



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 witnessed the French President attending the Indian Republic Day as Chief guest. Both countries discussed elevating bilateral defence and security cooperation in defence joint production, space and cyber. The Indian Foreign Minister visited Nigeria for the Sixth India-Nigeria Joint Commission Meeting. Indo-Pacific region also witnessed many elections, particularly in South Asia where Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's got re-elected for the fifth term, and the Maldives' opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) secured a decisive victory in Male's Mayoral election.

In ASEAN, Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei to strengthen bilateral cooperation with other members, Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Manet visited France to discuss defence cooperation pursuing a diversification policy. The Philippines President also visited Vietnam to boost bilateral maritime cooperation between their coastguards aimed to ease bilateral maritime territorial disputes.

In East Asia, Taiwan's incumbent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leader Lai Ching-te became the next President. The Chinese Foreign Minister and US National Security Advisor met in Bangkok to discuss bilateral ties taking forward the agenda last discussed during the US-China leaders meeting at the APEC Summit. North Korea launched its first ballistic missile, testing a solid-fuel intermediate range with a hypersonic warhead. In addition, North Korea Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui visited Moscow to discuss security issues in Northeast Asia. This happened against the backdrop of joint trilateral maritime exercises in international waters between the United States, South Korea, and Japan supporting a free and open 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

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How will Taiwan cope with China's invasion plans?

Read more about it at :-

<https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/how-will-taiwan-cope-with-china-s-invasion-plans-2867775>

QUOTE

"Why is our presence in India important? Because India is a major power at the heart of the world's reinvention. Together, we will rise to the challenges of our century"

- Emmanuel Macron
French President

Opinions/Review/Expert View

US-South Korea-India Tech Partnership
Proposed

Source: Abhishek Sharma | The Korea Times

https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2024/01/137_366453.html 05 January 2024

The next era of geopolitics will be dictated not by those countries with only military power but by those innovating and investing in critical and emerging technology (CET) and controlling their supply chain.

Some countries have realized this necessity and are already working on developing and strengthening their CET capabilities.

However, this is also a collaborative effort that needs regional and global partnerships.

Partnerships forged in the Indo-Pacific region are expected to be pivotal in shaping global geopolitical and geoeconomic alignments.

The U.S. and India CET collaboration in the areas of AI, semiconductors, cybersecurity and critical minerals among others, stands out in the region.

However, this bilateral technology partnership will be further strengthened with the addition of another vital technology leader and innovator in the region, South Korea.

The idea of potential technology collaboration between India, South Korea and the U.S. was announced at the inaugural launch meeting of the Next Generation CET Dialogue between the U.S. and South Korea

held in December last year. This would be India's third CET engagement after the U.S. and EU, and the first informal trilateral dialogue is expected to occur in the first quarter of this year.

India's partnership in the CET domain was started by the national security agencies of India and the U.S. to establish a technology partnership framework to deepen strategic relations. It aimed to signal India's increasing importance as a regional technology leader and highlight the importance "to build open, accessible, secure and resilient technology systems and value chains, based on confidence and trust."

Such technology partnerships between democratic countries were seen as critical when surveillance and espionage influenced technology and its innovation.

This perspective is borrowed from the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, which

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reaffirms the importance of international-based rules and order in the region. The trilateral CET dialogue between the three shows that there is interest and recognition in both Seoul and New Delhi to collaborate in the CET sector, building on each other's capabilities and reiterating the need to build open, secure and trusted CET.

Although the three countries can collaborate on many CETs, I have initially identified some strategic technology areas where the scope of collaboration between India, the U.S. and South Korea is much needed. These include semiconductor supply

chains, AI, cyber security, quantum science and technology and critical mineral supply chains.

The semiconductor supply chain is an important sector led by South Korea and the U.S.

India can leverage the tech partnership to establish a holistic semiconductor ecosystem. The U.S. and South Korea can help India develop a resilient semiconductor supply chain in design, manufacturing and fabrication by identifying opportunities for strategic development between the countries. We have already seen some development through U.S.-India CET cooperation and this trilateral relationship can be used to build upon that foundation. The U.S. and South Korea can assist the Indian workforce in skilling and up-skilling to cater to their domestic demands.

All these efforts would further consolidate India's role in the semiconductor supply chain. We have already seen some progress in this domain with major companies like Micron and LAM Research investing in India.

AI, cybersecurity and quantum computing are other areas where all countries need to work together to establish a responsible code of conduct, build principles and create standards.

