



# 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

*There were political upheavals in the Indo-Pacific countries during the month. Paetongtarn Shinawatra was chosen to be the next prime minister of Thailand, taking over for Srettha Thavasin, who had been fired by the nation's constitutional court. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan essentially announced his resignation as prime minister when he declared he would not seek the position of head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in September elections.*

*There was consensus reached at the 34th AUSMIN (Foreign and Defence 2+2 Ministerial Meeting) in Washington, D.C. on August 6th, about a significant increase in US military deployment in Australia.*

*On August 20, there was a third 2+2 Ministerial Meeting between Japan and India, which led to little steps forward in their mutual defense and security cooperation. It is necessary to amend the 2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between India and Japan to take modern circumstances into account. From August 23 to 26, India's Defense Minister Shri Rajnath Singh traveled to the US to enhance bilateral defense relations.*

*Tensions in the South China Sea between China and the Philippines have a new hot spot: Sabina Shoal, which is completely inside the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone. China aimed to stop the Philippines from resupplying its ships at the Sabina Shoal and to assert its claim over almost the whole South China Sea.*

*NATO's Indo-Pacific presence was further demonstrated when Italian and French warships practiced alongside American and Japanese vessels in the Philippine Sea. On August 20, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, paid a visit to India, enhancing bilateral relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. On August 19–20 and August 28–29, respectively, the defense ministers of Australia and Indonesia made reciprocal visits to each other's nations, formally establishing a new defense cooperation agreement at the treaty level between them*

*Jai Hind*

Vol IV, No 04, 06 September 2024

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### PEEP-IN

*Modi 3.0 Faces the Dragon*

Read more about it at :-

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/modi-3-0-faces-the-dragon>

### QUOTE

*Malaysia is an important partner of India in ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific region. India gives priority to ASEAN centrality*

- Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim,  
Prime Minister of Malaysia

## Opinions/Review/Expert View

## What Kishida's Resignation Portends for Japanese Politics

Source: Ben Ascione | East Asia Forum

<https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/08/26/what-kishidas-resignation-portends-for-japanese-politics/> 26 August 2024



*NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg delivers remarks at NATO's 75th anniversary summit in Washington, U.S., July 10, 2024. REUTERS/Elizabeth Franz Purchase Licensing Rights*

On 14 August 2024, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced that he will not seek another term as leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). This decision ends his tenure as prime minister, with his successor to be determined by the LDP leadership election scheduled for September. The circumstances of his resignation reflect the fault lines within the LDP and public distrust of the party.

As Japan's eighth-longest-serving post-war prime minister and its longest consecutively serving foreign minister, Kishida's legacy will likely centre on his diplomatic and security

**Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's resignation stemmed from domestic issues such as the political slush fund scandal and public mistrust over his Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) ties with the controversial Unification Church.**

achievements. Kishida committed Japan to double its annual defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP (around 10 trillion yen or US\$68 billion) by 2027, including investment in Tomahawk missiles to develop Japan's missile counter-strike capability.

He decisively responded to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, imposing sanctions in concert with the G7, providing security assistance to Ukraine and inviting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the 2023 G7 summit in Hiroshima. Kishida also contributed to deepening the US–Japan alliance, repairing Japan–South Korea relations with President Yoon Suk Yeol, revitalising US–Japan–South Korea trilateral security cooperation and advocating for NATO's cooperation with the Indo-Pacific Four.

For all his international achievements, the domestic proved Kishida's downfall. Throughout his tenure, he relied on and cooperated with the LDP's conservative-nationalists, particularly the Abe faction, disappointing the party's centrists — which the Kishida faction initially seemed to represent.

As Kishida attempted to chart a middle course between the LDP's conservative-nationalists and the public on issues such as the Unification Church, the political slush fund scandal and the cost of living, public distrust in the LDP sharpened.

The assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe in July 2022 served to

expose the hitherto taboo topic of the LDP's relationship with the Unification Church. LDP conservative-nationalists, especially the Abe faction, had for decades received political support from the church, including election campaign volunteers and coordinated votes. In exchange, the Unification Church gained policy influence and protection from legal scrutiny of their exploitative practices towards church members.

