



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



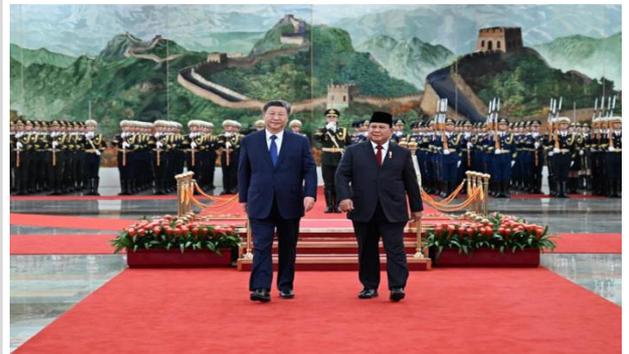
INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

NOVEMBER 2024

Author

Lalit Kapur

Volume V, Issue 11



Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

www.delhipolicygroup.org



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November 2024

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

This publication is a monthly analytical survey of developments and policy trends that impact India's interests and define its challenges across the extended Indo-Pacific maritime space, which has become the primary theatre of global geopolitical contestation. It is authored by Cmde. Lalit Kapur (Retd.), DPG Senior Fellow for Maritime Strategy, assisted by Ms. Divya Rai, based on open source reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to the author at lalit@dpg.org.in. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

Cover Image:

Flypast during President Droupadi Murmu's day at sea on INS Vikrant, November 07, 2024. Source: PIB

China's President Xi Jinping welcomes Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Beijing, November 9, 2024.

Source: The State Council of the People's Republic of China

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with President Joe Biden of the US and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil at the G20 Rio Summit, November 19, 2024. Source: MEA Photo Gallery

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Volume V, Issue 11
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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

November 2024

Abstract

Elections in the US on November 05 resulted in a decisive victory for Donald Trump. His Republican party also gained control of the Senate and retained its majority in the House of Representatives.

In other elections, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam was elected Prime Minister of Mauritius on November 10. In Sri Lanka, Harini Amarasuriya was appointed Prime Minister following the decisive victory of the National People's Power coalition led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on November 14.

Shigeru Ishiba was designated the 103rd Prime Minister of Japan following voting in the Diet on November 11. He leads a minority government, indicating a period of political instability lies ahead for Japan. While Ishiba's agenda is heavily focused on domestic issues, his initial remarks on foreign policy indicate possible changes in Japan's outlook.

The Philippines introduced a new Maritime Zones Act on November 08, specifying its territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. China condemned the move, describing it as an attempt to enshrine the "illegal" South China Sea arbitration award into domestic legislation, and asserting that the Scarborough Shoal and Spratly Islands were indisputably China's territory.

The Philippines also brought into force a new Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act to which China responded on November 10 by promulgating the baseline for the Scarborough Shoal and renaming what it claimed were Chinese islands in the Spratly group.

On November 27, a Russian spokesperson stated that if the US places Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles in Japan, it would retaliate by deploying short range and intermediate range missiles in East Asia.

Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto visited Beijing from November 08-10. Outcomes included commencement of defence and security cooperation, including exercises between the two countries, and an implicit

acknowledgement of the existence of a dispute over maritime boundaries in South China Sea in modification of a long-held Indonesian position.

Prabowo followed up with a visit to the US from November 10-13, signalling a desire for equidistance in Indonesia's relations with China and the US.

Presidents Joe Biden of the US and Xi Jinping of China met on the sidelines of the APEC Summit in Lima on November 16. China's readout of the meeting was marked for its prescriptive lessons, while the US highlighted both convergences and differences.

Leaders of the G20 met in Rio de Janeiro on November 18-19. Their joint statement focused on Brazil's priorities for its presidency: social inclusion and the fight against hunger and poverty; sustainable development, climate action and the energy transition; and the reform of global governance institutions. Amongst meetings on the sidelines were the second Australia-India Annual Summit, an India-Italy Summit, and the second US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Summit.

ASEAN defence ministers met in Vientiane, Lao PDR, on November 20, followed by a meeting of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus on November 21. India was represented by its defence minister, who also met his Chinese and American counterparts on the sidelines.

