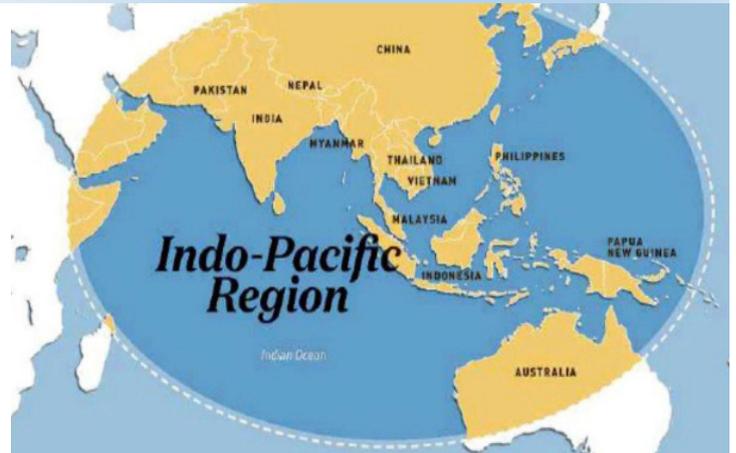




CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

INDO-PACIFIC NEWSLETTER



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

From the Editor's Desk

The past month had several high-level engagements as countries reached out to India. Georgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister visited India for the Raisina Dialogue on March 02-03 and remarked that India is its 31st strategic partner. The G-20 Foreign Minister's meeting was held in New Delhi on March 2 and was followed by the sixth Quad Ministerial Meeting on March 3.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visited India on March 9-10 for the first annual India-Australia summit and discussed ways to further enhance the Quad mechanism. On March 11, Canada and the US held their first Indo-Pacific dialogue to coordinate the implementation of their respective strategies for the region. There was a meeting between the leaders of the AUKUS on March 13 for an ambitious plan to transfer nuclear submarine construction technology to Australia. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol visited Tokyo on March 16 to strengthen their bilateral cooperation and improve their hostile ties. South Korea is also a potentially important nation for a free and open indo-pacific vision.

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida too visited New Delhi from March 20-21 wherein, he came up with his New Indo-Pacific plan to reinvigorate cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between India and Japan. The visit is also significant as Japan holds the G7 Presidency this year and India has the G20 Presidency. India also participated in Exercises Shinyu Maitri and Dharma Guardian with Japan; in the maiden Exercise FRINJEX as well as Exercise La Perouse with France.

This month we present specially selected opinions and cherry picks covering all this and more. Do check out our Social Media Corner for some engaging and insightful content, including debates, interviews and podcasts from eminent experts.

Jai Hind

Vol II, No 11, 07 April 2023

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PEEP-IN

This year, India leads the G20, and Japan the G7, and together can make a potent team

Read more about it at :-

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/year-india-leads-g20-japan-g7-together-can-make-potent-team>

QUOTE

"India is an indispensable partner for Japan's plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. This region will be a place where freedom and the rule of law are valued, free from force or coercion"

- Japan's PM Fumio Kishida

Opinions/Review/Expert View

Kishida's India Trip: A Reiteration of Strong India-Japan Ties

Source: Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/kishidas-india-trip-a-reiteration-of-strong-india-japan-ties/> 27 Mar 2023



Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio was in India on a two-day visit from March 20. This was a surprise because it was technically Prime Minister Narendra Modi's turn to visit Japan, and moreover Kishida will be returning to India in September for the G-20 Summit. It is possible that Kishida visited New Delhi because Japan wanted to assuage any Indian unhappiness about Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa not attending the G-20 Foreign Ministers meeting in India two weeks ago. India has been very active in promoting its G-20 leadership and Japan probably did not want to appear as if it was trying to underplay India's role.

Kishida may also have been keen to visit India to set up his surprise trip to Ukraine, which followed immediately after.

While in New Delhi, Kishida invited Modi to attend the G-7 Summit in Hiroshima in May, which was accepted by the Indian prime minister. Japan is heading the G-7 this year.

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India-Japan relations have been progressing rapidly over the last few years. Both countries are not only facing political and diplomatic pressures from China but also direct military pressure. India has a long, unsettled border with China that is subject to periodic tensions. In 2020, a Chinese incursion led to clashes that killed 20 Indian Army personnel and unknown number of Chinese soldiers. Subsequent to this, India and China have deployed vast number of troops to the border, where they continue to remain in a state of high readiness.

