Q2 of 2025.

Economic relations between India and UAE, which formally became a comprehensive strategic partner in 2017, have grown from strength to strength. The UAE was India's third biggest trading partner in 2023-24, accounting for a total trade of \$83.65 billion²³. It was also the seventh largest source of investment into India, with a cumulative investment of just over \$ 19 billion as of June 2024. The commitment is to raise this to \$ 75 billion over time. Over 3.5 million Indian diasporas are domiciled in the UAE²⁴. It is a partner in the I2U2 construct, as well as in the India - Middle East – Europe Economic Corridor.

The marked advancement of India-UAE relations over the last decade bodes well for India's interests in the Arabian Peninsula. As among the wealthiest and most stable countries in the region, the UAE is well placed to provide India a doorway into the Arab world. The visit by Sheikh Khalid is a step forward in India-UAE convergence and must be built upon in the years ahead.

The Japan Defense White Paper 2024

by Divya Rai

Japan's Defense Minister Kihara Minoru released the latest edition of "Defense of Japan 2024", marking the 50th issue since the first edition was published in 1970²⁵. The paper comes at a time when China continues rapidly building up military capabilities while intensifying its activities in the waters surrounding Japan's Senkaku Islands, as well as in the Pacific. North Korea continues advancing its nuclear and missile development, while Russia has been

²³ Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, FDI Statistics, June 2024, <https://dpiit.gov.in/publications/fdi-statistics>

²⁴ Population of Overseas Indians, <https://www.mea.gov.in/population-of-overseas-indians.htm>

²⁵ Japan Ministry of Defence, "DEFENCE OF JAPAN-2024 Digest (Annual White Paper)", https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/index.html

conducting intensive military activities in the Far East, while engaging in joint activities with China involving aircraft and vessels. The white paper defines three major objectives for Japan's Ministry of Defense and Self Defense Force: steadily reinforcing Japan's defensive capabilities; enhancing cooperation with allies, like-minded countries and other partners; and reinforcing the human resource base.

The White Paper comprises two special features and four parts. The first special feature is about the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) organisation's history and personnel. The second special feature presents first-hand accounts from SDF personnel, providing insights into their experiences and perspectives on service. Over the decades, the JSDF has transitioned from a strictly defensive posture to a more proactive role, engaging in joint exercises and expanding its operational scope beyond Japan. Other key milestones include – the reinterpretation of Article 9 in 2014, increased military spending and capabilities, and the establishment of new operational frameworks like the Joint Staff Office to enhance integrated operations among land, sea, and air forces.

The four parts are related to a review of the security environment surrounding Japan; Japan's security and defense policy; three approaches to achieve defense objectives; and reinforcing the common base. The overview of the security environment summarises the evolving and interconnected security landscape, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, with continuous challenges from regional states. It mentions the intensified competition between China and the United States across various domains which has shifted the global power balance. Additionally, it acknowledges that global security challenges are becoming increasingly unpredictable and hybrid warfare and grey zone tactics have potential to destabilize the Indo-Pacific region.

The threat assessment raises concern regarding China, Russia, and North Korea. The document emphasises that Japan is facing "the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II". It expresses serious concern over China's hard-line stance and its military manoeuvres, identifying China as Japan's "greatest strategic challenge," and its expanding military activities from the first island chain to the second as direct challenges to Japan's sovereignty and regional stability. It also expresses major concerns regarding China's military assertiveness around Taiwan. North Korea's advancements in nuclear and missile capabilities are categorised as an "even more grave and imminent threat" to Japan. It also addresses Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine and military operations near Japanese territory. It warns

of the possibility of situations in the Indo-Pacific region similar to Russia's aggression in Ukraine²⁶.

In international cooperation, the focal area is cooperation between Japan and the United States. The white paper acknowledges the U.S.-Japan alliance as a cornerstone of Japan's national security strategy. It outlines how this alliance has been reinforced through various initiatives, including the recent upgrade of U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) to a Joint Force Command with operational responsibilities. It also highlights Japan's commitment to contributing to regional stability alongside U.S. forces. It discusses Japan's plans to develop new military capabilities and its readiness to support U.S. operations, especially in scenarios involving Taiwan²⁷.