The three countries can work on joint research projects on cyber-physical systems, AI and quantum technologies. Foremost, AI is a technology where all countries need to work together to ensure a balanced approach between mitigating risks and leveraging its

commercial opportunities.

To realize this, there is a scope for international collaboration across platforms like the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) and the United Nations General Assembly on creating consensus. Besides, responsible use of AI in the military is an emerging issue where they can work together to build consensus, particularly after the recent incident where AI applications in the military have raised concerns.

South Korea will host the REAIM 2024 summit this year and inviting India would be a good start.

The cyber domain is another area that needs much attention, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, which is witnessing rising cybercrimes and cyber-attacks, like ransomware and attacks targeting critical infrastructure facilities. Democratic countries need to coordinate with each other in areas such as cyber approaches, cyber defense, information sharing and law enforcement.

On the quantum front, there is an opportunity to collaborate between academia, startups and industries to coordinate work towards quantum technologies like quantum communications and quantum science.

Lastly, critical minerals are considered the most important among these areas, as much of the technology stated above can be scaled only with a sustained supply of critical minerals, including rare earth elements. This initiative would add to the existing ones, such as critical mineral dialogue on supply chain stability

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under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and mineral security partnership, which all three are part of. South Korea and the U.S. can leverage existing bilateral cooperation with India and set up a trilateral dialogue mechanism, as done in the case of the U.S., South Korea and Mongolia, focused mainly on information exchange and cooperation on the critical mineral supply chain.

The U.S. and South Korea can explore joint investment initiatives and projects in India, similar to the rare earth project in Vietnam, after the opportunities in mining have opened up in exploration, with more liberal rules, policies and regulations in place. The trilateral mechanism would further catalyze and encourage private sector cooperation by establishing a critical mineral supply chain across upstream, midstream and downstream segments, and creating a system that adheres to the highest environmental, social and corporate governance standards. This would help India and others fix strategic vulnerabilities, achieve a net-zero target, and provide a secure and stable supply of minerals required in high and clean energy technologies.

The CET trilateral mechanism would help India attract much-needed investments and technology from South Korea and the presence of the U.S. makes the process much easier and trustworthy for Korean companies venturing out to find attractive options.

Going forward, the aim of the trilateral partnership should be to consolidate respective emerging technologies capabilities and

capacities to strengthen strategic collaboration, to co-produce and co-develop CET, and to develop a secure and sustainable innovation ecosystem and CET supply chain in the three countries.

The CET partnerships need a robust mechanism through a multi-stakeholder approach between national scientific and academic institutions, startups, and industries working on CET, as we have seen between India and the U.S. under the i-CET initiative.

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If successful, the partnership can be replicated or expanded by including like-minded countries like Japan, Australia or Taiwan. This CET trilateral signals that this year is the right moment for New Delhi and Seoul to elevate their special strategic

partnership beyond traditional domains, adding technology to the earlier stronger economic relationship. The big picture is that through this partnership, India, South Korea and the U.S. would be able to establish secure, safe and trusted supply chains for themselves as well as the Indo-Pacific region.

Modi, Macron and the World

Source: Harsh V. Pant | ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/modi-macron-and-the-world> 28 January 2024



French President Emmanuel Macron may be facing political trouble at home but his visit to India, full of pomp and ceremony, underscored the special place of France in Indian strategic calculus.

The roadshow in Jaipur with a 'chai pe charcha' capped by the pageantry of Republic Day celebrations where he was the chief guest was a reminder of how the strategic elite as well as ordinary Indians view France as a trusted partner that has always stood by India. This is no mean feat in a world which continues to evolve and where there are no permanent friends.

Macron has become the first French president to be accorded this honour of being welcomed as the chief guest at Republic Day celebrations twice. Last year, it was PM Modi who was the chief guest at the Bastille Day military parade hosted by Macron when an Indian tri-services contingent had also participated in the march. And at this year's Republic Day celebrations, a 95-member marching contingent and a 33-member band contingent from France joined in.

Even as the French President and Indian Prime Minister Narendra PM Modi deliberated on global problems like the war in Gaza and the turmoil in the Red Sea, they also found ways to further bolster their bilateral engagement. This involved adopting a roadmap on defence industrial cooperation to enhance opportunities in co-design, co-development and co-production in key sectors such as air and space, maritime tech, cyber, robotics and artificial intelligence. And there is also an attempt to bring the two societies together closer with the announcement of a 'Young Professionals' scheme for people between 18 to 35 years of age.

