



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

This month several meetings took place which would directly impact the Indo-Pacific region. The Foreign Ministers of China and Japan met in Beijing on April 02 and discussed bilateral, regional and global issues which also included the security in the Indo-Pacific. G7 Foreign Ministers met at Karuzaiwa, Japan on April 15-16 and adopted a non-binding 9277-word communiqué to promote peace and security and address global challenges. At an official-level meeting on April 14, the US, South Korea and Japan agreed to expand trilateral security cooperation to deter North Korea's nuclear and missile threat, adopted a common position on Taiwan, and discussed regularisation of missile defence and submarine exercises.

The DRDO conducted the maiden flight test of an endo-atmospheric interceptor successfully on April 21, marking the first step towards maritime Ballistic Missile Defence capability for the IN. IAF C-130 aircraft began the evacuation of Indian citizens from Sudan under Operation Kaveri. Three surface groups and a submarine from the JMSDF began the Indo-Pacific deployment that will take them to all parts of the region over the next five months.

South Korean President Yoon Suk-Yeol made a state visit to the US on April 26. Their joint statement was directed towards increasing comprehensive global cooperation, deepening their regional engagement and strengthening bilateral ties and focus on peace in the Indo-Pacific.

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 12, 07 May 2023

CONTENTS

From the Editor's Desk
Opinion/ Review/ Expert View
Social Media Corner

PEEP-IN

Japan's G7 high-wire balancing act

Read more about it at :-

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/04/17/japans-g7-high-wire-balancing-act/>

QUOTE

"The Quad has gained a significant place on the world stage in a short span of time, and it is moving ahead with a constructive agenda for the Indo-Pacific region"

- PM Narendra Modi

Opinions/Review/Expert View

India from Japan's Perspective: The Russia-India-China Trilateral

Source: Jagannath P. Panda, ISDP

<https://www.isdp.eu/publication/india-from-japans-perspective-the-russia-india-china-trilateral/> Apr 2023

Undoubtedly, India is fully committed to the Indo-Pacific construct – that both former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007 and current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in 2023 considered it apt to announce their respective Indo-Pacific visions in India attests to the assertion.

At the same time, India's multi-alignment foreign policy, with a view to promoting regional integration and not allowing China full control over non-Western forums like BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa), is geared toward involvement in China-dominated institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB, where India is a founding member). The Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral, “a significant non-Western platform for dialogue and cooperation,” that finally came into being in the 2000s is an offshoot of this latter goal. In the fast-advancing multipolar era, the goal is worthy of attention, even if the grouping is in limbo.

Against this context, and given that Japan's relations with both China and Russia have reached a nadir, especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the continuing “no

limits” Sino-Russian friendship, does the grouping have any relevance for Japan? This bears scrutiny primarily because Japan's ties with India – the country, literally, at the middle of the RIC – are at their pinnacle and show no signs of ebbing.

RIC's Potential Side-Effects on Japan

At the moment, the Japanese government does not seem worried about repercussions from the RIC's continued existence; there is no official acknowledgment of misgivings either. One of the most important reasons is that the long-standing India-Japan ties seem secure despite differences, some of which came to the fore in the early months of the ongoing Ukraine war.

Forexample, Japan in a strongly pro-Ukraine stance sanctioned Russia and castigated it at the United Nations (UN). In contrast,

The Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral, “a significant non-Western platform for dialogue and cooperation,” that finally came into being in the 2000s is an offshoot of this latter goal.

India, with its “proactive” neutral diplomacy geared to dialogue, has been trading with Russia and has abstained at such UN meetings that directly condemn Russia's war actions. However, it also noteworthy that in the latter half of 2022, India for the first time voted against the Russian bid to disallow Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech at the UN Security Council; and also voted to reject Russia's demand for a secret ballot in the UN General Assembly.

The RIC's Asymmetric Power Balance

Notwithstanding the complexities between partners vis-à-vis the war in Eastern Europe, in the Indo-Pacific, India and Japan have been

well-synchronized. A large part would be the continually deteriorating China-India ties, wherein India has refused to indulge China in its game of compartmentalizing territorial disputes and cooperation. Any trilateral mechanism cannot be effective under such hostile circumstances; more so true for a grouping like RIC, which even under relatively “normal” circumstances has not performed up to expectations.