Vietnam and Malaysia upgraded their relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership on November 21. Malaysia and South Korea elevated their relations to a strategic partnership on November 25.

Japan and Italy concluded an agreement for reciprocal provision of supplies and services between their armed forces on November 25.

Three flight tests during the month spoke of India's advancing missile programme. A long-range land attack cruise missile was tested on November 12. This was followed by the test of a long-range hypersonic missile on November 16. On November 27, India reportedly tested the K4 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile from INS Arighaat.

India and Japan concluded a Memorandum of Implementation for the co-development and co-production of the UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna) mast in India on November 16.

The maiden Russia-Indonesia naval exercise took place off Surabaya from November 05-08. An exercise between the Russian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy took place off Sattahip on November 26.

Australia announced on November 25 that Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' Mogami class and ThyssenKrupp Marine System's Meko A200 designs had been short listed for its future frigate programme.

Philippines and China Squabble Over New Maritime Laws

by Divya Rai

On November 8, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed two pieces of legislation: the Philippine Maritime Zones Act and the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act. The Maritime Zones Act establishes specific Philippine maritime zones, while the Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act designates routes for foreign vessels navigating through the Philippines archipelago. His action sparked a response and counter from China, exacerbating tensions between the Philippines and China over claims in the South China Sea.

The Philippine Maritime Zones Act (Republic Act No. 12064) declares the country's maritime zones in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)¹. The Act defines the geographical limits of the Philippine maritime zones, covering internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf. Notably, this law recognizes "the West Philippine Sea" as part of its legal framework, reinforcing its claims within its 200 nautical mile EEZ, particularly concerning the Spratly Island Group also claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam. It declares, "the high-tide features covered by the Kalayaan Island Group (the Spratly Islands) in the West Philippine Sea shall have a territorial sea of twelve (12) nautical miles from its baselines as determined above"².

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded the same day with a statement asserting that "The Philippine Maritime Zones Act illegally includes China's Huangyan Dao (the Scarborough Shoal) and most of the islands and reefs of China's Nansha Qundao (the Spratly Islands) and relevant waters into the maritime zones of the Philippines, and attempts to enshrine the illegal award of the South China Sea arbitration in the form of domestic legislation. China strongly condemns and firmly rejects this as the move gravely infringes upon China's sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea". The statement further added, "the Philippines' unilateral initiation of South China Sea (SCS) arbitration without prior consent from China seriously violates UNCLOS and substantially impairs its integrity and authority. The territorial sovereignty and maritime rights of China have solid historical and legal bases"³.

¹ Congress of the Philippines, "An Act Declaring the Maritime Zones Under the Jurisdiction of The Republic of The Philippines, <https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/4304339610!.pdf>.

² Ibid, pg-5

³ "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The People's Republic of China on the Enactment by the Republic of the Philippines Of Its 'Maritime Zones Act' and 'Archipelagic

On November 10, countering the Philippines Maritime Zone Act, China published 16 geographic coordinates for baselines around Huangyan Dao (Scarborough Shoal)⁴. The announcement of baseline is designed to solidify China's claims in the region. However, the promulgated baselines are confined to Scarborough Shoal. This stands in stark contrast to China's extensive baseline claims surrounding the Paracel Islands, known as Xisha Qundao. In addition to the baselines, China's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Civil Affairs released Chinese names of reefs and islands in the SCS, including Houteng Xidao (Houteng Island), Ren'ai Nanjiao (Ren'ai Reef (North)), and Ren'ai Beijiao (Ren'ai Reef (South))⁵.