The paper addresses military spending and capability development, detailing Japan's plans to enhance its defence budget and capabilities to adapt to evolving regional dynamics. The document emphasises a significant increase in Japan's defence budget, which is set to reach 9.3625 trillion yen (approximately US\$65 billion) for fiscal year 2024, marking the largest defence budget in Japan's history. This represents a 7.95% increase from the previous year²⁸.

The central theme of the white paper is focus on enhancing various military capabilities. These include the development of stand-off defence capabilities, cross-domain operational capabilities which integrate efforts across space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic domains. and missile defence capabilities to counter diverse aerial threats, including those posed by North Korean and Chinese missile systems. Japan is set to acquire various stand-off missiles including Tomahawk missiles, and the ground-launched version of upgraded Type-12 surface-to-ship missiles. It will also expedite construction of Aegis System Equipped Vessels to defend itself from sophisticated ballistic missiles and other threats. Furthermore, the document underscores the need for enhanced mobility and deployment capabilities, allowing for rapid troop movements and logistical support in times of crisis²⁹.

Finally, India does figure in the white paper. Japan recognises India as a significant partner. It highlights the ongoing and substantive defence cooperation between the two nations under the "defence equipment and technology cooperation" pillar of its "special strategic and global partnership". As for Quad, the white paper only underlines the centrality of United States,

²⁶ Ibid. p. 19

²⁷ Ibid. p. 25

²⁸ Ibid. pg. 233

²⁹ Ibid. pg. 209

while not explicitly mentioning India's and Australia's contributions or roles within the Quad³⁰.

Japan's Defense White Paper 2024 highlights the important security concerns in the Indo-Pacific, it notably omits any mention of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This raises concerns about Japan's perception of the IOR's significance and India's role within its broader maritime security concerns.

Other Indo-Pacific Developments

Prime Minister Modi's Visit to Brunei and Singapore. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Brunei and Singapore on September 3-5. This was the first ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Brunei Darussalam. He and his host, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, affirmed their commitment to further strengthen, deepen the bilateral partnership in all areas of mutual interest and elevated bilateral ties to an enhanced partnership³¹. Discussions included greater cooperation in the defence, trade & investment, food security, education, energy, space technology, health, capacity building, culture as well as people-to-people exchanges sectors, among others. In Singapore, he and Singapore Prime Minister decided to elevate the relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership³². They reviewed existing cooperation in the fields of defence and security, maritime domain awareness, education, AI, Fintech, new technology domains, science and technology and knowledge partnership. They called for strengthening connectivity between the countries to enhance economic and people-to-people ties, and also called for acceleration in green corridor projects.

Prime Minister Modi's Visit to the US. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the US from September 21-23 for a bilateral interaction with President Joe Biden, the Wilmington Quad Summit and for the Summit of the Future at the UN. A Joint Fact Sheet highlighted the continuing convergence between the US and India and took stock of developments in the US-India Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership³³. They oversaw the charting of a technology

³⁰ Ibid. pg. 51

³¹ Joint Statement on an Enhanced Partnership between the Republic of India and Brunei Darussalam, September 4, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2051862>

³² India-Singapore Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Singapore, September 05, 2024, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/38263/IndiaSingapore_Joint_Statement_during_the_visit_of_Prime_Minister_Shri_Narendra_Modi_to_Singapore_September_0405_2024

³³ Joint Fact Sheet: The United States and India Continue to Expand Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership, September 21, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/09/21/joint-fact-sheet-the-united-states-and-india-continue-to-expand-comprehensive-and-global-strategic-partnership/>

partnership for the future, welcomed progress in development of the next generation defence partnership, discussed cooperation on the clean energy transition, and discussed measures to empower future generations and promote global health and development.

Sri Lanka President. Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the National People's Power Alliance (NPP) was sworn in as the 10th President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on September 23, 2024. The leftist leader took oath of office before Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo. Dissanayake, defeated opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and 36 other candidates in the presidential election³⁴. Dissanayake, whose NPP held just three seats in Sri Lanka's 225-member parliament, immediately dissolved parliament to make way for a snap general election³⁵ and appointed Harini Amarasuriya as Sri Lanka's Prime Minister on September 24. Ms Amarasuriya will be the third woman to be Sri Lanka's Prime Minister.