Notably, the internal asymmetric power balance within the RIC has prevented the trilateral from achieving any significant outcomes and hindered its working. However, the Ukraine war has rekindled interest in the trilateral, mainly because of India and China. The two Asian rivals have both, albeit in different forms and with different motives, continued to build their ties with Russia and both are looking to solidify their respective influence in Eurasia. At the same time, Japan must take into account the sliding of RIC into the so-called “2+1” formation, wherein China’s ties with Russia far outweigh Russia’s ties with India or China’s with India.

Complications of Russia-India Relations

Unlike China which prefers a unipolar Eurasia, Russia needs a forum like the RIC which strengthens its vision of a multipolar Eurasia. Russia’s multipolar Eurasian vision complements India’s vision of a multipolar Asia and world affairs. Yet, Russia-India relations are not out of complications.

While the India-Russia relationship has been historically strong and continues to hold

a somewhat imposing position over India (given New Delhi’s response to the Ukraine invasion), looking closer reveals that India is working to wean off from its dependence on Russian defense equipment and energy via diversification and steady movement toward self-reliance. The India-China bilateral is certainly the weakest side of the RIC and the most problematic in terms of limiting progress for the trilateral.

India’s Unabashed Adherence to FOIP

Hence, from this lens, RIC could be seen as a complex extension of the Russia-China partnership under the current circumstances, allowing for a far more stringent “anti-Western” pursuit of a new multipolar world vision that would be possible were India to have an equal stake. This would have given Japan pause had India’s unabashed adherence to the “free and open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP), which both Russia and China reject as an “exclusive” concept, not been a stumbling block to such an extremist ideology.

As such, for Japan, India remains on the periphery of the RIC with a primary aim to counter Russia’s unopposed tilt to China; hence not only is the RIC unlikely to negatively impact Japan but India’s goals may further Japan’s (i.e., of countering China’s aims and having a trusted partner within the trilateral). Notwithstanding the historical lack of complete trust in the US, India is not effusive about being a counterbalance to the West, and is certainly not anti-West, as evidenced by its strategic leaning toward the US and its adherence in the

A large part would be the continually deteriorating China-India ties, wherein India has refused to indulge China in its game of compartmentalizing territorial disputes and cooperation.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

The Eurasian Angle

As Japan takes on a more prominent role in Indo-Pacific security, under the US umbrella of course, it would be hoping to increase its clout against the growing China-Russia hold in Eurasian geopolitics. Japan incidentally is not a new player in Central Asia; it has long been contributing via its official development assistance (ODA).

However, it now must revitalize its old connect with the Eurasian countries and devise ways to decrease their dependence on Russia and China. In this context, India, a historically and currently relevant player in the region, would be a befitting partner; India's integral voice in the RIC, through which the country hopes to strengthen its Eurasian influence, could only provide Japan opportunities.

A Democratic Counterweight to China

Since the RIC's objective is to undermine US presence, which is growing in the Indo-Pacific and supported by India and Japan, there are questions about whether the RIC engagement actually serves India. The added complication is that "China is Russia's partner against the West, but India is the West's partner against China." This serves Japan well, as Tokyo needs India for the fulfilment of the FOIP and as a democratic counterweight to China.

Nevertheless, Tokyo is aware that Moscow will attempt to not only revive the RIC but also bolster its partnership with New Delhi. Given Moscow's international isolation, India

is an important partner and link beyond the autocracies that have stuck by Putin – not only for trade but also international standing. Moreover, in the long run especially, Russia will not relish its subordinate status in its partnership with China, and India provides that necessary leverage. Moscow is likely to try and act as a mediator between China and India to reinvigorate the RIC; but Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks about the inevitability of an RIC ministerial meeting this year at this juncture seem merely a rhetorical move to undermine Western suggestions of Moscow's isolation.

The Double Threat from Russia and China

On the other hand, Washington and Tokyo recognize the need to detach New Delhi from the Kremlin, most likely through using the common threat of China. Japan is deeply concerned about the growing double threat from

Tokyo is aware that Moscow will attempt to not only revive the RIC but also bolster its partnership with New Delhi.