The second law enacted, the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act (ASL) (Republic Act No. 12065), defines sea lanes and air routes while designating three archipelagic sea lanes for foreign vessels' passage⁶. The designated sea lanes are:

I: Philippine Sea–Balintang Channel–West Philippine Sea

II: Celebes Sea–Sibutu Passage–Sulu Sea–Cuyo East Pass–Mindoro Strait–West Philippine Sea

III: Celebes Sea–Basilan Strait–Sulu Sea–Nasubata Channel–Balabac Strait–West Philippine Sea

The Philippines claimed the status of an archipelagic state as defined in UNCLOS on June 17, 1961, establishing a system of straight archipelagic baselines that effectively "closed" the entire archipelago. However, it did not designate archipelagic sea lanes. The ASL Act outlines rights and the legal status for straits used by foreign ships and aircraft for international navigation, as per Article 53 of the UNCLOS. According to this article, ships from all countries have the right to navigate through archipelagic waters. This includes

Sea Lanes Act," n.d. November 8, 2024.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/wjbxw/202411/t20241108_11523786.html.

⁴ China Military, "China releases baselines of territorial sea adjacent to Huangyan Dao. November 10, 2024.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16350831.html.

⁵ Global Times, "China announces standard names of some islands and reefs in the South China Sea," November 10, 2024. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202411/1322772.shtml>.

⁶ Congress Of The Philippines, An Act Authorizing The President Of The Philippines To Establish The Archipelagic Sea Lanes In Philippine Archipelagic Waters, Prescribing The Obligations Of Foreign Ships And Aircraft Exercising Archipelagic Sea Lanes Passage Through The Designated Archipelagic Sea Lanes, And For Other Purposes, n.d. <https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/4404440513!.pdf>

two types of passage: archipelagic sea lanes passage, which allows navigation through designated routes, and innocent passage, which permits ships to traverse these waters as long as their passage does not threaten the peace, security, or good order of the archipelagic state⁷. This is an important move by the Philippines, enabling it to enforce its laws against Chinese Coast Guard and military vessels that have hitherto been passing freely through the archipelago.

China's Foreign Ministry expressed opposition to the ASL Act, claiming it was not in accordance with international law and International Maritime Organization (IMO) resolutions. However, they did not specify which provisions they believe are incompatible with IMO's regulations. This ambiguity leaves room for interpretation regarding China's diverse position on both laws.

Despite the 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), tensions have not abated between China and Philippines. China refuses to recognise ruling and continues to assert its claims in the SCS. Since last year, confrontations between China and Philippine Coastguard forces have increased, particularly incidents of vessel collisions near Scarborough Shoal and Sabina Shoal. The tension shows no signs of abating

Insofar as the legislative actions by the Philippines are concerned, the Maritime Zone Act does not change Philippines' claims in the SCS. Rather, it brings more clarity and provides grounds for negotiations and delimitation of maritime boundaries with other claimants in the SCS. At the same time, it safeguards Philippines claims irrespective of shifts in future administrations. This is relevant given a past administration's ignoring the PCA ruling in order to improve relations with China.

President Subianto Visits China and the US

Less than three weeks after assuming office, Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto undertook his first visits abroad, to China and the US. First was a State Visit to China, from November 08-10. An official visit to the US followed, from November 10-13.

In China, Prabowo met China's President Xi Jinping, Premier of the State Council Li Qiang and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National

⁷ Preamble To the United Nations Convention on The Law of the Sea. (n.d.).
https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part4.htm

People's Congress Zhao Leji. An expansive Joint Statement was issued⁸. The key elements of this include commonalities in the outlooks of the two countries; greater solidarity and cooperation as part of the Global South; closer strategic cooperation, including the institution of a 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue commencing 2025; building stronger political trust; forging a new pattern of development cooperation on all fronts; enhancing people-to-people exchanges; enhancing maritime cooperation; building a new pillar of defence and security cooperation; upholding regional development, prosperity and stability; closer cooperation to tackle global challenges; and the signing of cooperation agreements. Seven agreements, including on export of coconuts to China, promotion of sustainable fishing, and strengthening cooperation on the blue economy, mineral resources, green minerals, water resources and conformity cooperation were signed⁹.

The two sides agreed that China and Indonesia are both major developing countries, emerging markets and significant forces of the Global South, and that their bilateral relations are of great strategic significance. On the journey ahead, both resolved to carry forward their tradition of bilateral cooperation, maintain the right direction in bilateral relations and set a good example of major developing countries working in unity and advancing South-South cooperation.