Japan similarly has been facing pressure from China in the East China Sea. There have been repeated Chinese air and naval intrusions into the areas around the Senkaku Islands (claimed by China as the Diaoyu), including last week. Over the last week, Japan moved hundreds of troops closer to the Senkaku Islands with anti-shiping and surface-to-air missiles.

Japan also feels pressured because Russia has been sending bombers on patrol near that area too. Thus, Japan has been seeking greater support from its regional partners, including by reaching out to South Korea, Australia, and India, in addition to the United States. Thus, both India and Japan feel some mutual empathy regarding the pressures they face from China.

While in New Delhi, Kishida also gave a speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) about Japan's new plans for the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). He emphasized that "India is an indispensable" partner for

developing the FOIP. While China was not mentioned in his speech, it is very clear to see that the concern about China was driving Japan's approach toward the Indo-Pacific.

For example, he talked about the need to build economic relations based on trust, free from coercion and threats of force, and expressed concern about such connections becoming a breeding ground for political vulnerability. All of this appears to be directed at China's pattern of using coercive trade practices because of the dependencies that many economies have with China.

Similarly, Kishida talked about the threat of disinformation and the need to ensure a free and fair cyberspace, which again is an issue that many countries in the region are concerned about, and the Quad partners are also talking about.

Kishida paid particular attention to providing economic assistance to various countries in the region including South Asian states like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which are facing severe debt burdens, as well as the Pacific Island states, where China is trying to make inroads.

All of this should have been pleasing to his Indian hosts. However, the Japanese prime minister also repeatedly criticized what he called "Russia's aggression against Ukraine," linking it to many of the other principles in his speech about ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific. This could have made his hosts somewhat uncomfortable considering that

India has been reluctant to criticize Russia for its invasion. Kishida did try to find a middle ground by noting that Modi had told Russian President Vladimir Putin that today's era is not one of war.

As noted earlier, Japan does feel military pressure from Russia, whereas India has had a long strategic partnership with Moscow, which account for the differences in approach.

Despite the difference over the Russian invasion of Ukraine, India and Japan share concerns about China and that has been the key driver of their relationship. This is unlikely to change anytime soon. Indeed, what is more likely is that India and

Japan will agree to disagree on Ukraine while driving their relationship forward focusing on China.

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Why Seoul and New Delhi Should Leverage the G20 Momentum for Advancing Collaboration in the Indo-Pacific

Source: Pratinashree Basu, ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/why-seoul-and-new-delhi-should-leverage-the-g20/> 09 Mar 2023



In the global rush towards the Indo-Pacific and the focus that is accorded to ‘major powers’, while referring briefly, policy debates and literature have often discounted the significance of Seoul. But as the United States and China enter increasingly murkier waters, South Korea will play an important part in Northeast Asia’s maritime geography. President Yoon Suk-Yeol’s key foreign policy thrust as soon as his administration came to office was to announce that South Korea will be transformed into a “global pivotal state” and a “new maritime power.” Within less than a year, he has signalled this intent on political, diplomatic, economic, and infrastructural fronts and has initiated structural and operational changes aimed at stimulating the country’s maritime industry and expanding the scope of its maritime diplomacy.

With the launch of Seoul’s Indo-Pacific strategy, what is clear is its intention of engaging with and participating meaningfully in the region. For India, which is already regarded as

a reliable and willing partner in the Indo-Pacific, this presents a strong opportunity to expand the horizons of bilateral engagement. New Delhi and Seoul are two key players in the Indo-Pacific in terms of their respective maritime geographies, geopolitical capabilities, and foreign policy orientations.

After the previous government’s tenure that was focused to a greater degree on improving ties with North Korea (DPRK) to the inattention of foreign policy engagements with the neighbourhood as well as with the US, President Yoon’s approach is not only needed for course correcting Republic of Korea’s (ROK) domestic and foreign policy outreach but also for underscoring the country’s strategic advantages for Northeast Asia. It is also needed for amending the line adopted towards

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DPRK. President Yoon has even signalled his desire to mend ties and strengthen the security partnership with Japan.

Under Yoon’s stewardship, Seoul appears to be moving swiftly to ensure that it continues to be a key security ally of the US in the region, that it is in step with the democratic and strategically likeminded countries of the Indo-Pacific, and that it leverages its strengths to best respond to regional concerns and demands. However, what must be remembered is that for countries like ROK and others in the Indo-Pacific, often, gradual yet measured steps are louder than vociferous pronouncements and action that the US can afford to carry out. This format is both a civilisational characteristic as well as a contemporary geopolitical necessity for regional countries.