Kishida attempted to win back public support by reshuffling his cabinet and removing members with links to the Unification Church. His government also filed a court order requesting the dissolution of the Unification Church. Yet he divided public opinion by holding a state funeral for Abe at an estimated cost of 1.66 billion yen (US\$12 million) as details of the Unification Church's exploitative practices were emerging. Public opinion felt that the LDP had not sufficiently explained the true extent of its relationship with the church. And at best the court request will ultimately only revoke the church's tax-exempt status in Japan, rather than put it out of business.

Tensions between the LDP and the public boiled over with the emergence of the political slush fund scandal in December 2023. LDP factions underreported income from fundraising parties, creating hidden funds for unofficial expenses outside legal spending practices. Kishida ousted all members of the Abe faction, who accounted for most of the unreported income, from his cabinet. He also

dissolved his own faction, pressuring other factions to follow suit. But Kishida's taskforce into the scandal fell short of public expectations and was criticised for producing only surface-level changes that failed to punish wrongdoers or address the underlying culture of political corruption.

Perhaps just as important as the loss of public trust in the LDP in driving Kishida's decision to resign was his inability to follow through on his signature economic policy concept. When Kishida first ran for the LDP leadership in September 2021, he did so by promoting a 'new form of capitalism', promising to accelerate economic growth through a more equitable distribution of wealth, invest in human capital and innovation and address demographic challenges. This seemed designed to evoke associations with former prime minister Hayato Ikeda's successful Income Doubling Plan in the 1960s.

Yet Kishida's new capitalism was criticised for its vagueness. While it initially seemed to represent a shift away from Abenomics, pressure from the conservative Abe faction forced Kishida to emphasise continuity. This made it difficult for Kishida to present a coherent economic vision, ultimately disappointing both the LDP's conservative and centrist streams and the public at large.

The continuation of Abenomics-lite locked in a weakened yen, spurring a cost-of-living crisis. Kishida's response to this included

**Kishida attempted to win back public support by reshuffling his cabinet and removing members with links to the Unification Church.**

a one-off stimulus package for low-income households, negotiations with business federations for wage hikes and a rise in the minimum wage to 1054 yen (US\$7). But these limited changes failed to keep pace with inflation and thus earned very limited public support.

The race to succeed Kishida is now wide open with an unprecedented number of contenders and no clear frontrunner. In the past, LDP politicians would follow cues from their faction bosses in the leadership election. But now, with the factional system upended, voting patterns may be more fluid.

Kishida's comments when announcing his resignation pointed to a search for somebody who could 'firmly show the public the changing face of the LDP' and re-win public trust. In other words, finding a fresh face to lead the party to victory in the next elections, which must take place by July 2025 for the upper house and October 2025 for the lower house.

Despite ongoing public distrust in the LDP, the weak and divided opposition parties still looking incapable of toppling it. Greater uncertainty surrounds whether Kishida's successor can unite the LDP, credibly regain public trust and build a political foundation to enact meaningful economic and political reform.

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## India-Japan Defense Ties Quietly Reaching New Heights

Source: Simran Walia | Asia Times

<https://asiatimes.com/2024/08/india-japan-defense-ties-quietly-reaching-new-heights/> 30 August 2024



Japan and India conduct bilateral exercises on land, sea and air. Image: Japan Self Defense Forces

Over the past twenty years, the Japan-India security collaboration has grown steadily, though not quickly. Given the outcomes of a recent key defense meeting, that may be ready to change.

**Japan-India 'two plus two' talks agree to expand exercises, key military equipment transfers and collaboration in space**

On August 20, the third Japan-India Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting, known colloquially as "two-plus-two" talks, was held with little fanfare and scant global media attention in New Delhi.

At an apex level, Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara and Foreign Affairs Minister Yoko Kamikawa met their Indian counterparts, Rajnath Singh and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

Atop their meeting agenda was China's expanding military, political and economic might in the Indo-Pacific, prompting the emerging partners to align their rhetoric and strengthen their defense cooperation in new unison.