The two sides agreed to upgrade their existing cooperation based on four pillars (political, economic, people-to-people exchanges and maritime aspects) with the addition of security as the fifth pillar. They agreed to optimize and review existing bilateral dialogue mechanisms and explore alternative mechanisms at appropriate levels of government and in more areas of cooperation. Resolving to build stronger political mutual trust, the two sides reaffirmed their mutual support to each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security. China resolutely supported Indonesia's national unity and territorial integrity, while Indonesia reiterated its consistent adherence to the One-China principle and its recognition of the Government of the PRC as the sole legal government representing the whole of China, with Taiwan as its inalienable part. Indonesia also considered issue related to Xinjiang and Xizang as internal affairs of China.

⁸ Joint Statement Between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia on Advancing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the China-Indonesia Community with a Shared Future, November 9, 2024,

https://news.cgtn.com/news/files/Joint_Statement_between_China_and_Indonesia.pdf

⁹ President Prabowo, President Xi Jinping witness signing of cooperation agreements, November 9, 2024, <https://setkab.go.id/en/president-prabowo-president-xi-jinping-witness-signing-of-cooperation-agreements/>

On maritime cooperation, the two sides “reached important common understanding on joint development in areas of overlapping claims and agreed to establish an Inter-Governmental Joint Steering Committee to explore and advance cooperation pursuant to their prevailing laws and regulations”. They also agreed to comprehensively resume cooperation throughout the entire fishery industrial chain and jointly promote the conservation and sustainable utilisation of fishery resources. They further agreed to step up institutional cooperation between their Coast Guards. The quoted section of the joint statement implicitly indicates that the two have reached some agreement on their overlapping claims in the Natuna Sea and waters of the Riau Islands, where Indonesia’s territorial sea and China’s nine-dash line claim overlap. Indonesia has till now long rejected China’s territorial assertions in the South China Sea, including the nine-dash line, arguing that they have no basis under UNCLOS. Indonesia’s MOFA was quick to issue a press release stating that nothing in the section on maritime cooperation in the joint statement should be construed as recognition of China’s nine-dash line claim in any way, and that Indonesia believes that maritime cooperation would facilitate the conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea¹⁰. However, doubts in this regard persist¹¹. What cannot be doubted is that China will use the content of the joint statement as expressing Indonesia’s acquiescence to its maritime claims in the Natuna Sea.

On building the defence cooperation pillar, the two sides agreed to revitalise the existing defence cooperation agreement of 2007¹². Military relations between the two countries have been subdued since 2015 on account of the dispute over the North Natuna Sea. In August 2024, however, senior officials at the China Indonesia Foreign and Defence Officials Dialogue had agreed to the resumption of joint military exercises. This demonstrates Indonesia’s active and free foreign policy (Indonesia also conducted naval exercises with Russia as a part of this policy in November 2024), while China seeks to build trust between the countries.

¹⁰ Press Release on the Indonesia-China Maritime Cooperation in the Joint Statement Between Indonesia and China, Beijing, 9 November 2024, November 11, 2024, <https://kemlu.go.id/berita/keterangan-pers-tentang--kerja-sama-maritim-ri-tiongkok-dalam--pernyataan-bersama-ri-tiongkok?type=publication>

¹¹ Has Indonesia fallen into China’s nine-dash line trap, November 12, 2024, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/has-indonesia-fallen-china-s-nine-dash-line-trap>

¹² Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on Cooperation Activities in the Field of Defence, November 7, 2007, https://www.kemhan.go.id/strahan/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MOU-RI_CHINA-2007.pdf

Subianto's second port of call on his first visit abroad was Washington DC, where he was received in the White House. Indonesia's relationship with the US had been elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2023, a decade after the relationship with China was upgraded to that level. Apart from meeting President Joe Biden, Subianto's engagements in Washington DC included interaction with Indonesian community in the US, a meeting with corporate members of the US-Indonesia society, meetings with US Secretary of Defense General Lloyd Austin and CIA Director William Burns, telephonic interaction with President-elect Donald Trump and a private dinner with Jared Kushner, his son-in-law.