Nonetheless, despite typical reticence,

regional countries in the Indo-Pacific in the last five years have assumed stronger and more articulate postures, particularly vis-à-vis Beijing, that has paved the way for greater intra-region collaboration.

Patterns of Convergence

While bilaterally the “special strategic partnership” between the two countries has been progressing at its own pace having found convergence in New Delhi’s Act East (AEP) and Seoul’s New Southern Policy (NSP), the moment for forging deeper cooperation links in the context of the Indo-Pacific is now. Seoul’s Indo-Pacific strategy lists India as a key player as New Delhi is the best choice for Seoul’s outreach towards South Asia. If the NSP and the AEP were launchpads, both countries’ Indo-Pacific policies are the perfect meeting points for nurturing broader, more meaningful cooperation. As former President Moon remarked during his visit in 2018, India and ROK are geared towards a “future-oriented cooperation with a 3P+ approach that goes beyond the New Southern Policy of Korea that focuses on people, prosperity and peace.” 2023, incidentally, will mark 50 years of bilateral diplomatic ties.

Seoul and New Delhi are both keen and, in a position to forge issue-based engagement with regional cooperation architectures such as the ASEAN, Indian Ocean Rim Association, and the QUAD and perhaps, form informal as well as formal combinations of function-based and sector-specific minilateral cooperation. ROK

has been keen to engage with the QUAD during the pandemic and will continue to be an active part of the QUAD Plus arrangement possibly leading to full membership. Whereas resilient supply chains, climate action, emerging and critical technologies, global health, sustainable infrastructure, and connectivity are the key areas of collaboration, in the context of the Indo-Pacific, all of these are underpinned by the development of maritime security cooperation.

Yoon’s plan for transforming ROK’s maritime capacities include the establishment of a stable supply chain to support the country’s exports and imports backed by the requisite digital infrastructure, automated ports, and environment-friendly autonomous ships. These will be coupled with the establishment of a stable distribution network by expanding the transportation capacities of South Korea-flagged vessels and securing overseas distribution bases, such as ports and distribution centres. For enabling his vision,

Besides operational cooperation and capacity enhancement, other potential areas for boosting maritime cooperation include search and rescue, maritime domain awareness, marine pollution, humanitarian aid and disaster relief, anti-terrorism and anti-trafficking, prevention of marine pollution, and anti-piracy.

the government will be investing substantially towards maritime economic and technological development. Agreements are already in place for cooperation in shipbuilding, often considered the Indian maritime sector’s missed opportunity, both for defence and commercial purposes, given ROK’s technological expertise in the domain. The modernisation of naval shipbuilding projects, under Hindustan Shipyard Ltd. with the help of Korea Shipyard and sharing of LNG shipbuilding technology by Korea’s STX Offshore and Shipbuilding Co. with GAIL India Ltd., are already underway. Besides operational cooperation and

capacity enhancement, other potential areas for boosting maritime cooperation include search and rescue, maritime domain awareness, marine pollution, humanitarian aid and disaster relief, anti-terrorism and anti-trafficking, prevention of marine pollution, and anti-piracy.

G20, New Delhi, and ROK

Why does India's G20 Presidency provide a fitting moment for this purpose? Because as the world turns towards the Indo-Pacific, it is also turning increasingly towards India as a key regional partner, more resolutely willing and certainly more able than before. For Seoul, finding regional partners beyond its immediate ambit of US, Japan,

Russia, and China has become vital because of the uncertainties posed by US-China rivalry and bitter experiences of China's campaign of economic retaliation after Seoul's agreed to allow the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile defence system to be deployed in the country. In addition to its advances in digital economy and development, as a democratic, economically capable, and politically willing country, India is a natural choice for the ROK. At the first International Financial Architecture working group meeting of the G20 in January, the South Korean delegation emphasised that India is not only hard power evidenced by economy scale and population but also soft power equipped.

The absence of ROK' Foreign Minister at the G20 Foreign Ministers Meet in Delhi on 1-2 March, due to being busy with 'domestic affairs', prompted commentators to identify a

break in momentum and speculate about the level of importance accorded to the meeting and the complexities of Russia's war in Ukraine. But these interpretations are transient because while complexities of global compulsions are pervasive, they are unlikely to dampen the regional cooperation demands in the Indo-Pacific. While diplomatic rhetoric needs to be measured and

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contextualised, it is genuine and concrete cooperation that will bring about tangible and meaningful differences. In that regard, if the groundwork for deeper ties was laid during the previous Moon administration, with Seoul embracing the free and open Indo-Pacific construct, the scope for ROK-India middle power diplomacy appears to have

been accelerated under Yoon.