Japan's Prime Minister. Former Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba won the Liberal Democratic Party (election) on September 27, beating Sanae Takaichi by 215 votes to 194 in the runoff³⁶. He will become Japan's Prime Minister on October 01, when Japan's parliament convenes and elects him.

US – UAE Joint Statement. UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan visited the White House, the first ever visit by a UAE President to Washington DC, on September 23³⁷. He and President Biden affirmed the enduring US-UAE Strategic and Defense Partnership. The leaders were positive about the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) connecting India by ship and rail through UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Greece to Europe. President Biden recognised the UAE as a major defense partner of the US, joined by only India, enabling unprecedented through joint training, exercise and military-to-military cooperation, between the military forces of India, the US and UAE. The development points towards India playing a larger role in Gulf security.

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Sri Lanka. "Swearing in of the 9th Executive President of Sri Lanka" September 23, 2024. <https://mfa.gov.lk/swearing-in-of-the-9-th-executive-president-of-sri-lanka/>.

³⁵ Sri Lanka's new president dissolves parliament, September 25, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c05qnm05qmdo>

³⁶ Japan's Next Leader, Shigeru Ishiba, Pushes to Remake Military Alliance With US, September 27, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/japans-next-leader-shigeru-ishiba-pushes-to-remake-military-alliance-with-u-s-5da81109>

³⁷ US-UAE Joint Leaders' Statement Dynamic Strategic Partners, September 23, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/09/23/u-s-uae-joint-leaders-statement-dynamic-strategic-partners/>

Joint Leaders' Statement to Mark Third Anniversary of AUKUS. A joint statement³⁸ from the Prime Ministers of Australia and UK and the President of the US marked the third anniversary of the AUKUS agreement³⁹. The statement effectively provides a report card of the progress of both AUKUS Pillars. In Pillar I, Australia has committed an investment of over A\$ 30 billion into its defence industrial base and proportional contributions to build up the capacities of the UK and US industrial bases. UK has committed over £4 billion into development work on the SSN-AUKUS and over £3 billion into expand the production capacity of its submarine building base. The US has committed \$17.5 billion to expand its own submarine industrial base. The countries have signed an agreement on naval nuclear propulsion and begun preparation for establishment of the Submarine Rotational Force at HMAS Stirling. Australian personnel are being trained and have completed assisting in the first maintenance of an SSN (USS Hawaii) in Australia. In Pillar II, the countries are working together in undersea warfare capability, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, cyber capabilities, hypersonics and electronic warfare. They are also working to involve Japan, Canada, New Zealand and South Korea as potential partners for Pillar II cooperation.

AUKUS Defence Ministers' Meeting. AUKUS Defence Ministers met at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich on September 26⁴⁰. A communique issued on the occasion reaffirmed their commitment to the partnership, apart from providing an updated position on the status cooperation.

Forum on China Africa Cooperation. The 9th edition of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was convened at Beijing from September 04-06. All 53 African member countries of the Forum and the chairperson of the African Union Commission participated. The Beijing Declaration was issued on September 05⁴¹. China will work with Africa to implement ten partnership initiatives covering mutual learning between civilisations, trade prosperity, industrial chain cooperation, connectivity, development cooperation, healthcare, rural revitalisation, people-to-people exchanges, green

³⁸ Joint Leaders' Statement to Mark the Third Anniversary of AUKUS, September 17, 2024, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/joint-leaders-statement-mark-third-anniversary-aukus>

³⁹ Joint Leaders' Statement on AUKUS, September 15, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aukus/>

⁴⁰ AUKUS Defence Ministers' Meeting Communique, September 26, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3918402/aukus-defence-ministers-meeting-communique/>

⁴¹ Beijing Declaration on Jointly Building an All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era, September 05, 2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/zyxw/202409/t20240905_11485993.html

development and common security⁴². To ensure successful implementation of these ten initiatives, China will provide Africa RMB 360 billion of financial support (about \$ 50.7 billion) over the next three years, including RMB 210 billion (about \$29.6 billion) in credit lines, RMB 80 billion in assistance of different types and at least RMB 70 billion in investment by Chinese companies⁴³. The Republic of Congo took over as the African co-chair of the Forum for the period 2024-2027.