Russia and China, particularly in its disputed Northern Territories and the Senkaku Islands. These fears are not unfounded, as is evidenced by joint military activity (bomber flights in May 2022 and combined naval drill around Japan) and heightened Chinese military activity in the Taiwan Strait disturbing the status quo.

What is most concerning for Japan is the Russia-China growing sphere of influence; security cooperation with India and expanding their bilateral into a regional cooperation (e.g., connectivity initiatives) are one way of undercutting that factor. The invasion of Ukraine was a fundamental turning point for Japan because it prompted Kishida to underline the interlinkages between European and Asian

security. Hence, not only did it give impetus to overturn Tokyo's stance on pacifism – Kishida's new national security strategy has set the ball rolling for Japanese militarization – it has also pushed Japan to coalesce “like-minded” partners like India and not lose them to the other side, even in a limited capacity via a largely defunct forum like the RIC..

Quad should ask ASEAN to a diplomatic dance

Source: *The Interpreter*

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/quad-should-ask-asean-diplomatic-dance> 26 Apr 2023



A shadow puppet show, or Wayang, one of the highlights of Javanese culture (Afrianto Silalahi via Getty Images)

In early 1979, fearing the growing security cooperation between Hanoi and Moscow, China invaded Vietnam. A year earlier, the then-Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping met Singapore's prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, asking for Singapore's support against Vietnam. But, to his utter surprise, the canny Singaporean leader caught the equally perceptive Deng off guard. Lee Kuan Yew admitted that Singapore was worried about Beijing's ambitions to dominate the region more than Vietnam. In other words, China was Singapore's most significant source of long-term concern.

For all the talk of hedging, Southeast Asian nations have long worried about China's ambition to dominate the region.

The point is that even before China's economic transformation, Southeast Asian states were worried about living with a giant next door.

Cut to the post-Cold War era and the emergence of the unipolar moment. With the Soviet threat extinguished, the extended cooperation between Washington and Beijing created a stable regional order – propitious for economic growth. Southeast Asian countries could not have asked for more. American handholding of China's entry into the World Trade Organisation symbolised the spirit of the times. Southeast Asia took full advantage of regional stability and accelerated their pursuit of prosperity. Over the years, a neat equilibrium saturated the thinking in the regional capitals. For Southeast Asia, China's development was an economic opportunity to be capitalized on under the umbrella of American military presence. Having drawn the right lessons in Vietnam, Washington was happy to act as the offshore balancer.

During the Sino-US rapprochement period, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations assiduously cultivated the idea of ASEAN centrality. The main motivation behind this effort was safeguarding its agency in the then Asia-Pacific, influencing the actions of the great powers operating in the region, and underscoring the idea that ASEAN's growth was central to Asia's developmental story. As a result, even the economic interdependence between the two regional economic powerhouses grew manifold. For example, in 2022, China's trade with ASEAN was estimated at close to a trillion US dollars.

The last few years have heralded a new dawn

of great-power competition. China's assertive behaviour in the maritime domain and the emergence of new minilateral coalitions under the Indo-Pacific framework are simultaneously causing alarm in some parts of Southeast Asia. Given the established equilibrium that has sustained regional economic prosperity, countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia are wary of the growing chasm between Beijing and Washington. When asked where it stands, Jakarta doesn't hesitate to pull out the old card of non-alignment reflexively. However, to expect Indonesia to do otherwise publicly would be unwise. Even the sensitivities in Indonesia and Malaysia around American military presence are primarily due to domestic compulsions.

Picking up from Lee Kuan Yew's outlook toward Beijing, it is not a wild guess that other regional players also share a similar outlook toward China. The foremost ones are Vietnam and the Philippines. Alongside Jakarta, Hanoi, Manila, and Singapore are also influential actors in ASEAN. They might not directly voice their concerns, however, these capitals intuitively understand that the United States, India, Japan, Australia, and other like-minded powers are essential in upholding the regional balance of power. ASEAN has also long sought India's role in balancing China. Moreover, nationalism is not frowned upon in Southeast Asia. Irrespective of the sizeable presence of ethnic Chinese citizenry in Southeast Asian states, nationalism runs high in many countries.