In a statement, the ministers expressed their joint opposition to any unilateral attempts to alter the strategic status quo and reiterated their commitment to upholding and bolstering the rules-based international order – a not-so-veiled joust at China’s growing assertiveness in the region.

Putting muscle behind the rhetoric, they agreed to conduct more bilateral and multilateral defense exercises. In particular, India said it welcomed Japanese fighters at its Tarang Shakti exercise, the first multilateral exercise hosted by the Indian Air Force.

All three Indian and Japanese military services – army, naval and air – held bilateral exercises in 2023, including the inaugural Veer Guardian 2023, which took place at Japan’s Hyakuri Air Base.

The ministers also agreed to update and amend the joint declaration on security cooperation that Japan and India first signed in October 2008 “to reflect contemporary priorities and be responsive to contemporary security challenges facing them.” Areas of collaborative priority will include cyber and space.

Perhaps more sensitively to China, the ministers also discussed the transfer of Japan’s latest radar technology, now utilized by the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force’s Mogami-class multirole frigate, to India.

Moreover, the ministers made progress in the export of Japan’s “Unified Complex Radio

Antenna”, or UNICORN system, an antenna mast that includes sensors and transponders for communications, electronic warfare and navigation, to India’s navy.

Japan’s Mogami-class frigate’s bridge is now outfitted with UNICORN and a Nora-50 integration mast, a horn-shaped structure comprised of numerous antennas for tactical data links, TACAN (Tactical Air Navigation System) and communications.

UNICORN reduces the radar cross-section (RCS) of the antennas by stacking numerous antennas on top of one another, enclosing the entire system in one structure, making it stealthy.

Japanese Defense Minister Kihara said he approved the UNICORN transfer with a grant totaling approximately 1.5 billion yen (US\$10.3 million), the first of its kind under Tokyo’s new Defense Equipment Transfer Facilitation Fund.

If and when transferred to India, it will mark Japan’s second key defense equipment export under the fund, the first being the export of air surveillance radar systems to the Philippines, which likewise will be deployed to counter China’s aggression in the region.

India is known to be pursuing high-end military and other technology transfers from strategic partners, including Quad members the United States, Australia and Japan. Meanwhile, Japan’s 2022 National Security Strategy explicitly emphasizes expanding security cooperation with India.

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It's a delicate balancing act for both as India maintains policies of "strategic autonomy" and non-aligned diplomacy, both of which refrain from forming alliances with other nations, and Japan maintains a pacifist constitution that is at increasing odds with the country's remilitarization.

On the diplomatic front, the four ministers discussed India's intention to open a new consulate in Fukuoka, raising India's total number of diplomatic posts in Japan to three. Japan presently maintains five diplomatic missions in India. More broadly, both sides agreed at two-plus-two talks on the need for UN Security Council reform.

Clearly, Japan and India have strong strategic incentives to expand their collaboration, interoperability and confidence-building as both seek to consolidate their maritime peripheries and play more proactive roles in the region's strategic balance.

The question now is how China will respond to India and Japan's budding and increasingly fruitful strategic relations.

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**India's increasing role in shaping regional security by ensuring freedom of navigation, now especially as a member of the Combined Maritime Force (CMF), was acknowledged.**

## Never Before Has Defence Been So Important For India-US Ties

Source: Harsh V. Pant and Vivek Mishra | ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/english/research/never-before-has-defence-been-so-important-for-india-us-ties> 30 August D2024



The US-India defence relationship is rapidly expanding, adapting to evolving regional and global security demands. This includes safeguarding supply chains, advancing critical and emerging technologies, and enhancing cooperation in cyber, space, and new dimensions of battlespace dominance. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to the US from August 23-26 highlighted these shifts, aiming to bridge bilateral gaps in these critical areas. The visit underscored a clear trend: while major defence deals continue to strengthen traditional security ties, both nations are increasingly emphasising emerging strategic elements to integrate the security partnership with a purposive intent towards making the Indo-Pacific region free and open.

Issues central to joint India-US interests in the Indian Ocean and the security of the Indo-Pacific

are being prioritised. India's increasing role in shaping regional security by ensuring freedom of navigation, now especially as a member of the Combined Maritime Force (CMF), was acknowledged. With India assuming leadership in the Combined Task Force 150 in 2025, stakes for an expanded regional security role have increased for New Delhi.