Hard Security Back in Focus at the Quad Foreign Ministers Meet

Source: Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, *Diplomat*

<https://thediplomat.com/2023/03/hard-security-back-in-focus-at-the-quad-foreign-ministers-meet/> 08 Mar 2023



Credit: U.S. State Department photo by Chuck Kennedy

The foreign ministers of the Quad countries — Australia’s Penny Wong, India’s S. Jaishankar, Japan’s Hayashi Yoshimasa, and the United States’ Antony Blinken — met in New Delhi a few days ago. The foreign ministers in their joint statement underscored their “steadfast commitment to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and resilient.” The statement also noted their strong support for “the principles of freedom, rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force and freedom of navigation and overflight, and oppos[ition to] any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, all of which are essential to the peace, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.”

Following the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, the four partners had expanded the focus of the Quad to

non-security issues such as health security and vaccine diplomacy. However, it now appears that the Quad is regaining its security salience with the joint statement reiterating the importance of political and hard security issues, including maritime security, counterterrorism, and cyber security, though Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) continues on the agenda.

The four ministers also reaffirmed the importance of “the rules-based international order” which is “anchored in international law, including the U.N. Charter, and the principles of sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of all states.” The joint statement also highlighted the development of a prosperous Indo-Pacific based on the prevalence of “peace and security in the maritime domain,”

It is relatively easy to establish coalitions to work on non-traditional security issues, but nurturing a group to focus on security issues as the core is not easy, especially for countries like India.

which can be accomplished only through “respect for sovereignty, consistent with international law, as reflected in the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the South and East China Seas.” The statement rejected unilateral actions to change the status quo and stroke tensions in the region as well as the “dangerous use” of maritime militia and coast guard vessels to perpetuate tensions as well as to violate the sanctity of maritime borders.

Though not mentioned by name, these are all clearly aimed at China’s behavior in the region.

In order to deal with the growing regional challenges, the Quad foreign ministers agreed to a number of additional steps that will be taken

up within the Quad Maritime Security Working Group meeting, which will be hosted by the United States in Washington, D.C. later in the month. The statement also highlighted the work undertaken by the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) in this regard.

Probably reflecting Indian concerns, the need for coordinated counterterrorism actions was also emphasized. In particular, the partners identified and condemned the Mumbai and Pathankot terror attacks. Reflecting Japanese concerns, the statement criticized North Korean actions, specifically its continued testing of long-range missiles and the abduction of Japanese citizens. There was also a clear effort to appeal to Southeast Asia, with attention to both the deteriorating situation in Myanmar and support for the ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus and the broader ASEAN efforts at diffusing the crisis in Myanmar.

Ukraine is obviously a sore spot, with India unwilling to go along with its partners so far in condemning the Russian invasion of the country. But the partners appear to have found a way around their disagreements, opposing the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and underscoring the need for a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in accordance with international law, including the U.N. Charter." Without naming Russia, the statement also "emphasized that the rules based international order must respect sovereignty, territorial integrity, transparency and peaceful resolution of disputes." This was probably not ideal, but India at least agreed to the broad principles.

A careful reading of the joint statement issued by the Quad foreign ministers as well as the ministers' first joint public appearance at the Raisina Dialogue, a flagship annual dialogue hosted by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), a public policy think tank in Delhi (full disclosure: I work at ORF) illustrated the increasing comfort among the four countries, and the increasing convergence of interests and perspectives. The Indian minister's summing up of the panel discussion with an emphasis on maritime security at the heart of the Quad's engagement reflects the growing seriousness of the Quad.

It is relatively easy to establish coalitions to work on non-traditional security issues but nurturing a group to focus on security issues as the core is not easy, especially for countries like India. The other three Quad partners already have a number of concrete security arrangements that will further the security agenda in managing China as well as in ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

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The message of united determination was clearly heard in China, which responded along expected lines to say that state to state engagements should be for peace and development, rather than creating "exclusionary blocs." Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov used the Raisina platform to criticize the Quad as well as the AUKUS and the broader West, saying the West is pushing a certain agenda, playing one against the other.

Even though the Quad ministers' joint

statement did not call out Russia by name, the statement called for respect for international law and a rules-based order, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and “just and lasting peace in Ukraine” which is clearly indicative of who to blame for the invasion of Ukraine. That the statement did not call on Ukraine to restrain itself again demonstrates who the partners think is to blame for the conflict and human suffering it has caused. This is a slight but significant shift from India’s traditional stand calling on both parties to exercise restraint. In order to deal with the growing regional challenges, the Quad foreign ministers agreed to a number of additional steps that will be taken up within the Quad Maritime Security Working Group meeting, which will be hosted by the United States in Washington, D.C. later in the month. The statement also highlighted the work undertaken by the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) in this regard.