Despite their public reservations about American military presence, even Malaysia and Indonesia have military exercises with

the United States. Therefore, given its history of quickly adapting to new political realities, ASEAN member countries can be expected to be pragmatic in their approach to selecting partners in the altered geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific.

This brings us to the Quad, drawing together the Australia, Japan, India and United States. It's not to say that the Quad must expect the ASEAN member states to choose between binary choices. Southeast Asians are adept at playing a polygamous game. Their geographical location and relative sizes do not afford them the liberty to pick clear sides.

Having said that, the deepening structural contradiction between the United States and China increases the difficulty of hedging. Furthermore, the latest ISEAS Survey of sentiment by the Yusof Ishak Institute shows interesting trends. In ASEAN, China is seen as the region's most "influential" political and economic power. However, if forced to choose between the United States and China, the United States emerges as the frontrunner. Japan also remains ASEAN's most "trusted" major power, closely followed by the United States.

Therefore, it is in the interests of the Quad partners to capitalise on the goodwill it enjoys and engage like-minded partners in Southeast Asia. The Quad could begin by moving ahead of chanting the mantra of ASEAN centrality, a banal invocation in international conferences. Despite their individual relationships with ASEAN members, it is in the larger interest of the Quad partners to get ASEAN on the same page as far as the Indo-Pacific framework is concerned.

The Quad could begin by moving ahead of chanting the mantra of ASEAN centrality, a banal invocation in international conferences.

After all, pursuing a free and open Indo-Pacific is arguably among the topmost interests of the Quad and ASEAN.

Potential starting points for engaging Southeast Asia could be toning down the democracy-autocracy rhetoric by Washington, giving complementary importance to the land dimension in the Quad's proposed maritime dialogue with ASEAN, and offering capacity-building and developmental alternatives to countries in the region.

Evaluating Extended Deterrence at the U.S.-South Korea Summit

Source: Jennifer Ahn, CFR

<https://www.cfr.org/blog/evaluating-extended-deterrence-us-south-korea-summit> 02 May 2023



U.S. President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol shake hands at the conclusion of a joint news conference in the Rose Garden of the White House on April 26, 2023. (Kevin Lamarque, Reuters)

On April 26, U.S. President Joe Biden welcomed South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol to the White House for a summit meeting to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the U.S.-South Korea alliance and open a new chapter for the next seventy years of expanded cooperation. Amid a substantial list

The Washington Declaration offers concrete and visible U.S. efforts to reinforce its extended deterrence commitment to South Korea, but the media response to its implications has been mixed.

of topics discussed by the two leaders, extended deterrence emerged as the top deliverable.

In the joint press conference that followed the meeting, Biden and Yoon announced the Washington Declaration, which outlines strengthened U.S. pledges for signaling its extended deterrence commitment to South Korea. The two governments established the Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG), which involves a stepped-up role for South Korea by engaging in joint nuclear planning and decision-making with the United States. Yoon hailed the agreement as an unprecedented broadening and strengthening of extended deterrence to new levels. The declaration also includes U.S. efforts to enhance the visibility of its defense commitment, most notably through the upcoming visit of a U.S. ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) to South Korea. Unlike the nuclear arrangements within NATO, the Washington Declaration does not forward deploy U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea. Nor does the agreement grant the South Korean president shared authority on nuclear-use decisions in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula.

As part of the Washington Declaration, South Korea acknowledged its continued reliance on U.S. nuclear deterrence and reaffirmed its commitment to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) as well as the U.S.-South Korea Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. The declaration counters domestic calls in South Korea to reduce its reliance on the United States for the country's defense and survival

by withdrawing from the NPT and developing nuclear weapons. However, Yoon pledged that strengthened coordination and consultations under the NCG should relieve South Korean concerns over its vulnerability to North Korea's nuclear weapons.

The Washington Declaration symbolizes a clear display of U.S. defense commitment amid South Korean public debates over the independent acquisition of nuclear weapons. A growing number of South Koreans have argued that South Korea should possess nuclear weapons to more effectively deter North Korean provocations and to achieve the country's invulnerability to future security threats. However, the Washington Declaration affirms that the Yoon administration will not incur damage to the U.S.-South Korea alliance by unilaterally pursuing nuclear weapons. With South Korea's nonproliferation commitment reiterated in the agreement, South Korean efforts to strengthen its defense and security posture in response to growing North Korean capabilities will continue to work alongside alliance mechanisms and the global nonproliferation regime.