India and France have been close partners but under PM Modi and Macron there has been a sustained attempt to work towards making this critical partnership respond to the 21st century

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In this 25th anniversary year of the Indo-French Strategic Partnership, there is no attempt to simply sit on past laurels. The strategic realities are evolving rapidly and any partnership, to remain

relevant, should also evolve. Such an evolution is relatively easy when there is a historic comfort level in engagement.

In the case of India and France, this high degree of comfort level could be gauged from the fact that New Delhi could invite Macron after, reportedly, the US President couldn't make it to the Republic Day celebration and Macron accepted it without any hesitation. This suggests a level of understanding quite rare in global engagements with the result that New Delhi and Paris have

been able to reconfigure their ties nimbly in the light of changing global realities.

If France was one of the first western nations to bet on India during the Cold War when most of the West saw India as the "other," it also understood much better than most the need for New Delhi to acquire its independent nuclear deterrent. From standing by India after the 1998 nuclear tests to supporting India's membership at the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and permanent membership at the UN Security Council, France has been a critical anchor for India as India sought to create newer platforms like the International Solar Alliance. On issues such as terrorism and Kashmir, France's support has been key for India in standing its ground against a large part of the globe.

And as India sought diversification in its defence inventory, France emerged as a priority nation. New Delhi has also welcomed a more robust French engagement in the Indian Ocean as India seeks greater maritime stability in the Indo-Pacific in partnership with like-minded nations. Just a few days back, The Indian Air Force conducted Exercise Desert Knight in collaboration with the French Air and Space Force (FASF) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Air Force over the Arabian Sea to enhance synergy and interoperability between the three air forces.

Both nations value strategic autonomy and so they understand each others' priorities better. With Europe facing a prolonged crisis in Ukraine and with the Indo-Pacific balance of power shifting rapidly, Paris and New Delhi will have

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to work even closer now to lead and provide solutions to emerging challenges. The shadow of Donald Trump also looms large over the American political landscape, so it is also time to start preparing for even greater disruption. PM Modi and Macron have succeeded in developing a close personal bond, which has been instrumental in further consolidating the bonds between two nations. But as the world faces disruption from multiple sources and the US domestic polity undergoes another significant churn, New Delhi and Paris will have to start looking beyond the bilateral to shaping an international order that is demanding serious attention.

Indonesia's 2024 Elections and the Future Foreign Policy Trajectory

Source: Sriparna Pathak | Hindustan times

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/ht-insight/international-affairs/indonesias-2024-elections-and-the-future-foreign-policy-trajectory-101705900131039.html> 22 January 2024



Bali, Indonesia(Unsplash)

The first month of 2024 has already seen three elections in Asian countries--Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Taiwan. February will witness elections in at least two more Asian countries--Pakistan and Indonesia. In all these countries,

the effects of great power competition--between the United States and China have been important issues for consideration. Indonesia, the world's fourth largest democracy, goes to polls on February 14. The election is unique and will have an impact on geopolitics given the role China has in international politics, which, in turn, affects national politics.

In Indonesia, the presidential election is a three-way race between Prabowo Subianto who is an ex-special forces commander and current president Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo's two-time election opponent--turned-defence minister; Ganjar Pranowo--the former Central Java governor and Anies Baswedan--the former governor of Jakarta. Joko Widodo, the popular incumbent, cannot contest elections as his second and last possible term ends this year. Jokowi has shown support for Prabowo Subianto and Jokowi's eldest son Gibran Rakabuming Raka is Subianto's running mate.

The winner of the presidential election will shape foreign policy choices for over 270 million Indonesians. To understand the directions Indonesian foreign policy may take under either of the three contestants, it is pertinent to understand the existing foreign policy outlook of Indonesia under Jokowi. Since he took office in 2014, Jokowi has put forth a domestic-centred, economy-first foreign policy, to develop Indonesia into one of the world's top five economies by 2045. In 2022, with a nominal

gross domestic product (GDP) of \$1.3 trillion, Indonesia ranked at the 16th place.

To bolster the Indonesian economy, Jokowi strengthened economic diplomacy and reinforced Indonesia's status as a commodity giant through onshoring production and started big infrastructure projects, of which the plan to build the city of Nusantra as Indonesia's capital is a major one. Two noteworthy examples of

In Indonesia, the presidential election is a three-way race between Prabowo Subianto who is an ex-special forces commander and current president Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo's two-time election opponent--turned-defence minister; Ganjar Pranowo--the former Central Java governor and Anies Baswedan--the former governor of Jakarta.