Coming at the tail end of the Biden administration's innings, the visit's significance lay more in the fact that Subianto portrayed equidistance between China and the US in visiting both during his first trip abroad. There was, nevertheless, a long joint statement¹³. The leaders committed to regularly convening the Comprehensive Strategic Dialogue between their Foreign Ministers; introducing new cooperation in areas such as climate, energy, human and labour rights, foreign policy and national security policy, as well as increasing dialogue on domestic, regional and global security issues. The leaders highlighted their commitment to promoting research collaboration at the nexus of artificial intelligence and sustainable farming practices. Biden expressed his support for Indonesia's efforts towards expedited accession to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Presidents affirmed their commitment to develop a critical minerals supply chain in both countries through a mutually beneficial partnership. They announced the opening of a new American Corner in Makassar in 2025 and committed to furthering health cooperation. In defence and security, the two leaders talked of strengthening bilateral cooperation and emphasised the significance of the Defence Cooperation Agreement concluded in 2023¹⁴. They also reaffirmed their intention to continue with various defence dialogues, and to hold a maritime dialogue intended to explore new areas of discussion, including cooperation on a sustainable maritime economy and advancing marine science and technology.

¹³ Joint Statement from the Leaders of the United States and the Republic of Indonesia: Commemorating 75 years of Diplomatic Relations, November 12, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/11/12/joint-statement-from-the-leaders-of-the-united-states-and-the-republic-of-indonesia-commemorating-75-years-of-diplomatic-relations/>

¹⁴ United States and Indonesia Sign Defense Cooperation Arrangement, November 17, 2023, <https://id.usembassy.gov/united-states-and-indonesia-sign-defense-cooperation-arrangement/>

On regional and global cooperation, the two leaders underscored their support for upholding freedom of navigation and overflight as well as respect for sovereign rights and jurisdiction of coastal states over the exclusive economic zones in accordance with the international law of the sea, as reflected in UNCLOS. They recognised the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration of the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. They also expressed their support for ASEAN efforts to develop an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea that adheres to international law, in particular UNCLOS, and respects the rights and interests of third parties.

In sum, the significance of Prabowo's visit to China appears to be substantially more than that of his visit to the US. However, both visits have produced statements, not agreements. Not too much should be read into them. How seriously they are both to be perceived will become clearer as time goes by.

The Biden Xi Jinping Meeting

Just over two months his term at the White House ends, US President Biden and China's President Xi Jinping met for about two hours in Lima, Peru, on November 16, on the sidelines of the APEC Summit. Both leaders opined that their meeting resulted in a candid and constructive discussion on a range of bilateral, regional and global issues. There was no joint statement. Readouts from the two sides indicate convergence on some subjects, but also differing positions on multiple issues.

China's aggressively worded prescriptive readout stresses that the two sides have, over the last four years, worked out through consultation a number of principles to guide US-China relations¹⁵. US-China dialogue has been brought back on track. More than 20 communication mechanisms have been restarted or established, and there have been positive achievements in areas such as diplomacy, security, economy, trade, finance, military, counternarcotics, law enforcement, agriculture, climate change and people-to-people exchanges. China's readout identifies seven prescriptive lessons that have been drawn from exchanges during the last four years.

First, a correct strategic perception is important. A new Cold War should not be fought and cannot be won; containing China is unwise, unacceptable and bound to fail. Second, it is important to match words with actions. China has always honoured its words. If the US always says one thing but does another,

¹⁵ President Xi Jinping Meets with US President Joe Biden in Lima, November 17, 2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/zyxw/202411/t20241117_11527672.html

it harms its own image and undermines trust with China. Third, it is important to treat each other as equals. Fourth, red lines and paramount principles should not be challenged. Xi identified the Taiwan question, democracy and human rights, China's path and system, and China's development right as four red lines that must not be challenged or crossed. Fifth, it is important to expand dialogue and cooperation so as to achieve a win-win result. Sixth, it is important to respond to the expectations of the people; bilateral relations should always advance the well-being of the people and bring them together. Finally, it is important to step up and shoulder the responsibility of major countries, keeping in mind humanity's future, their responsibilities for world peace and providing public goods, conducting themselves in a way conducive to global unity.