Space Capability Development. India's Union Cabinet on September 18 approved the development of the next generation launch vehicle, with a payload capacity of 30 tonnes into low earth orbit by 2032⁴⁴. Other approvals accorded were for the Chandrayaan-4 mission⁴⁵, in preparation for a manned landing on the moon; a Venus orbiter mission to be launched in 2028⁴⁶; and building of the first unit of Bharatiya Antariksh Station⁴⁷, India's space station, by 2035. Successful realisation of these capabilities will place India among the first rank of global space powers.

US-UK Strategic Dialogue Emphasises Interconnectedness of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific. The US-UK Strategic dialogue held on September 14 emphasised the interconnectedness of the security and economies of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific⁴⁸. Both sides affirmed the importance of close coordination to advance shared objectives and common values and interests with respect to the Indo-Pacific. Both also confirmed their shared commitment to upholding international law and the rule-based international system and noted with concern dangerous and destabilising actions by Chinese vessels towards Philippines vessels in the South China Sea. They restated the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait as indispensable to the security and prosperity of the international community and called for peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.

⁴² Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027), September 06, 2024, https://2024focacsummit.mfa.gov.cn/eng/hyqk_1/202409/t20240906_11486213.htm

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ New Reusable Low-cost Launch Vehicle for Bharat, September 18, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2055979>

⁴⁵ India Goes to Moon Again: This Time to Come Back to Earth After Landing on the Moon, September 18, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2055983>

⁴⁶ After Moon and Mars, India Sights Science Goals on Venus, September 18, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2055982>

⁴⁷ Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS): Our own Space Station for Scientific Research to be Established with the Launch of its First Module in 2028, September 18, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2055978>

⁴⁸ Joint Statement on the US-UK Strategic Dialogue, September 14, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-u-s-uk-strategic-dialogue/>

India-US 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue. US and Indian officials convened in New Delhi on September 16 for the eighth India-US Intersessional Dialogue⁴⁹. They discussed shared priorities including defence cooperation, space and civil aviation collaboration, clean energy cooperation and industrial and logistics coordination. The intersessional lays the groundwork for the next 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue.

US-India Semiconductor Partnership. The US Department of State launched a new partnership with India to explore semiconductor supply chain opportunities on September 09⁵⁰. The partnership will help create a more resilient, secure and sustainable global semiconductor value chain.

US Strategy on Global Development. The US Strategy on Global Development was launched on September 18, 2024⁵¹. The strategy sets out five strategic objectives: Reduce poverty through inclusive and sustainable economic growth and quality infrastructure development; invest in health, food security and human capital; decarbonise the economy and increase climate resilience; promote democracy, human rights and governance, and address fragility and conflict; and respond to humanitarian needs.

Japan Protests Chinese Naval Vessel's Navigation in its Territorial Waters. A Chinese naval survey vessel navigated through Japan's territorial waters southwest of Kuchinoerabu Island in the Kagoshima Prefecture on August 31. The incident occurred five days after a Chinese military aircraft had transgressed Japan's airspace. Japan voiced its concern and lodged a strong protest with China's Embassy in Tokyo⁵².

Houthi Attacks on Tankers. Yemen's Houthis attacked two tankers in the Southern Red Sea on September 2⁵³. The Panama flagged MV Blue Lagoon I and Saudi MV Amjad were reported targeted by two ballistic missiles and a one-way attack drone. Both vessels were reported hit, but were able to continue

⁴⁹ US-India 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue, September 16, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-india-22-intersessional-dialogue/>

⁵⁰ New Partnership with India to Explore Semiconductor Supply Chain Opportunities, September 09, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/new-partnership-with-india-to-explore-semiconductor-supply-chain-opportunities/>

⁵¹ Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Releases US Strategy on Global Development, September 18, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/09/18/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-releases-u-s-strategy-on-global-development/>