Initial South Korean media responses to the announcement of the Washington Declaration have been mixed. JoongAng Ilbo welcomed the agreement as a "practical compromise" between the United States and South Korea in response to growing security uncertainties, and Hankook Ilbo praised the NCG for providing a beneficial bilateral mechanism that reflects South Korean perspectives. However, both media editorials stressed the need for reliable follow-up

measures to ensure effective implementation. Donga Ilbo also offered a pragmatic assessment of the Washington Declaration, noting that the agreement signaled a strong U.S. commitment to addressing the escalating North Korean nuclear threat but that it did so by reaffirming the "asymmetry of the alliance."

The conservative Chosun Ilbo newspaper provided a more critical view by referencing the high price paid by South Korea, specifically the tightening of the "shackle" placed on South Korea's ability to defend itself. The progressive Hankyoreh newspaper also highlighted the importance of pursuing dialogue and diplomacy with North Korea alongside strengthening extended deterrence, with the progressive Kyunghyang newspaper emphasizing the need for South Korea to preserve its relationships with China and Russia to uphold the country's top priority of peace on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, a Korea Times editorial argued that the most consequential outcome of the agreement was turning China and Russia into "de facto adversaries" of South Korea.

Despite the significance of the Washington Declaration in promoting an increased South Korean role within U.S. extended deterrence, both conservative and progressive news outlets have pointed out the limitations of the agreement in addressing the fundamental issue at the core of South Korean security concerns: North Korea's nuclear arsenal. In this sense, the South Korean public and media may pay particular attention to the regional ramifications of enhanced U.S.-South Korean nuclear cooperation, namely the

U.S. ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) to South Korea. Unlike the nuclear arrangements within NATO, the Washington Declaration does not forward deploy U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea.

potential increase in North Korean provocations and strains on South Korea's bilateral relationships with China and Russia.

The Washington Declaration offers concrete and visible U.S. efforts to reinforce its nuclear umbrella to South Korea, but it will require continued U.S. assurance to the South Korean public that the safety and survival of South Korea is in U.S. vital interests. According to a recent poll, 64.3 percent of South Koreans support an independent nuclear weapons program and the number only drops to 54.7 percent when participants factor in the cost of international sanctions. Thus, the United States should also redouble cooperative and diplomatic efforts to alleviate the deteriorating security situation on the Korean Peninsula. It remains to be seen how the new measures outlined in the Washington Declaration will affect South Korea's nuclear debate and inter-Korean relations. The question going forward is whether most South Koreans will find any measure short of nuclear weapons in South Korea or South Korean hands on the nuclear button to be sufficient in addressing their concerns.

For all three member countries, the recent San Diego meeting presented both collective and individual opportunities.

AUKUS: Consolidating the 'Atlantic Pacific' as a strategic space

Source: Premesha Saha, shairee Malhotra and vivek Mishra, ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/aucus-consolidating-the-atlantic-pacific-as-a-strategic-space/> 08 Apr 2023



Last month, the leaders of Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US), Anthony Albanese, Rishi Sunak, and Joe Biden, respectively, gathered in San Diego, California to unpack the AUKUS agreement—the trilateral defence partnership between Australia, the UK, and the US. The three nations first announced their security partnership in September 2021 and have been working on the details of the alliance since then. Recently, the leaders revealed the plan to implement the AUKUS partnership. For all three member countries, the San Diego meeting was more than a review meeting and translated into both collective and individual opportunities.

Australia: A win-win

On 13 March 2023, Australia, the UK and the US unveiled plans to provide Australia with “conventionally armed, nuclear powered attack submarines (SSN)” in the early 2030s to deal with the growing Chinese encroachments in the Pacific. According to the joint statement released, the US is looking to sell Australia three US Virginia class nuclear-powered submarines built by General

Dynamics in the early 2030s, with an option of buying two more if needed in the future. The statement also mentions the phased development of the submarine vessel, “SSN-AUKUS”, which will be a “state-of-the-art platform designed to leverage the best of submarine technology from all three nations.” Additionally, from 2027 onwards, there will be rotational presence of one UK Astute class submarine and up to four US Virginia class submarines at HMAS Stirling near Perth, Western Australia.