There was convergence between the positions of the two sides on counternarcotic issues¹⁶, the resumption of high-level military-to-military dialogue, the development of AI technology for the good of all, and maintaining human control over the decision to use nuclear weapons. There were also differences. Biden emphasised the US commitment to upholding international law, freedom of navigation and overflight and peace and stability in the East and South China Seas. China, however, firmly upholds its territory, sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea and believes that the US should not get involved in bilateral disputes over the relevant islands, nor should it aid or abet provocations. On Taiwan, the US opposes unilateral changes to the status quo by either side and desires that cross-Strait differences be resolved by peaceful means, noting that the world has an interest in the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. The US desires an end to destabilising PRC military activity around Taiwan. China, however, refuses to renounce the use of military means to subjugate Taiwan. It stresses that cross-Strait peace and stability and "Taiwan independence" activities are irreconcilable. If the US wants peace, it must see the true nature of the ruling DPP authorities in seeking "Taiwan independence" and support China's reunification.

Biden raised deep concern about ongoing PRC cyberattacks targeting critical civilian infrastructure and threatening the safety and security of Americans. China, however, said there is no evidence to support the irrational US claim of cyberattacks from China; China itself is the target of international cyberattacks and consistently opposes and combats all forms of cyberattack. Biden raised

¹⁶ Readout of President Joe Biden's Meeting with President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, November 16, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/11/16/readout-of-president-joe-bidens-meeting-with-president-xi-jinping-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-3/>

concern about the PRC's unfair trade policies and emphasised that the US will continue to take necessary action to prevent advanced US technologies being used to undermine the national security of the US or its partners. China, however, believed that "small yard, high fence" is not what a major country should do; only openness and sharing can advance the well-being of humanity. The Chinese people cannot be deprived of their right to development and the concept of national security should not be overstretched to constrain and contain other countries.

Biden condemned the deployment of thousands of DPRK troops to Russia and expressed deep concern over the PRC's continued support for Russia's defence industrial base. Xi Jinping stated that China's position and actions on the Ukraine issue have always been fair and square. It is making every effort for peace and striving for de-escalation. He also said China does not allow conflict and turmoil to happen on the Korean Peninsula and will not sit idly by when its strategic security and core interests are under threat.

Differences between the US and China on a range of issues are not narrowing: if anything, they are increasing. These include the China containment belief, China's belief in Taiwan independence forces, its no-limits partnership with Russia and support for that country in the Ukraine conflict, China's illegal claims in the East and South China Seas, democracy and human rights issues, trade policies, provocative cyberattacks, etc. The Biden approach of dialogue and reconciliation while placing enhancing deterrence on the back burner does not appear to have had significant impact in curtailing China's revisionism. The approach the incoming Trump administration adopts remains to be seen; he has already threatened the imposition of additional tariffs on China's exports to the US. What cannot be denied is that there is little give on areas where there are differences in the positions adopted by the two super powers. The task facing the future administration will be to effectively manage the China challenge while preventing these differences from spiralling into conflict.

The Rio G20 Summit

Leaders of the G20 met in Rio de Janeiro on November 18-19 to address major global challenges and crises and promote strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. The summit was attended, among others, by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a member of the G20 troika. The Rio Declaration promulgated following the meeting can be summarised under the three priorities of the Brazilian G20 Presidency: Social Inclusion and the Fight against

Hunger and Poverty; Sustainable Development, Energy Transitions and Climate Action; and the reform of Global Governance Institutions¹⁷.

The leaders noted that with only six years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, progress towards only 17% of the SDGs was on track; nearly half the goals were showing minimal or moderate progress; and progress on over a third has stalled or even regressed. Noting that inequality within and among countries was at the root of most global challenges, they resolved to accelerate their efforts and reaffirmed their strong commitment to the SDGs. Noting the immense human suffering and the adverse impact of wars and conflicts around the world, they said all states must refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition and reaffirmed that all parties must comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Expressing deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and escalation in Lebanon, they emphasised the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance and reinforce the protection of civilians. Concerning the war in Ukraine, the leaders highlighted the human suffering and negative added impacts of the war on global food and energy security, supply chains, macro-financial stability, inflation and growth. The leaders recommitted to advancing the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and noted that only with peace would the world achieve sustainability and prosperity.