Indonesia's leadership in geopolitics were its presidency of the G20 in 2022 and of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2023.

In 2023, the long-delayed, China-backed Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway became operational, with the journey of its first bullet train in October hailed as a conclusion to the fraught process of building high-speed rail in Indonesia. China provided financial backing for the project through its policy banks and State-owned enterprises. Construction began in 2016 with a bumper budget which started off at \$4.5 billion, in concessional financing through Indonesia-China joint ventures. The project ran overtime due to various reasons including Covid-19 and other logistical delays. The project ran overtime and ran over the budget by \$1.2 billion. To cover the overrun, China wanted Indonesia to put up its State budget as collateral. Questions loomed large over China's debt trap diplomacy in Indonesia. However, Indonesia firmly held its ground and did not put up its State budget as collateral which would have implications for

its sovereignty. Nevertheless, questions remain about the pressure on Indonesia to repay the gigantic loan, with China pushing a repayment rate of 3.4%, while Indonesia insists on a much lower 2%.

It is against this backdrop that the three contestants go to the polls on February 14. The election promises made by each of the three candidates are also worthy of analysis to understand the plausible direction Indonesia may take post the elections.

Subianto Prabowo, who comes from an elite family and has considerable support has promised to continue Jokowi's programme to build Nusantara as the new capital. He has also promised the development of the maritime sector and has announced his intention to raise state revenue-to-GDP ratio to 23% along with the establishment of a State revenue agency. He plans to gradually increase the defence budget and modernise the military. He has also promised achievement of food, energy and water security. He represents the Great Indonesia Movement (Gerindra) Party.

His competitor, Ganjar Pranowo from the ruling Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle has immense support from ordinary Indonesians as he is not part of any political or military elite and comes from a humble background. Mahfud MD, Indonesia's widely respected coordinating security affairs minister, is Ganjar's running mate. Ganjar is also popular with younger voters and is active on social media. Ganjar also has stated that he will continue programmes by

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President Widodo, he has kept a targeted growth rate of 7% for the Indonesian economy and has promised to create 17 million jobs. He has also promised modernisation of military hardware, along with the expansion of social welfare coverage.

The third contender, academic Anies Baswedan is an immensely popular figure. He does not belong to any political party but enjoys backing from three. He has announced a targeted growth rate of 5.5%-6.5% for Indonesia, the creation of 15 million jobs, and raising the tax-to-GDP ratio from 10.4% in 2022 to 13-16% by

2029. He has also promised to keep inflation between 2-3%, along with the creation of two million new affordable units.

As is clear from the manifestos of the three candidates, the domestic economy's development is to continue. For that, China

could be looked upon favourably if other donor countries do not come up with offers to fill in the gap. Indonesia's experience with the debt it already owns should make it cautious of further such arrangements with China. However, given the fact that infrastructure is a need and has been pointed out by all three candidates, China will try to leverage the infrastructural gap and will come up with more lucrative offers. At least two of the candidates have promised upgrades of the military which means that sovereignty, especially in the South China Sea will be a continued foreign policy concern. The archipelagic nation and its election results have major implications for great power rivalry in Asia and need to be closely watched.

Why we need a National Security Adviser

Source: Danielle Cave | ASPI

<https://www.aspi.org.au/opinion/why-we-need-national-security-adviser> 09 January 2024

The review of Australia's intelligence community that's now underway—as long as it is delivered with ambition so it remains relevant years from now—is one tool that will help prepare the government to confront the speed of global change. In the current environment, maintaining a strategic and technological edge over our adversaries, remaining a sought-after and valuable partner that can keep pace with bigger and better-resourced intelligence communities, and attracting and retaining top workforce talent (for which industry is also fiercely competing) will continue to become harder.

Both the domestic and international stakes are higher for this intelligence review than the terms of reference let on, so the review's output should be watched closely. But it likely won't look at a gap in Australia's security architecture that has been filled in almost all counterpart nations—a dedicated and

autonomous national security adviser (NSA). An Australian NSA would report to the prime minister and speak publicly with a trusted voice both internationally and domestically on Australia's most pressing interests and priorities.

Without such a position, Australia is missing out on a seat at the table at key global meetings, which provide the best opportunities to exercise the kind of influence we want, need and deserve.