However, there may be divided opinions on this deal within the strategic community in Australia. Some are concerned about the high cost and funds that Australia will need to pour in. The programme is forecasted to cost US\$268 billion to US \$368 billion between now and the mid-2050s and will also depend on help from the US and the UK. While Prime Minister Albanese looks at this as “the biggest single investment in Australia’s defence capability in its history and that Australia is also determined to promote security by investing in our relationships across our region,” a few people such as the former Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating sees the, “AUKUS nuclear-submarine deal as an aggressive attempt to maintain US hegemony in Asia and it has nothing to do with repelling Chinese aggression.” On the other hand, experts like Rory Medcalf of the Australian National University have

According to the joint statement released, the US is looking to sell Australia three US Virginia class nuclear-powered submarines built by General Dynamics in the early 2030s, with an option of buying two more if needed in the future.

pointed out that though there will be challenges in reaching the targets set out in the deal, the current geopolitical scenario has to be taken into account, which include “the deterioration of a regional and global order, the rapid growth of China’s military capabilities, the return of war as a global reality,

the deep vulnerability of our lifelines to the world, the examples of aggression and coercion by large autocracies against weaker democracies, and the open threats China is making to use force against others.” These factors make such a deal a necessity in the current times.

There have been questions too if this would impede Australia’s sovereignty, in the sense that whether the operation and use of these submarines will make it completely rely on the US. Does this not make it very clear as to which side Australia is on with regards to the US-China tussle? But Australian experts like Bec Strating note that, “Australia’s regional interests are becoming increasingly difficult to disentangle from those of the US. The US alliance should be viewed as a means for securing Australia, not an end.”

UK: Standing “shoulder to shoulder”

The AUKUS announcements during PM Sunak’s visit to San Diego significantly coincided with the release of the United Kingdom’s Integrated Review Refresh, an updated version of the original Integrated Review strategy launched in 2021, that factors in the occurrence of huge

geopolitical shifts over the past two years in Britain’s foreign policy approach.

At the heart of IR2021 was the Indo-Pacific tilt, with ambitions that Britain would be the “European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence in the region”. IR2023 not only reinforces this tilt, but further reiterates the Indo-Pacific as a “permanent pillar” of British foreign policy. The UK has committed to several actions, including a defence pact with Japan, dialogue status with ASEAN, a new minister for

the Indo-Pacific, and deployment of naval assets, as part of its influence, projection, and active presence in the region.

The most consequential of these expanding engagements and commitments is AUKUS to provide nuclear submarines to Australia using British and American support and technology. While rejuvenating Britain's defence industrial base, AUKUS is central to the country's vision for the Indo-Pacific, which aims at fostering a stable and open region and countering what the strategy refers to as the "epoch defining challenge" of China. Sunak's reference to AUKUS as "the most significant multilateral defence partnership in generations" demonstrates the agreement's centrality to Britain's Indo-Pacific vision.

The UK has committed to several actions, including a defence pact with Japan, dialogue status with ASEAN, a new minister for the Indo-Pacific, and deployment of naval assets, as part of its influence, projection, and active presence in the region.

As the updated strategy warns of a further deteriorating international security environment, it also acknowledges that "tensions in the Indo-Pacific could have global consequences greater than the conflict in Ukraine".

Even as the document prioritises the Euro-Atlantic as the most important geography for Britain, prosperity and security in this region are linked to developments in the Indo-Pacific. In this context, a network of "Atlantic Pacific" partnerships is stressed, thereby merging the two strategic theatres. Throughout the strategy, IR2023 emphasises the importance of partnerships, with "likeminded democracies" such as US and Australia, both ranking amongst Britain's top partners. For Britain, AUKUS is the most important manifestation of this joint approach. Stability in the Indo-Pacific gains even greater salience for post-Brexit Britain where economic

ties with the European Union have weakened, compelling the country to increase trade with the rest of the world.

Britain has also pledged an increase in its defence budget from the previous 2 percent to 2.25 percent of GDP, granting another 5 billion pounds over a two-year period from which 3 billion pounds is allocated towards strengthening nuclear capabilities, particularly AUKUS. Yet as Sunak promises to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Australia and the US to maintain Indo-Pacific security, a key question that looms is Britain's capacity to be a security provider in two simultaneous regions, particularly given the country's economic crisis and dwindling military stocks resulting from its strong support to Ukraine.