Noting that the goal of reducing poverty and eradicating hunger has been set back after the COVID pandemic, the G20 observed that a staggering 733 million people faced hunger in 2023. This despite the world producing more than enough food to eradicate hunger. The reason was an absence of political will to create conditions to expand access to food. They thus launched a Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty and invited all countries, international organisations, multilateral development banks, knowledge centres and philanthropic institutions to join. They committed to supporting developing countries to enhance their capacity for sustainable food production and marketing, as also towards sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and reducing food lost and waste. The leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to lead by example in global efforts against corruption and related illicit financial flows.

¹⁷ G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration, November 19, 2024, <https://www.g20.org/en/documents/g20-rio-de-janeiro-leaders-declaration>

The leaders reaffirmed the Paris Agreement temperature goal of holding the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. They supported the Sustainable Finance Roadmap and welcomed the consensus achieved in the 2024 G20 Sustainable Finance Report. The leaders supported efforts to triple renewable energy capacity and double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements globally.

Towards reform of global institutions, the leaders pledged to work for a reinvigorated and strengthened multilateral system, with renewed institutions and a reformed governance that is more representative, effective, transparent and accountable. They committed to invigorating the General Assembly through the strengthening of its role through transformative procedures and practices that recognise its authority and enhance its effectiveness and efficiency. They pledged reform of the Security Council to make it more representative, inclusive, efficient, effective, democratic and accountable, and called for its enlargement to improve representation of regions such as Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. They pledged to strengthen the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to better promote sustainable development in all dimensions and to assist member states in achieving the SDGs. They also pledged to work towards a more representative UN Secretariat through transparency, equitable geographical distribution, rotation of nationalities, merit and gender balance in filling positions, and to increasing the nomination of women for senior positions. They endorsed the G20 Roadmap toward Better, Bigger and More Effective Multilateral Development Banks. Reaffirming the commitment in the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration to mobilise more concessional finance to boost World Bank capacity, they looked forward to the upcoming International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 2025 Shareholding Review, in line with the Lima Shareholding principles. They reaffirmed their commitment to a strong, quota-based and adequately resourced IMF at the centre of the global financial safety net. They welcomed achievement of the global ambition of USD 100 billion of voluntary contributions in pledges for countries most in need and called for swift delivery of pending pledges. They emphasised the need to ensure a rules-based, non-discriminatory, fair, open, inclusive, equitable, sustainable and transparent multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core.

The G20 looked forward to working together in 2025 under South Africa's Presidency and meeting again in the United States in 2026. They welcomed Saudi Arabia's ambition to advance its turn for hosting the G20 Presidency in the next cycle.

As a consensus based multilateral organisation, the G20 not only has to engender consensus amongst its members on policies to be followed, but has also to bring pressure to bear that pledges are complied with. This can be difficult, particularly as the G7 often acts independently and not in consonance with commitments of the G20. Nevertheless, the G20 which represents about 86% of the global GDP, 75% of global trade and two-thirds of the global population serves a useful purpose. It will be for South Africa to build on the achievements of the Rio Summit.

The Second India Australia Annual Summit

When India and Australia elevated their bilateral strategic partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership in June 2020, they also affirmed their desire to increase the frequency of prime ministerial contact through reciprocal bilateral visits and annual meetings on the margins of international events¹⁸. The first India Australia Annual Summit was held on March 10, 2023, when Prime Minister Albanese paid a state visit to India¹⁹. Prime Minister Modi visited Australia in May 2023²⁰. The leaders met again during the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September 2023 and for the Quad Summit at Wilmington, USA in September 2024. The Second India-Australia Annual Summit, however, took place on the sidelines of the Rio de Janeiro G20 Summit, on November 19, 2024.