## The Indo-Pacific Arena

As the Indo-Pacific remains central to regional and global security, enhancing partnership in this region is key to shaping a regionally favourable security architecture. Towards this, the visit provided an opportunity for steps in increasing supply chain security as well as enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean. Among the highlights was a new agreement to expand and strengthen operational coordination between India and the US by placing Indian liaison officers at US commands. The agreement is a step up for regional security coordination and domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific for India, complementing an earlier initiative to host US officers at the Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR) in India. It also overcomes the capacity limitations of India, indeed any country, to solely monitor the vast expanse of the Indo-Pacific on a real-time basis. Beyond the Indo-Pacific, placing Indian liaison officers at the other 10 Combatant Commands could usher new vistas in information sharing.

At the heart of the visit were steps to strengthen the Major Defence Partnership (MDP) and

provide fresh momentum to joint production, including the reigniting of the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI). Under the US-India Roadmap for Defense Industrial Cooperation, an agreement to jointly produce jet engines, unmanned platforms, munitions, and ground mobility systems was signed. Leading up to the third summit of the India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) to be held in September in the US, discussions to expand cooperation in the areas of undersea and space-related collaborations were timely.

## What is SOSA

One of the most significant outcomes of the visit was the signing of the Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA), which makes India the 18th country to enter into this agreement with the US. It reflects a shared long-term vision to seamlessly integrate the defence industrial ecosystems of both nations

**The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment will host a DTTI meeting in the coming months, bringing together government and private stakeholders from both countries' defence industries.**

while safeguarding supply chains from future disruptions. SOSA complements the Major Defense Partnership (MDP) and the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). Notably, the visit aimed to reinvigorate the DTTI, a co-production initiative launched with high expectations, but that had lost momentum. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment will host a DTTI meeting in the coming months, bringing together government and private stakeholders from both countries' defence industries. The DTTI's primary goal is to integrate the defence industrial bases of the US and India, promoting bilateral co-development,

co-production, and co-sustainment efforts.

SOSA strengthens the partnership by establishing guardrails for supply chains between the two countries' defence industries, which are poised to grow with new co-production and co-development opportunities. Guided by the US Defense Priorities and Allocations System (DPAS), the arrangement provides structural and institutional assurances for defense supplies. India, in turn, is expected to develop a common code of conduct for government and industry stakeholders, prioritizing critical supplies to the US on a voluntary basis. With SOSA in place, working groups will have the framework to communicate more frequently and take proactive steps to ensure supply chain stability in both peacetime and crisis situations.

### Diaspora as a 'Living Bridge'

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's reference to the Indian diaspora in the US as a 'living bridge' now resonates within the context of the growing India-US defence relationship. This June marked the first anniversary of the US-India INDUS-X Initiative, which aims to build a defence innovation bridge between the two countries under the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET). By connecting researchers, investors, and defence tech companies from both nations, INDUS-X outlines a strategy to harness private capital for defence innovation.

India and the US are swiftly adapting to the

evolving global security landscape, responding to new threat perceptions with increased innovation and cooperation in advanced domains. The second US-India Advanced Domains Defense Dialogue (AD3) held this year underscored the importance of coordination in emerging defence areas, including space, cyber, and artificial intelligence, while identifying critical sub-sectors for potential industrial collaboration.

### The Next Goals

The Defence Minister also visited the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Memphis, accompanied by a delegation from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), signalling a potential pathway for co-learning and development. In a boost to India's Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capabilities, India secured the purchase of sonobuoys from the US in the lead-up to the visit. The acquisition and co-production of General Atomics' MQ-9B remotely piloted aircraft systems and the joint production of GE F414 jet engines in India are the next major goals for both nations.

Rajnath Singh's visit managed to underline once again that defence is the main driver when it comes to shaping the trajectory of US-India bilateral engagement.