US: Retaining influence

For the US, the San Diego meeting provided not just an opportunity to review progress but more importantly, to plan and speed up the pace of an extremely complex deal in AUKUS. During the meeting, Biden stated that the partnership would help them overcome present and future challenges together, which was readily agreed upon by others. Providing momentum to the AUKUS deal is important for all the three countries as they seek to tide over one of its most outstanding critiques that the deal may take a very long time for its potential advantages to unravel in full scale. Besides the potential delays owing to the involvement of the transfer of nuclear technologies between the three parties, the need to pace up the AUKUS deal is also externally induced due to China's home-grown rapidity in

its naval capabilities which has been witnessed in the past decade, catapulting it to the largest navy in the world in sheer number.

From a strategic standpoint, AUKUS is advantageous for the US for several reasons. Firstly, it strengthens the US-led alliance system in the Indo-Pacific, which is crucial to countering China's growing influence in the region. Secondly, it enhances US access and presence in the region, especially in Southeast Asia, where the US has sought to expand its military footprint. Thirdly, it provides a boost to the US defence industry by creating new opportunities for arms sales and technology transfers to Australia and the UK. Finally, it sends a clear signal to China that the US is committed to defending its allies and interests in the region and is willing to invest in advanced military capabilities to do so.

At the level of leadership, the meeting between the three leaders suggests a consensual roadmap. Two out of three AUKUS countries have had leadership changes since the deal was announced, with successive changes in the UK and the Anthony Albanese government in Australia replacing the Scott Morrison administration. Symbolically, the meeting in San Diego also depicts that the US leadership is likely to steer the AUKUS deal along with the two partners.

Finally, with AUKUS, the Biden administration seeks to consolidate its waning influence in the Pacific theatre. A rapidly rising China has already attempted to pull small islands of the Pacific to its side and has created an unprecedented economic and strategic dependency in the region. Coupled with China's aggressive strategies are the US' own

leadership pitfalls in the region led by some of the Trump administration's decisions to weaken its non-NATO alliance network and eroding in the region. The Biden administration has worked on mending partnerships and strengthening alliance in the region. These coupled with a strategic alliance like the AUKUS could reposition the US in the Pacific theatre from a security perspective.

Washington Declaration affirms that the Yoon administration will not incur damage to the U.S.-South Korea alliance by unilaterally pursuing nuclear weapons.

In Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Only One Side Wins

Japan Forward.com

<https://japan-forward.com/editorial-in-japan-china-foreign-ministers-meeting-only-one-side-wins/> 07 Apr 2023



Japanese FM Yoshimasa Hayashi meets with Wang Yi, a member of the CCP Politburo and China's top diplomat, at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing on April 2. (© Kyodo)

The Japanese government has declared that the recent Japan - China Foreign Ministers Meeting held in Beijing resulted in tangible "results."

What on earth are they thinking?

The reported contents of the meeting show that none of Japan's core concerns were addressed.

Not even one of the Japanese nationals arbitrarily detained in China was released. They

were all arrested in China without the grounds for their detentions even being clarified.

And even while the meeting was in progress, China Coast Guard vessels continued to intrude into Japanese territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands of Ishigaki City in Okinawa Prefecture. In fact, they set a new record for the longest continuous incursions to date.

Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said he underscored the importance of "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait." Nevertheless, his Chinese counterpart, Qin Gang, showed no inclination of hearing the message. Instead, Qin simply repeated the old refrain that Beijing "will not allow interference in the Taiwan question or damage to China's sovereignty in any form."

Nor did the Chinese side give any indication that it intended to change its provocative military behavior around Japan. That included China's increased military cooperation with Russia and Chinese activities in the South China Sea.

Achieving...More 'Dialogue'

Despite this lack of positive outcomes, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno held a press conference on March 3. In it, he merely cited the two foreign ministers' agreement to work for the resumption of the trilateral dialogue framework as an "important achievement."

That framework simply consists of talks among the heads of state or foreign ministers of Japan, China, and South Korea.