⁵² Protest regarding the Navigation of a Chinese Naval Survey Vessel in Japan's Territorial Waters, August 31, 2024, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00566.html

⁵³ Houthis attack two crude oil tankers, September 02, 2024, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/3892026/houthis-attack-two-crude-oil-tankers/>

their journey. The owners of MV Amjad, however, claimed that it was not targeted or hit⁵⁴. Meanwhile, the Greek oil tanker MV Sounion, which was hit by Houthi militants on August 21, was towed to a safe area without any oil spill. The vessel was carrying approximately 1 million barrels of crude oil⁵⁵.

India-Philippines Cooperation. The 14th India-Philippines Policy Consultation Talks and 5th Strategic Dialogue were held in New Delhi on September 09⁵⁶. Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in defence and security, the maritime domain, trade and investment, healthcare and other areas. Two days later, the 5th India-Philippines Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting was held in Manila, on September 11⁵⁷. Both sides committed to supporting each other to achieve the goal of self-reliance in defence production. They appreciated operationalisation of the White Shipping Information Exchange and opening of the defence wing in the Embassy of India, Manila, in the near future.

Philippines Withdraws Ship from Sabina Shoal. The standoff between the China Coast Guard (CCG) and the Philippines Coast Guard (PCG) at Sabina Shoal took an unexpected turn when the latter withdrew PCGS Teresa Magbanua on September 15⁵⁸. The vessel has been a constant presence in the Sabina Shoal since April 17, 2024. The PCG cited the need to repair damage caused by collisions with CCG ships as well as repair of machinery, the need for medical care of crew members, depleted food supplies and adverse weather as reasons for the pullout of its ship. It said it would deploy another ship to Sabina Shoal soon. China meanwhile said it would continue to carry out rights protection and law enforcement activities in waters under China's jurisdiction and would resolutely safeguard China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. While the PCG may claim it has not abandoned Sabina Shoal, the reality is that China possesses both the resources and the will to prevent redeployment and enforce its claims.

⁵⁴ Pentagon says Saudi oil tanker MV Amjad was indeed attacked by Yemeni Houthi terrorists, September 04, 2024, <https://aurora-israel.co.il/en/el-pentagono-asegura-que-el-petrolero-saudita-mv-amjad-si-fue-atacado-por-los-terroristas-huties-yemenies/>

⁵⁵ EUNAVFOR ASPIDES. X (Formerly Twitter). n.d. September 16, 2024. <https://x.com/EUNAVFORASPIDES/status/1835731041577009642>.

⁵⁶ 14th India-Philippines Policy Consultation Talks and 5th Strategic Dialogue, September 10, 2024, https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/38280/14th_IndiaPhilippines_Policy_Consultation_Talks_and_5th_Strategic_Dialogue

⁵⁷ 5th India Philippines Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting held in Manila, September 11, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2053803>

⁵⁸ China urges Philippines to stop hyping up situation after Philippines vessel leaves Xianbin Jiao, September 15, 2024, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16338712.html

German Warships Transit Taiwan Strait. The German frigate Baden-Württemberg and supply ship Frankfurt am Main transited the Taiwan Strait on September 13, ignoring warnings from China and becoming the first German ships to do so since 2002⁵⁹. The ships were headed from South Korea to the Philippines. A spokesperson of the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command said, "Germany's actions have increased security risks and sent wrong signals"⁶⁰. China's spokesperson had earlier said that China respects countries' right to navigation in relevant waters in accordance with China's laws and international law, including UNCLOS, but opposes any act of provocation that harms China's sovereignty and security⁶¹. Although international law including UNCLOS considers these waters as high seas where warships enjoy complete freedom of navigation, they do form part of China's EEZ. China requires that warships obtain its prior approval before transiting through them. The transit indicates that Germany has, after over two decades, taken a position on the Strait being an international waterway open for all to transit through.

US Navy Taiwan Strait Transit. A US Navy P-8A Poseidon transited the Taiwan Strait, remaining in international air space, on September 17, 2024⁶².