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## South China Sea: Sabina Shoal may be New Hotspot as Philippines, Beijing Spar Over Sovereignty

Source: Jeoffrey Maitem | SCMP

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3273452/south-china-sea-sabina-shoal-may-be-new-hotspot-philippines-beijing-spar-over-sovereignty> 07 August 2024



A recent move by the Philippines to indefinitely deploy a coastguard vessel to the Sabina Shoal in the South China Sea has raised tensions further in the disputed waterway, with Manila and Beijing both accusing the other of illegally occupying the maritime feature.

Analysts say the shoal, known as Xianbin Jiao in China and Escoda Shoal in the Philippines, could become the next flashpoint in the territorial conflict given its strategic value to both sides.

Manila on Monday rejected a claim by a China Coast Guard spokesperson that the presence of the BRP Teresa Magbanua, a Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) ship stationed at the shoal, violated Beijing's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights. The Chinese side also claimed the vessel had been "illegally stranded" on the shoal.

**Analysts note shoal's location ideal for projection of power and call for Manila to strengthen presence in disputed area to counter China.**

Jay Tarriela, PCG spokesman for the West Philippine Sea, denied the accusation, saying the BRP Magbanua had been "intentionally deployed to maintain our presence and ensure the protection of this area of the West Philippine Sea", referring to the part of the South China Sea that lies within the country's exclusive economic zone.

"Given our sovereign rights in these waters, the Philippine coastguard can remain there for as long as necessary," Tarriela added.

Manila has had the BRP Teresa Magbanua deployed to the shoal – a low-tide elevation feature that is part of the Spratly Islands, located 75 nautical miles (139km) from the island province of Palawan – since April to monitor and prevent alleged illegal activities by Chinese vessels.

In May, the Philippines claimed China could be undertaking land reclamation activities near the shoal after crushed corals were found in the area.

Over the weekend, the BRP Teresa Magbanua was used to provide Philippine fishermen with fuel subsidies, while Chinese research vessel the Ke Xue San Hao, the China Coast Guard's largest vessel nicknamed "the Monster", and 12 Chinese maritime militia were spotted patrolling the area.

### Strategic Shoal

Jose Antonio Custodio, a defence analyst and fellow at the Consortium of Indo-Pacific Researchers, told This Week in Asia on Tuesday Sabina Shoal could be the next potential flashpoint

in the South China Sea conflict.

“The Chinese are trying to inch forward. The Philippines is also trying to protect its line of communication and sovereignty there. The shoal is ideal for forward operating areas ... Similar to what the Chinese have done in Mischief Reef, it will allow for the projection of power or the protection of communication lines,” Custodio said.

Mischief Reef, known as Panganiban Reef in the Philippines, has been developed and transformed by China into an artificial island with military installations, including runways and missile systems.

Security analyst Joshua Espeña, a resident fellow and vice-president of the International Development and Security Cooperation, noted that Sabina Shoal is close to Second Thomas Shoal – another disputed maritime feature that has been the site of numerous conflicts between both sides – and a good place for rest and replenishment for small boats.

The Philippine and China recently said they had reached a deal to de-escalate tensions at Second Thomas Shoal by agreeing to terms under which the Philippines could conduct rotation and resupply (RORE) missions to their outpost there.

Previously, Beijing would attempt to disrupt these missions, which led to numerous clashes. An incident on June 17 left several members of the Philippine navy injured, including one who lost a thumb.

Espeña said maintaining a presence at Sabina Shoal would give China more power to enforce its terms over RORE missions.

“This is something that the Philippines must counter, given the critical value of a symmetric enforcement of the RORE. If not, the Philippines might be in a bad position in the long term,” Espeña told This Week in Asia.

He also noted that Sabina would serve as a good forward operating base for the People’s Liberation Army’s Southern Theatre Command.

**“This is something that the Philippines must counter, given the critical value of a symmetric enforcement of the RORE. If not, the Philippines might be in a bad position in the long term,” Espeña told This Week in Asia.**

Sherwin Ona, an associate professor of political science at De La Salle University in Manila, said it was not difficult to imagine that Sabina Shoal would become a flashpoint since it was the “scene of an environmental crime”, given the accusations that China had destroyed coral for illegal land reclamation activities.