What's more, the lack of an NSA means the government lacks an authoritative representative who can help set the tone and focus of our strategic communications across all international security issues.

Most countries—including our most important partners—have an NSA. These roles are as senior as it gets, often equivalent to a department head or sometimes even a minister. NSAs have the ears of their leaders, often travel with them and are always available for briefings and policy advice. Critically, most NSAs also maintain their own remits of policy work and their own busy travel schedules separate from their presidents or prime ministers.

On 20 December former Director-General of ASIS Paul Symon responded with an article on the ASPI Strategist titled 'Yes, Australia does need a national security adviser.' Head of the ANU National Security College also joined the debate in the Australian Financial Review on 27 December.

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South China Sea: A formula for the Philippines

Source: Richard Javad Heydarian | *The Interpreter*

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/deciphering-china-pakistan-naval-exercises-in-the-indian-ocean> November 2023



Filipino fishing boat (Indigo Skies Photography/Flickr)

Shortly before handing over the chairmanship of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to Laos, Indonesia corralled regional states for an unprecedented move. For the first time in recent memory, the regional body issued a stand-alone statement on the dangerous escalation of maritime spats between the Philippines, a founding ASEAN member, and China, a major economic partner.

Although the regional body didn't directly criticise China, it reaffirmed its "solidarity" with a besieged member state and emphasised the importance of "full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resorting to threat or use of force."

Crucially, ASEAN nations spoke of "our maritime sphere", underscoring shared concern over the escalating tensions in the disputed

waters. In effect, the regional body rejected Beijing's insistence that the situation is "generally stable" and that the disputes are purely a bilateral affair among rival claimants. It also indirectly questioned Beijing's de facto claim over the bulk of the South China Sea basin under the bogus "nine-dashed-line" doctrine.

Evidently, the situation is so troubling that even the notoriously passive ASEAN has been forced to make such an unprecedented statement. In the past two months alone, Chinese vessels water-cannoned Philippine resupply vessels en route to the disputed Second Thomas Shoal at least twice.

But after six years of subservience under the pro-Beijing Rodrigo Duterte presidency, the Southeast Asian nation is once again stepping up its efforts to protect its sovereign rights.

Since the late-1990s, the Philippines has exercised effective control over the Second Thomas Shoal, a low-tide elevation that falls within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. A grounded vessel, *Sierra Madre*, has served as the de facto base for Filipino marines for more than two decades.

A 2016 arbitral tribunal ruling, under the aegis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), made it clear that the Second Thomas Shoal is simply a low-tide elevation which can't be claimed as sovereign territory. It also flatly rejected China's expansive claims across much of the South China Sea basin.

Nevertheless, China has gradually stepped

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up its efforts to eject Philippine troops from the Second Thomas Shoal after wresting control of the Philippine-claimed Scarborough Shoal in 2012. In recent months, China has tightened the noose around the Philippine-occupied features like never before.

Last November, as many as 38 Chinese vessels swarmed the Second Thomas Shoal, while a Chinese coast guard vessel water cannoned Philippine vessels en route to disputed feature, including one with the Philippine military chief onboard. A month later, two Philippine vessels were damaged after encounters with Chinese vessels in the area. Chinese vessels didn't hesitate to also ram into Philippine resupply ships.

Meanwhile, a 135-strong armada of Chinese maritime militia vessels anchored within the Philippine-claimed Whitsun Reef in the Spratlys. In the Scarborough Shoal, a Chinese coast guard vessel water cannoned a Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) vessel providing supplies to Filipino fishing boats in the area. More ominously, China has threatened direct intervention should the Philippines press ahead with fortifying its presence in the Second Thomas Shoal.

China's unusually aggressive behaviour stands in stark contrast to its relatively calibrated response to assertive moves by other claimant states, most notably Malaysia's unilateral development of energy resources in Beijing-claimed waters as well as Vietnam's steady militarisation of occupied features in the South China Sea in recent years.

By all indications, it seems China has

been caught off-guard by the increasingly proactive policies of the Ferdinand Marcos Jr administration. Following a largely fruitless visit to Beijing last year, the Filipino president greenlit expanded security cooperation with Western partners, including granting the Pentagon access to key bases close to Taiwan's southern shores, as well as adopting an aggressive transparency initiative in the South China Sea to expose China's intimidation tactics in the area.