Japanese Warship Sails Through Taiwan Strait. A Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force destroyer, JS Sazanami, was reported to have sailed through the Taiwan Strait for the first time on September 25⁶³. Reports indicate that warships from Australia and New Zealand also passed through the Strait on their way to joint exercises in the South China Sea. Japan has till now avoided its warships going through the Taiwan Strait, even though warships of the US, Canada, Britain, France, Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Germany have done so in recent years. Although the transit is in consonance with international law and UNCLOS, it is in violation of China's position which requires that warships of all nations obtain its prior approval before such transit. The changed position may be in response to intrusions by Chinese ships and aircraft into Japan's waters and airspace in recent times. China's spokesperson said that the Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, is the political foundation of China-Japan relations and a red line that

⁵⁹ Germany sails first warship through Taiwan Strait in 22 years, September 14, 2024, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2024/09/14/asia-pacific/germany-warship-taiwan-strait/>

⁶⁰ Chinese military slams German warship's transit through Taiwan Strait, September 14, 2024, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/16338435.html

⁶¹ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on September 9, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202409/t20240909_11487817.html

⁶² 7th Fleet Aircraft Transits Taiwan Strait, September 17, 2024, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3909013/>

⁶³ Japan defense force ship sails through Taiwan Strait for 1st time, September 26, 2024, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20240926/p2g/00m/0in/024000c>

must not be crossed. He said, "China is vigilant on Japan's political intention behind this move and has protested to the Japanese side"⁶⁴.

US Arms Sale to Taiwan. On September 16, the United States government notified Congress of a US\$228 million arms sale to Taiwan, which includes the return, repair, and reshipment of spare parts for aircraft and related equipment. This announcement was followed by comments from Taiwan's Presidential Office Spokesperson Karen Kuo on September 17, who emphasised that maintaining sufficient self-defence capabilities is crucial for regional stability. The arms sale marks the 16th military transaction to Taiwan under the Biden administration⁶⁵.

DAC Approves Capital Acquisition Proposals Worth Rs 1.45 lakh Crores. India's Defence Acquisition Council accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for 10 capital acquisition proposals amounting to Rs 1,44,716 crores (about \$ 17 billion) on September 03⁶⁶. The proposals include procurement of Future Ready Combat Vehicles, Air Defence Fire Control Radars, Dornier-228 aircraft, and next generation Fast Patrol and Offshore Vessels for the Coast Guard.

Launch of ASW Shallow Water Craft. The 4th and 5th ships of the eight ASW Shallow Water Craft being built by CSL were launched at Cochin Shipyard on September 09⁶⁷. A total of 16 ships have been ordered, eight each on Cochin Shipyard and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers in partnership with Larsen & Toubro. All 16 are expected to enter service by 2026.

Australia to Acquire Kongsberg Missiles for Long Range Strike. Australia announced its decision to acquire the Kongsberg Joint Strike Missile from 2025, at a cost of A\$ 142 million⁶⁸. The missile, with a range of around 275 Km and a low-altitude sea skimming flight profile, is designed to fit into the internal weapons bay of Australia's F-35A Lightning-II fighters.

⁶⁴ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian's Regular Press Conference on September 26, 2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202409/t20240926_11497961.html

⁶⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan). "US government officially notifies Taiwan of latest arms sale", September 17, 2024. https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1328&s=118067

⁶⁶ DAC approves 10 capital acquisition proposals worth Rs 1.45 lakh crores to enhance defence preparedness, September 03, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2051323>

⁶⁷ Simultaneous Launch of 'Malpe and Mulki', Fourth and Fifth Ships of ASW SWC (CSL) Project, September 10, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2053322>

⁶⁸ Acquisition of Joint Strike Missile to boost Australia's Long-Range Strike Capability, September 05, 2024, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2024-09-05/acquisition-joint-strike-missile-boost-australias-long-range-strike-capability>

Singapore Commissions Two Submarines. The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) commissioned its first two Invincible-class submarines, RSS Invincible and RSS Impeccable, on September 24 at RSS Singapura – Changi Naval Base. Prime Minister Lawrence Wong was the Chief Guest at the ceremony, which was attended by Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean, Defence Minister Dr Ng Eng Hen, and other senior MINDEF and SAF officials. Built in Kiel, Germany by ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS), the Invincible-class submarines are custom-designed for Singapore's shallow and busy tropical waters. Two Invincible-class submarines are expected to be completed by 2028⁶⁹.