“The current situation shows that the Philippines needs bigger ships that can stay in an area for longer periods. This underscores the need for the PCG to invest in floating platforms,” he said.

Ray Powell, a maritime security analyst at the Gordian Knot Center for National Security Innovation at Stanford University, said Beijing had stationed its ships at Sabina Shoal for years, but the Philippines’ recent investigation revealing apparent preliminary reclamation activity forced Manila to deploy the BRP Teresa Magbanua to monitor and contest China’s attempt to lay claim to this feature.

“This unexpected move has clearly aggravated growing influence in the region. Beijing, which has responded by sending in larger militia as well as coastguard vessels, including the 12,000-ton ‘Monster’ ship, which remains there now,” Powell told This Week in Asia.

**Manila and Beijing have been locked in an increasingly contentious territorial row in the South China Sea in recent months.**

Manila and Beijing have been locked in an increasingly contentious territorial row in the South China Sea in recent months. A tribunal in The Hague ruled in 2016 that Beijing’s claims over the South China Sea through its so-called nine-dash line had no legal basis and recognised Manila’s sovereign rights in the waterway. China, however, has refused to accept the ruling and continues to assert claims over maritime features such as the Sabina Shoal.

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## NATO Alliance Bolsters Naval Presence in Western Pacific to Counter China

Source: Alastair Gale | Business Standard

[https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/nato-alliance-bolsters-naval-presence-in-western-pacific-to-counter-china-124081600935\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/nato-alliance-bolsters-naval-presence-in-western-pacific-to-counter-china-124081600935_1.html) 16 August 2024



NATO is bolstering its presence in the Western Pacific by sending warships to more places. Image: Bloomberg

NATO is bolstering its presence in the Western Pacific by sending warships to more places, a move that risks stoking tensions with China, which is worried about the alliance’s

The latest entrant is the Italian aircraft carrier Cavour, the first time Rome has deployed its lone carrier to the Pacific. The Cavour and an Italian frigate recently held exercises with the US carrier USS Abraham Lincoln near the island of Guam. A day later, F-35 stealth jets and AV-8B Harriers launched from the Cavour practiced shooting down airborne targets.

“This is a demonstration, above all, of our ability to project power anywhere,” said Rear Admiral Giancarlo Ciappina, the commander of the Cavour carrier strike group.

Few security analysts expect European navies to play a frontline role in any conflict in the Pacific. But the rising frequency of their presence is complicating China’s calculus as it raises the tempo of its military activity, including fighter and bomber flights near Taiwan and confrontations with the Philippines in the South China Sea.

In times of crisis, European navies might augment the US military, such as by providing additional platforms for US aircraft, adding submarine-hunting capabilities or contributing to supply missions. Nato members have a mutual defense treaty that only applies to attacks in Europe and North America, so they wouldn’t be legally compelled to defend each other in the Indo-Pacific region.

The British aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales and its strike group are scheduled to arrive

in the Pacific next year and France has said it would send the Charles de Gaulle carrier strike group. A strike group is a mini-armada built around an aircraft carrier that typically includes destroyers, cruisers and other vessels, as well as fighter jets and other aircraft.

Germany and the Netherlands are among other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that plan to send warships to the region.

Nato militaries use standardized equipment and tactics, enabling them to work closely together — known in military jargon as “interoperability.” In the Pacific, senior officials say the goal is to go further and be able to swap in and out of American and other allied naval battle groups.

“I think in the future, we have to come more and more to the point where we are not talking any longer about interoperability but where we are talking about interchangeability,” German Chief of Defense General Carsten Breuer said in a recent interview.

Nato had been wary of confrontation with China, but tensions escalated this year when it called Beijing an enabler of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine — an accusation China rejected. In 2022, Nato included China for the first time in its guiding strategy document, describing the country as a challenger to the organization’s “interests, security and values.”

China, in turn, says instability is a result of militaries from other regions operating near

its shores. In July, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said Nato should “not create chaos in the Asia-Pacific after creating turmoil in Europe.”

As China’s rhetoric on Nato has aligned with Russia, it has also stepped up military exercises with Moscow, including bomber flights and joint naval patrols.