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Australian and British counterparts and announced what amounts to one of the most significant shifts in U.S. security policy in decades.

AUKUS is About Far More Than Submarines

Source: Charles Edel, National Interest

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/aukus-about-far-more-submarines-206325> 18 Mar 2023



On Monday in San Diego, President Joe Biden met with his Australian and British counterparts and announced what amounts to one of the most significant shifts in U.S. security policy in decades. Standing atop the USS Missouri, a Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarine docked at the U.S. Naval Base Point Loma and facing the Pacific Ocean, the three leaders announced the way forward for AUKUS, the trilateral defense pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

That announcement came almost eighty years ago to the day that President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Act into law. That act allowed the United States to lend or lease defense materials to any nation deemed “vital to the defense of the United States.” The United States shipped more than \$50 billion worth of equipment to supply Moscow, Beijing, Paris, and London in their warfighting efforts, and ultimately helped them prevail in their struggle against totalitarian forces in World War II. After Lend-Lease had become official American policy, Roosevelt declared that “here in Washington, we are thinking in terms of speed and speed now.”

What was true for Roosevelt's America, is true today. For AUKUS to matter, it will need to move from conception to reality at full speed.

The big news out of the leaders' meeting all revolves around submarines—America and the United Kingdom will increase the frequency of their port visits to Australia, the United States will start a rotational deployment of submarines to Australia within the next several years, Washington will sell Australia three to five of its Virginia-class attack submarines, and ultimately, Australia will begin building submarines that are British-designed and loaded with American technology and weapons systems.

What was revealed yesterday, however, is significantly more ambitious than that. AUKUS, it turns out, is about much more than submarines, and more than even a trilateral defense partnership. Fundamentally, it represents a bet that by integrating industrial capacities and increasing interoperability between the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, the capabilities of two of America's closest allies will become much more powerful, and that will ultimately change Beijing's calculations about its security environment. The real goal here is to stabilize a region that has been deeply destabilized by China's rapid expansion of its military capabilities and increasingly aggressive foreign policy.

Over the past decade, Beijing has built up a formidable military arsenal. Growing capabilities, both quantitative and qualitative, have abetted an expanding set of goals and resulted in growing

concern in the region. Once content to shelve territorial disputes with its neighbors, Beijing now uses its strengthened military to increasingly lean on, intimidate, and attack neighboring states while it seizes disputed territory, builds military bases and outposts throughout the region, and projects its power further afield. Most observers now believe that China may eventually be looking to weaken American alliances in the region and push U.S. forces and bases out of Asia altogether.

Any serious response to China's actions needs to increase allied capabilities, diversify U.S. force posture, and underscore that the United States and its allies are willing to push back against Beijing's

destabilizing activities. If what was announced in San Diego can be pulled off, and pulled off in a timely manner, it has the potential to accomplish those goals by putting more ships in, and under, the water throughout the Indo-Pacific. This would add to the combined nuclear-powered submarine forces of the three nations; negate some

of Beijing's local advantages by increasing the range, power, and stealth of the allied presence; and reinforce that these three nations are willing to work collectively to deter future acts of Chinese aggression.

AUKUS is the most substantial response yet to China's rapidly expanding military power—and a harbinger of where American and allied strategy will need to go. It is a public declaration that the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom are aligning their strategies more closely in order to ensure that they are sufficiently armed and able to push back against acts of aggression in the future.

The United States shipped more than \$50 billion worth of equipment to supply Moscow, Beijing, Paris, and London in their warfighting efforts, and ultimately helped them prevail in their struggle against totalitarian forces in World War II.

It also has the potential to transform the industrial shipbuilding capacity of all three nations, accelerate technological integration, change the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, and, ultimately, transform the model of how the United States works with and empowers its closest allies.

Of course, this new agreement brings risks too—the weight of its ambitions alone might sink those submarines. On top of those great expectations lies a challenging road ahead to bring AUKUS from concept to reality. That includes maintaining bipartisan support for this initiative in all three countries over multiple decades; ensuring sufficiently large investments are made into the industrial base and shipbuilding capacity of all three nations; finding, training, and retaining more scientists, shipbuilders, and nuclear-trained submariners; changing the way the United States shares and Australia protects sensitive technology; and pulling this all off in a way that begins providing deterrence now—not a decade from now.