DRDO Tests VLSRSAM. The DRDO conducted back-to-back tests of the Vertically Launched Short Range Surface to Air Missile from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha, on September 12⁷⁰ and 13⁷¹. The missile successfully tracked and engaged a high-speed aerial target flying at very low altitude and simulating a sea-skimming threat. The tests mark a step forward towards fielding indigenously developed missiles to combat sea-skimming cruise missiles and drones.

JS Kaga Developmental Test. The JMSDF announced that JS Kaga would conduct developmental tests off San Diego from October 05 to November 18, 2024, to collect data for operation of F-35B aircraft from Izumo-class vessels⁷². The development brings Japan closer to acquiring full aircraft carrier capability.

Exercise Varuna-2024. INS Tabar and a P-8I aircraft of the Indian Navy participated in the 22nd edition of India-France Exercise Varuna from September 02-04⁷³. France fielded FS Provence, the submarine Suffren, and F20, MB339 and Atlantique-2 aircraft for the exercise. Exercise content included advanced tactical manoeuvres and ASW exercises, Air Defence exercises, and live weapon firings.

⁶⁹ MINDEF. "Prime Minister Lawrence Wong Commissions the first two Invincible-class Submarines RSS Invincible and RSS Impeccable.", September 24, 2024.

https://www.mindef.gov.sg/news-and-events/latest-releases/24sep24_nr#:~:text=Prime%20Minister%20and%20Minister%20for,Singapura%20%E2%80%93%20Changi%20Naval%20Base%20today.

⁷⁰ DRDO and Indian Navy successfully flight test Vertical Launch Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile off Odisha Coast, September 12, 2024,

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2054307>

⁷¹ DRDO and Indian Navy achieve back-to-back success with 2nd consecutive flight test of VLSRSAM off Odisha Coast, September 13, 2024,

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2054488>

⁷² Developmental Test of JS Kaga, September 10, 2024,

https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/release/202409/20240910en_01.pdf

⁷³ India France Bilateral Exercise Varuna, September 06, 2024,

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2052614>

USS Hawaii Departs HMAS Stirling. USS Hawaii departed HMAS Stirling on September 10, having completed the first ever submarine tendered maintenance period in Australia, and the first one with Australia crew embedded on both the SSN and the submarine tender USS Emory S Land⁷⁴. The three-week maintenance period provided essential training for Australia personnel.

Exercises in Oman. The Indian Air Force participated in the seventh edition of Exercise Eastern Bridge at Air Force Base Masirah, Oman, from September 11-22⁷⁵. Participating units included Mig-29, Jaguar and C-17 aircraft. Almost in parallel, a 60-man contingent from the Indian Army participated in Exercise Al Najah V at the Rabkoot Training Area in Salalah, Oman, from September 13-26⁷⁶.

Multilateral Maritime Cooperation in the South China Sea. Units from the Royal Australian Navy, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, the Royal New Zealand Navy, the Armed Forces and the Philippines and the US Navy conducted a series of maritime cooperation exercises in the South China Sea, remaining within the Philippines EEZ, on September 28⁷⁷. The exercise is a demonstration of support for the Philippines, which faces China's assertive claims in its EEZ in the South China Sea.

US CNO's Navplan. The US Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Lisa Franchetti, released her Navigation Plan (NAVPLAN) for America's Warfighting Navy at the Naval War College on September 18⁷⁸. The NAVPLAN has two strategic objectives: readiness for the possibility of war with the PRC by 2027 and enhancing the USN's long-term advantage. It sets seven priority targets: Ready the force by eliminating ship, submarine and aircraft maintenance delays; scale robotic and autonomous systems to integrate more platforms at speed; create the command centres the fleets need to win on a distributed battlefield; recruit and retain the force needed to get more players on the field; deliver a guilty of