Military deployments in the Indo-Pacific region by Nato, meanwhile, come as several European countries have adopted national strategies that emphasize their interests in the region, including the continued free flows of trade.

Italy has tried to perform a balancing act with China under Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. It pulled out of China’s Belt and Road investment initiative last year but Meloni recently

visited Beijing and held talks with President Xi Jinping.

After leaving Italy in June, the carrier Cavour took part in multinational military exercises in Australia. It’s set to train with the Japanese navy this month before returning home via Singapore and India.

Italy has realized that “engagement without some degree of military power underwriting it, it is simply not enough to signal that one is serious about building ties in an age of growing contestation,” said Alessio Patalano, professor of war & strategy in East Asia at King’s College in London.

**The British aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales and its strike group are scheduled to arrive in the Pacific next year and France has said it would send the Charles de Gaulle carrier strike group.**

The emerging role of European navies in the Indo-Pacific comes as demands are increasing on the US military in other locations. The USS Abraham Lincoln was ordered to speed up a planned deployment to the Middle East by the Pentagon after the recent training with the Cavour.

Some security analysts say European navies can't substitute for a strong US naval presence in the Indo-Pacific, the region the Pentagon has labeled as its priority theater. Deployments such as the mission to the Middle East for the Lincoln could stretch the fleet of American carriers.

"This constant demand on carriers means we need 15 of them but we only have 11, placing more stress on the ships and crews. It isn't sustainable and the Navy needs to grow to meet the rising dangers," said Brent Sadler, a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a Washington-based think-tank.

China has only two operational aircraft carriers but around 234 warships, larger than the US Navy's total of 219, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a US think-tank. China has around half of the world's shipbuilding capacity, giving it the potential to add to its fleet faster than the US.

Indo-Pacific nations are helping to offset the shortfall, particularly Japan, which has over 100 warships and routinely patrols with the US Navy. Japan, along with South Korea, Australia and New Zealand have forged closer ties with Nato and leaders of the so-called Pacific Four attended this year's Nato summit in Washington.

"The security of the Indo-Pacific and the security of the Euro-Atlantic are two sides of

the same coin," said US Ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel. "Increased cooperation between Nato member countries and our four Indo-Pacific partners reinforces our collective deterrence and boosts stability across both regions and beyond."

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### **Cherry-Picks of the Month**

1. Australia and U.S. Bolster Defense Cooperation, Basing Arrangements - <https://news.usni.org/2024/08/07/australia-and-u-s-bolster-defense-cooperation-basing-arrangements>
2. Modi 3.0 and India's Trajectory in the QUAD - <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/08/23/modi-3-0-and-indias-trajectory-in-the-quad/>
3. China-Philippine tensions center on new flash point: Sabina Shoal - <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2024/08/27/asia-pacific/south-china-sea-philippines-china-sabina-shoal/>
4. Kishida's Legacy of Global Success, Domestic Distress - <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/08/kishidas-legacy-of-global-success-domestic-distress?lang=en>
5. India-Malaysia ties elevated to comprehensive strategic partnership - <https://www.hindustantimes.com/ht-insight/international-affairs/indiamalaysia-ties-elevated-to-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-101724918225435.html>
6. Indonesia and Australia Sign 'Historic' Defense Cooperation Agreement - <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/indonesia-and-australia-sign-historic-defense-cooperation-agreement/>
7. China and Philippines trade blame as ships collide - <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2erwedxz5o>

### **Caps Experts View**

1. Augmenting India's Indigenous Ballistic Missile Defence: An Analysis - <https://capsindia.org/augmenting-indias-indigenous-ballistic-missile-defence-an-analysis/>

## Podcasts/Debates/Discussions

1. India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue, Key Talks On Indo-pacific Security & Regional Cooperation | India Global - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv9XXnl5m3E>
2. Investigating China's 'historic' claims in the South China Sea - <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/investigating-chinas-historic-claims-in-the-south/id1522448504?i=1000668077485>

3. India's Expanding Maritime Focus | Can It Challenge China in the Indo-Pacific? - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2gGzluYvpQ>



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