Much has changed since 1941 when Roosevelt described Lend Lease as an initiative to provide “aid to democracies,” and declared that the country had awoken from a long slumber to “realize the danger that confronts us.” Neither China nor Russia is an ally today. This time, the United States is not giving, but selling, its most advanced technology. And thankfully, the world is not at war. But the logic that held then, holds now. Stronger allies, working together, have the best chance of defending themselves, deterring further acts of aggression, and preserving peace.

The twin presidencies of Japan and India are a chance to foster North-South cooperation in vital areas such as climate change, energy, food and infrastructure.

AUKUS has the potential to play a tremendous role in defense, in deterrence, and in the maintenance of peace. The question that remains is whether the governments, legislatures, and industries of the three nations can proceed with “speed and speed now.”

Charles Edel is the inaugural Australia Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Previously, he was an associate professor at the U.S. Naval War College and worked in the Secretary of State’s Office of Policy Planning.

G7 and G20, with Japan and India at the Helm, Must Ensure Global South has a Voice at the Table

Source: Tetsushi Sonobe and Syed Munir Khasru, SCMP

<https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3213121/g7-and-g20-japan-and-india-helm-must-ensure-global-south-has-voice-table> 13 Mar 2023



Illustration: Craig Stephens

Traditionally, the Global South and middle powers have been under-represented in multilateral deliberations. But this year, Asian countries are at the helm of two powerful global platforms, with the Group of Seven led by the Japan and the G20 led by India.

Under India’s presidency, three prioritised G20 agendas are terrorism,

pandemics and climate change. Similarly, Japan's G7 presidency emphasises economic recovery, climate change mitigation, public health and nuclear non-proliferation. Their presidencies provide an opportunity to foster North-South cooperation led by Asia.

Japan and India have a strong relationship. The late Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe personally led in strengthening ties by persuading India, traditionally a cautious operator, to embrace his Indo-Pacific vision. The relationship continues to deepen after current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida chose India for his first bilateral visit.

Across the world, despite development gains lifting millions out of abject poverty, inequality is growing between the world's richest and poorest nations. The G7 elite – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States – accounted for 27 per cent of global gross domestic product and 14 per cent of growth in the past decade.

In contrast, for least-developed countries, a 7 per cent growth target was unreachable for most, even before the pandemic. The economic and social advantages of artificial intelligence, technological infrastructure, a clean energy transition and food security are still largely restricted to the Global North.

For most resource-constrained nations, implementing cutting-edge technology, ensuring food security and achieving a just energy transition are a prohibitive expense, never mind long-term operation and maintenance. The developing Global South has also been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and war in Ukraine.

Since G7 leaders have expressed support for India's G20 chairmanship and pledged to work together for a better future, Japan and India should be able to push for greater collaboration in an environment of increasing financial vulnerabilities and geopolitical tensions.

The G7 has committed to work to increase funding for infrastructure and investment, and conclude more agreements like the energy transition partnership with Indonesia. Given India's close relations with G7 nations, it can bring a fresh perspective to the narrative of climate change, carbon pricing and pandemic prevention, as well as secure investment, new technologies and climate financing.

India, however, has responded differently to the war in Ukraine. While Japan joined other G7 nations in denouncing Russia and imposing sanctions, New Delhi's response has mostly been restricted to statements of concern. When Kishida met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March last year, their joint statement gauged the invasion's broader implications, notably for the Indo-Pacific, and advocated an immediate cessation of violence, but did not name Russia.

With rhetoric in Europe and beyond ratcheting up amid the spectre of nuclear war, Kishida, as part of his commitment to nuclear disarmament, is hosting the G7 summit in May in Hiroshima, the city devastated by the first atomic bomb detonated during the second world war.

Tensions are also rising on the Korean peninsula with Pyongyang thought to be planning a nuclear test, in response to which South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol has warned of an "unprecedented joint response". Japan, as the

A joint Kishida-Modi diplomatic effort could see both leaders brokering peace in Moscow and Kyiv.

only country to have suffered a nuclear attack, is in a unique position to advocate a peaceful resolution.

Despite having sometimes divergent strategic goals, Japan and India have managed to work closely to improve ties, especially in defence and security, economic cooperation and technology.

A joint Kishida-Modi diplomatic effort could see both leaders brokering peace in Moscow and Kyiv when the US and Europe have never been so diplomatically distant from Russia – and the UN has neither the consensus nor mandate to stop the war.