Having wrongly expected a "new golden era" of bilateral relations with Marcos Jr, who initially signalled continuity with his pro-Beijing predecessor, China is now lashing out. But with vast majority of Filipinos backing a tougher

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stance on the South China Sea disputes, and thanks to growing support from traditional allies such as the United States, Australia and Japan, the Marcos administration has every reason to stay its course in order to preserve its sovereign rights in the area.

Accordingly, the Philippines should adopt a three-pronged response. First, it should remain dogged in exposing China's bullying tactics as well as fortifying its position in areas under its control. To battle Beijing's evolving grey zone tactics, the Philippines should redeploy more vessels to the South China Sea theatre, expand its domestic naval military-industrial capacity, and adopt asymmetric measures to counter superior Chinese forces such as creating an auxiliary maritime force and expanding its fleet of drones, fast attack boats, and anti-ship missiles. The Philippines needs to win China's grudging respect after six years of subservience under Duterte.

Moreover, the Philippine has to deter various

efforts by China to infiltrate the Philippines' critical infrastructure and create divisions within the Philippines through vectors of disinformation. Taking a page from fellow democracies such as Australia, the Marcos Jr administration will have to adopt stringent measures to battle influence operations by Beijing. It should block efforts by China-affiliated companies seeking investments in strategic locations, most notably in Fuga Island and Cagayan Province (near Taiwan) as well as in Grande and Chiquita Islands (near Subic Bay).

The Philippines will also have to leverage and expand its maritime security cooperation with traditional allies and likeminded nations, most notably through regularised joint patrols in the South China Sea. Through a wide network of allies and partners, the Philippines should rapidly source modern weapons systems to upgrade its maritime defensive capabilities.

Once the Philippines achieves a position of strength, it should move towards decisive diplomacy with China. For instance, the Marcos Jr administration can reconsider any massive American military presence in northernmost Philippine bases close to Taiwan in exchange for China's de facto acceptance of expanded Philippine military presence in the Second Thomas Shoal and other features under its control. The Philippines and China can also restart negotiations over a service contract agreement to develop energy resources in contested areas such as Reed Bank as long as Philippine sovereign rights are preserved.

Despite the risks, this is a historic opportunity for the Philippines to stand its ground, enhance its strategic position, and preserve its sovereign rights in the South China Sea.

Cherry-Picks of the Month

1. North Korea factor Fades Amidst Seoul's Trilateral Engagements - <https://thediplomat.com/2024/01/north-korea-factor-fades-amid-seouls-trilateral-engagement/>
2. Sustaining Change in Cambodia: Hun Manet's Journey of Steady Reforms - <https://www.9dashline.com/article/sustaining-change-in-cambodia-hun-manets-journey-of-steady-reform>
3. India's Long Road to Lithium - <https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/01/27/indias-long-road-to-lithium/>
4. India can be Peacemaker to the World - <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/India-can-be-peacemaker-to-the-world/>
5. South Korea's Demographic Crisis is a National Security Threat - <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/south-korea%E2%80%99s-demographics-crisis-national-security-threat-208815>

CAPS Experts- Infocus

1. India-France Partnership in the Indo-Pacific: Positioning Japan - <https://capsindia.org/india-france-partnering-in-the-indo-pacific-positioning-japan/>
2. Entailment of Maldives' Actions Against India - <https://capsindia.org/entailment-of-maldives-actions-against-india/>
3. Change of Regime in Maldives: Why India Matters? - <https://capsindia.org/change-of-regime-in-maldives-why-india-matters/>

Debates/ Podcasts

1. Pacific Change Makers: NZ High Commissioner Dame Annette King on the Pacific, geopolitical competition, and her time serving in Australia - <https://omny.fm/shows/aus-png-network-leadership-series/pacific-change-makers-nz-high-commissioner-dame-an>
2. Trade Ties: Exploring South Asia's evolving Geopolitical and Trade Relations - <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/officecsdronlineorg/episodes/S2-EP-10-Trade-Ties-Exploring-South-Asias-Evolving-Geopolitical-and-Trade-Landscape-e2e57j9/a-aaqobsg>

3. India's Infra Thrust to Ladakh: Countering China and Pakistan - <https://www.youtube.com/h?v=WKlqHkZ3ct0&list=PLqG7Etq4EK6gdn7hi8ZdhABcicoulYo4X&index=6>

4. Australia High Commissioner Philip Green on Ties with India, Threat to Indian Missions and More - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXs9zvwxlbw>



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