⁷⁴ Submarine Tendered Maintenance Period Complete, USS Hawaii (SSN 776) departs HMAS Stirling, September 10, 2024, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3901833/submarine-tendered-maintenance-period-complete-uss-hawaii-ssn-776-departs-hmas/>

⁷⁵ IAF Aircraft Set Course for Exercise Eastern Bridge VII at Oman, September 11, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2053702>

⁷⁶ Indian Army Contingent Departs for India-Oman Joint Military Exercise Al Najah V, September 12, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2054052>

⁷⁷ Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, and United States Conduct Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity, September 29, 2024, <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/3920330/australia-japan-new-zealand-philippines-and-united-states-conduct-multilateral/>

⁷⁸ Chief of Naval Operations releases Navigation Plan for America's Warfighting Navy, September 18, 2024, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/3909919/>

service commensurate with the sacrifices of USN sailors; train for combat as the USN plans to fight, in the real world and virtually; and restore the critical infrastructure that sustains and projects the fight from shore. The plan is based on a 381 ship + 134 unmanned vessel Navy projected by the USN in 2023, a force level that will not be reached till the mid-2040s at the earliest.

India's Maritime Interaction with Other Countries.

Dates	Participants	Event
2-4 Sep	Indian, French Navies	Ex Varuna 2024 ⁷⁹ .
04 Sep	Indian & South African Navies	Signing of implementing agreement to enhance submarine rescue support cooperation ⁸⁰ .
04 Sep	ICGS Sujay	Port call in Incheon, South Korea ⁸¹
09-11 Sep	INS Tabar	Visit to Souda Bay, Greece ⁸²
18 Sep	ICGS Sujay	Port call in Bali, Indonesia ⁸³ .
22 Sep	INS Talwar	Port call in Mombasa, Kenya ⁸⁴ .
26-29 Sep	CNS	Official visit to Greece ⁸⁵ .

⁷⁹ India France Bilateral Naval Exercise Varuna, September 06, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2052614>

⁸⁰ Indian Navy and South African Navy Sign Implementing Agreement to Enhance Submarine Rescue Support Cooperation, September 04, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2051795>

⁸¹ ICGS Sujay makes port call in South Korea as part of its ongoing overseas deployment to East Asia, September 04, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2051711>

⁸² INS Tabar visits Souda Bay, September 09, 2024, <https://www.dailyworld.in/breaking-photo/ins-tabar-visits-souda-bay-571789.html>

⁸³ ICGS Sujay makes a port call in Bali for a three-day visit as part of overseas deployment to East Asia, September 18, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2056067>

⁸⁴ Indian Naval Ship Talwar Arrives in Mombasa, Kenya, September 23, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2058097>

⁸⁵ Adm Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff on an Official Visit to Greece, September 26, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2058940>

Joint Exercises

Dates	Participants	Event
29-Aug-14 Sep	Air Forces of Australia, Bangladesh, Greece, Singapore, UAE and the US	Phase II of IAF Ex Tarang Shakti 2024 ⁸⁶ .
09-22 Sep	India and US	Ex Yudh Abhyas in Rajasthan ⁸⁷ .
11-22 Sep	IAF and Royal Air Force of Oman	Ex Eastern Bridge at Masirah, Oman ⁸⁸ .
13-26 Sep	Indian Army, Royal Army of Oman	Ex Al Najah-V in Salalah ⁸⁹ .
30 Sep – 13 Oct	Indian Army, Kazakhstan Army	Ex KAZIND-2024 in Uttarakhand ⁹⁰ .

⁸⁶ Ex Tarang Shakti: Largest Multinational Ex by IAF, August 6, 2024, <https://capsindia.org/ex-tarang-shakti-largest-multinational-exercise-by-iaf/>

⁸⁷ India-USA Joint Military Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2024 Commences in Rajasthan, September 09, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2053095>

⁸⁸ IAF aircraft set course for Ex Eastern Bridge VII at Oman, September 11, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2053702>

⁸⁹ Indian Army contingent Departs for India Oman Joint Military Exercise Al Najah V, September 12, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2054052>

⁹⁰ India Kazakhstan Joint Military Exercise KAZIND-2024 Commences in Auli, September 30, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2060265>



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