India has its work cut out in trying to unify a divided G20 but it complements its long-standing pursuit of strategic autonomy and in serving as a link between the East and West. The South Asian giant will continue to press for greater Global South representation in multilateral organisations as the second of four consecutive G20 presidencies from the Global South – Indonesia, India, Brazil and South Africa.

Meaningful coordination between the G20 and G7 presidencies can open windows for developing nations to participate in discussions on international policy and influence the global agenda.

Japan will need to emphasise the significance of the interdependence of all countries in the global economy, and increase efforts to resolve outstanding issues of North-South cooperation through dialogue, rather than diatribe.

The North-South collaboration under the leadership of Japan and India should vie to

achieve a unified stance on critical issues such as poverty alleviation, food security, healthcare support, digital transformation, energy transition and climate change. The goal should be to create a strong global financial safety net to help identify, prevent and mitigate financial crises.

Japan and India should also catalyse discussions at the G7 and G20 to mobilise new funding mechanisms in the wake of the pandemic and Ukraine war. The much-needed physical and digital infrastructure in the Global South can only be financed by strengthening international financial cooperation on direct investment and official development aid.

G7 and G20 leaders make pledges that have

India has its work cut out in trying to unify a divided G20 but it complements its long-standing pursuit of strategic autonomy and in serving as a link between the East and West.

a huge impact on global governance and people's lives. As the world struggles to reboot post-pandemic, and to spur socioeconomic advances while averting ecological catastrophes, adherence to those promises has never been more important.

The question is whether the Asian giants of Japan and India can rise to the occasion, to synergise their diplomatic acumen and statesmanship to make the world better and safer.

South Korea-Japan Rapprochement Creates New Opportunities in the Indo-Pacific

Source: Andrew Yeo, Brookings.edu

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/03/17/korea-japan-rapprochement-creates-new-opportunities-in-the-indo-pacific/> 17 Mar 2023

In a sign of further diplomatic thawing, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol traveled to Tokyo this week to meet his Japanese counterpart, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. It was the first official visit of a South Korean president to Tokyo in 12 years due to tensions in South Korea-Japan relations. Yoon's visit comes just over 10 days after the two leaders struck a deal to resolve a dispute over South Korea's 2018 court ruling against Japanese companies' use of forced Korean labor during World War II.

The Yoon-Kishida summit gives Seoul and Tokyo a diplomatic boost and provides further political momentum to establish a "future-oriented" bilateral relationship. The meeting also bodes well for strengthened U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral relations. It therefore carries positive implications for the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy. However, the Yoon government faces strong domestic political headwinds. Nearly 60% of South Koreans oppose Yoon's handling of the forced labor issue with Japan.

Yesterday's summit should be viewed as a significant step in an effort to restore bilateral South Korea-Japan relations that began following Yoon's inauguration in May 2022. The two leaders had met four times prior to yesterday's meeting

in Tokyo. Improved bilateral relations have also helped facilitate U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral relations and vice versa with the three countries holding around 40 trilateral meetings over the last year.

To continue the virtuous cycle, Japan announced its intent to remove export controls on certain chemicals needed to produce semiconductors and displays levied against South Korea since 2019, ostensibly in response to the forced labor court ruling. South Korea's trade minister announced that his country would withdraw a complaint filed against Tokyo at the World Trade Organization. Both actions create an opportunity for increased cooperation on economic security, including coordinating supply chains and building resilience against Chinese economic coercion.

Kishida also stated that the two countries would resume defense dialogue and strategic talks at the vice-ministerial level. The discussions will likely result in the full restoration of the General Security of Military Information Agreement which both countries signed in 2016, enabling the two sides to share classified intelligence. Improved security ties will help strengthen defense and deterrence on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

To promote relations across civil society, Japan's largest business federation, Keidanren, also announced plans to establish a joint scholarship fund with South Korean businesses to promote youth exchanges. A delegation of South Korean business leaders accompanied Yoon to meet their Japanese counterparts on

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Friday. People-to-people exchanges will help glue Korea-Japan ties from the bottom-up, and not just the top-down.

The Biden administration has been quick to praise the diplomatic rapprochement between two of the United States' closest allies. The White House and the State Department issued separate but reinforcing statements welcoming the "historic announcements" and the "groundbreaking new chapter" between Japan and South Korea. Although Washington encouraged both sides to seek reconciliation and created political space for dialogue in trilateral settings, Seoul and Tokyo should be credited as the main drivers of the recent efforts at rapprochement.

The steady ratcheting up of North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, including a long-range missile test the morning of the Yoon-Kishida summit, and concerns regarding China's challenge to the existing rules-based regional order, have also worked in favor of improved South Korea-Japan relations. The two U.S. allies are now taking pragmatic steps to improve security cooperation on the Korean Peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific.