China is a neighbor, as well as major economic

and military power. Communication between our two countries is therefore necessary.

That is all the more reason why Japan should tell China now that we are irate with its hardline tactics. We should make clear our determination to never knuckle under to its attempts at coercion.

It is disconcerting to see an effort made to revive the trilateral dialogue involving Tokyo, Beijing, and Seoul in order to provide something to celebrate. The Chinese are bound to question how serious Japan is when it makes serious demands.

Hugging More Chinese Communists

Hayashi also met with Premier Li Qiang,

Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said he underscored the importance of "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait." Nevertheless, his Chinese counterpart, Qin Gang, showed no inclination of hearing the message.

number two behind President Xi Jinping, and Wang Yi, the top Communist Party Politburo member in charge of foreign affairs. This is not the time to exult at having the opportunity to meet with such Chinese communist luminaries.

Japan's leaders need to put their political lives on the line to negotiate seriously. Their duty is to protect the Japanese people and Japan's territory, territorial waters, territorial airspace and national interests, as well as regional peace.

If our diplomats have had such exchanges, those details should be made known. Simply saying that Japan's position was conveyed to the other party is extremely feeble at best.

Timing is also important in diplomacy. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida demonstrated this in his visit to Kyiv. It coincided nearly simultaneously with Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to

Moscow. Consequently, Japan was able to show the world how very different it is from China.

Right now, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's stopovers in the United States before and after her visit to Central America are attracting considerable attention. The fact that Japan's foreign minister visited Beijing at such a time surely delighted China, which is determined to drive a wedge between Japan and Taiwan.

Cherry-Picks of the Month

1. In Japan, G7 Foreign Ministers underscore importance of cooperating with India in Indo-Pacific - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/in-japan-g7-foreign-ministers-underscore-importance-of-cooperating-with-india-in-indo-pacific/article66751210.ece>
2. Quad should ask ASEAN to a diplomatic dance - <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/quad-should-ask-asean-diplomatic-dance>
3. Japan-South Korea Ties on the Road of Improvement - <https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/japan-south-korea-ties-on-the-road-of-improvement/3067456/>
4. Whither ASEAN centrality? - <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/whither-asean-centrality/>
5. India performs maiden test of sea-based ballistic missile interceptor - <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/india-performs-maiden-test-of-sea-based-ballistic-missile-interceptor-585215>

CAPS Experts-InFocus

1. Kishida's visit to India: Eye on the Indo-Pacific - <https://capsindia.org/kishidas-visit-to-india-eye-on-the-indo-pacific/>
2. Exercise Cope India 23': An Assessment - <https://capsindia.org/exercise-cope-india-23-an-assessment/>

Debates/Panel Discussions

1. India, Japan join hands with Sri Lanka to bolster regional connectivity in Indo-Pacific region - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20cMzD07fNc>
2. News On The Hour | Japan: G7 Foreign Minister's meeting ends - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kMoCNb9Ik0>
3. Joe Biden Plays Catch Up as US Loses Ground in Indo Pacific - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_rPs9LfCm4



The Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) is an independent, non-profit think tank that undertakes and promotes policy-related research, study and discussion on defence and military issues, trends and developments in air power and space for civil and military purposes, as also related issues of national security. The Centre is headed by Air Marshal Anil Chopra, PVSM AVSM VM VSM (Retd).

Centre for Air Power Studies

P-284 Arjan Path, Subroto Park, New Delhi - 110010

Tel.: +91 - 11 - 25699131/32 Fax: +91 - 11 - 25682533

Email: capsnetdroff@gmail.com

Website: www.capsindia.org

Editorial Team: Air Commodore SP Singh, VSM (Retd), Dr Joshy Paul, Ms Mahima Duggal, Ms Neha Mishra and Ms Simran Walia, Mr Gaurav Sen

Composed and Formatted by: Mr Rohit Singh, CAPS

Contact: +91 9716511091

Email: rohit_singh.1990@hotmail.com

Disclaimer: Information and data included in this newsletter is for educational non-commercial purposes only and has been carefully adapted, excerpted or edited from sources deemed reliable and accurate at the time of preparation. The Centre does not accept any liability for error therein. All copyrighted material belongs to respective owners and is provided only for purposes of wider dissemination.