This all bodes well for Washington, which seeks to mobilize like-minded allies and partners to sustain regional security. As outlined in the Phnom Penh Statement on U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Partnership for the Indo-Pacific, the Biden administration would especially welcome its two allies to cooperate on a wide range of issues beyond Northeast Asia. Japan adopted its Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy even before the United States in 2018. With

South Korea having released its own Indo-Pacific Strategy at the end of 2022, further cooperation in the areas of emerging technologies, climate change, and development finance, among others, are also in order.

Domestic Political Headwinds

Although the meeting carries significant positive implications for a "future-oriented" South Korea-Japan relationship, and by extension U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral relations, more work needs to be done by all parties to cement newfound gains in bilateral relations. South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party referred to the Yoon government's deal with Japan on the forced labor issue as the "most humiliating moment" in South Korea's diplomatic history.

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Similarly, the opposition chastised Yoon for ending his meeting with Kishida without receiving an apology. A recent Gallup poll indicated that 59% of South Koreans also opposed Yoon's "unilateral gesture" to Japan. By letting South Korean rather than Japanese companies compensate victims, opponents believe Yoon conceded too much ground to Japan.

To prevent domestic politics from torpedoing Korea-Japan relations once again, Tokyo can provide the Yoon government greater diplomatic cover by meeting Seoul halfway on the compensation fund. Thus far, the Japanese business community has not indicated if it would make voluntary contributions. Yoon also mentioned that his government would not demand that Japanese companies put money into the fund. However, such overtures may help quell protests in South Korea or at least highlight the intractable

position of those Koreans unwilling to make any compromises to improve South Korea-Japan ties.

A sincere apology on the issue, even if a restatement of the past apologies such as one given by Prime Minister Keizō Obuchi in 1998, would also go far in signaling Tokyo's willingness to work with Seoul toward a "forward-looking future of Japan and South Korea relations." For sure, Kishida faces his own domestic hurdles to making additional gestures that appear to go beyond the 1965 bilateral agreement that Tokyo contends fully settled all compensation matters. For this deal to work, however, Japan must demonstrate sincerity, flexibility, and show as much courage as Yoon has shown in going down this path. South Korea's political opposition would then need to exercise restraint from reversing the Yoon-Kishida deal in the future.

The statesmanship exercised by Yoon and Kishida enabled the two leaders to reach an important milestone in bilateral relations between South Korea and Japan. Historical issues will inevitably resurface in South Korea-Japan relations, but the series of diplomatic steps taken over the past year between the two countries provides an opportunity to further deepen cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Cherry-Picks of the Month

1. *The growing centrality of India in Australia's Indo-Pacific policy* - <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-growing-centrality-of-india-in-australias-indo-pacific-policy/>
2. *In Japanese PM Kishida's Indo-Pacific Plan, India's Northeast, Bangladesh is key* - <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/in-japanese-pm-kishida-s-indo-pacific-plan-india-s-northeast-bangladesh-is-key-101679327884414.html>
3. *Engaging The Indo-Pacific: Some Pointers for Europe* - <https://isdpeu/content/uploads/2023/03/Brief-March-21-2023-Parmar-final.pdf>
4. *Can India-Japan summit help in bridging the gap between G20 and G7?* - <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/can-india-japan-summit-help-in-bridging-the-gap-between-g20-and-g7-12324542.html>
5. *What's Behind Japan and South Korea's Latest Attempt to Mend Ties?* - <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/03/whats-behind-japan-and-south-koreas-latest-attempt-mend-ties>

CAPS Experts-InFocus

1. *Veer Guardian: The India-Japan Air Force Bonhomie* - <https://capsindia.org/veer-guardian-the-india-japan-air-force-bonhomie/>
2. *Quad Members Meeting: G20 Raisina Dialogue* - <https://capsindia.org/quad-members-meeting-g20-raisina-dialogue/>
3. *Kishida's visit to India: Eye on the Indo-Pacific* - <https://capsindia.org/kishidas-visit-to-india-eye-on-the-indo-pacific/>

Debates/Panel Discussions

1. *Perspective: India- Australia Relationship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkXLo2AKoHE>
2. *Why Japan's Kishida & India's Modi represent the power of G7 & G20 economies* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBu2tga_ZI
3. *Japan and South Korea meet for the first time in 12 years* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3G4IHj_zAO
4. *Indian Diplomacy: Japan-India Defence Cooperation* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlx8shs00Io&t=1162s>



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