The Prime Ministers noted the significant progress in strengthening bilateral ties across a range of sectors, including climate change and renewable energy, trade and investment, defence and security, education and research, skills, mobility, science and technology, regional and multilateral cooperation, community and cultural links, and people-to-people ties²¹. They welcomed the sustained high-level contact and ministerial engagement between the two countries, and announced initiatives to accelerate efforts for mutual benefit, as well as to promote the peace, stability and prosperity of the region.

The Prime Ministers reiterated their commitment to supporting an open, inclusive, stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific where sovereignty and

¹⁸ Joint Statement on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Republic of India and Australia, June 04, 2020, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/joint-statement-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-between-republic-india-and-australia>

¹⁹ 1st India – Australia Annual Summit: Joint Statement (March 10, 2023), https://hcic Canberra.gov.in/news_letter_detail/?id=100

²⁰ For an overview, see Lalit Kapur, "Prime Minister Modi's visit to Sydney" in the Indo-Pacific Monitor, Volume IV Issue 5, May 2023, https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/indo-pacific-monitor-4906.pdf

²¹ Joint Statement: 2nd India Australia Annual Summit, November 19, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2074823>

territorial integrity are respected. They underlined the importance of being able to exercise rights and freedoms in all seas and oceans consistent with international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including freedom of navigation and overflight. They reiterated their commitment to strengthening cooperation through the Quad as a force for global good which delivers real, positive and enduring impact for the Indo-Pacific, to advance their shared vision for a region that is free, open, inclusive and resilient. They reaffirmed their commitment to ASEAN centrality and the ASEAN-led regional architecture including the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus. They expressed ongoing support for the practical implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and noted the ongoing bilateral cooperation under the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), calling for enhanced cooperation in preserving maritime ecology, reducing the impact of marine pollution, ensuring sustainable use of marine resources, and reducing the impact of climate change. They reiterated their strong support for the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as the Indian Ocean region's premier forum for addressing the region's challenges and looked forward to working closely together when India assumes the IORA Chair in 2025. They also exchanged views on contemporary regional and global developments, calling for resolution of ongoing conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy. They condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms, calling for all countries to combat the threat of terrorism.

In defence and security cooperation, they expressed their intent to renew and strengthen the Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation in 2025, looking forward to a long-term vision of bilateral defence and security collaboration to enhance collective strength, contribute to both countries' security and contribute to regional peace and security. They appreciated the growing frequency and complexity of defence exercises and exchanges and the increasing interoperability through implementation of the Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement. Welcoming arrangements for enhancing maritime domain awareness and increased and reciprocal defence information sharing, they agreed to develop a joint maritime security collaboration road map. They also agreed to continue aircraft deployments from each other's territories to build operational familiarity. They highlighted the significance of defence industry and research and material cooperation and underscored the need for boosting connections between defence industrial bases and defence start-ups of the two countries.

Expressing satisfaction at the increasing two-way trade, they welcomed work towards an ambitious, balanced and mutually beneficial Comprehensive

Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), to realise the full potential of the bilateral economic relationship. They called for greater two-way investments and instructed officials to explore ways to realise greater synergies between the economies of both countries and promote mutually beneficial investments in both directions. They welcomed the launch of the India-Australia Renewable Energy Partnership (REP) which would provide the framework for practical cooperation in priority areas such as solar PV, green hydrogen, energy storage, two-way investment in renewable energy projects and allied areas; and upgraded skills training for the renewables workforce of the future. They welcomed the growing space partnership between the two countries, both at space agency and space industry levels. Cooperation to support the Gaganyaan missions, the planned launch of Australian satellites on-board an Indian launch vehicle in 2026 and joint projects between our respective space industries exemplify this deepening collaboration.

The India-Australia relationship continues to flourish. Australia is one of the three countries with which India has an annual summit, the others being Russia and Japan. India emerged as Australia's fourth largest export market and fifth largest trading partner in 2023, with two-way trade totaling A\$49 billion (about USD 32 billion)²². Australia's investment in India in 2022 was A\$ 17.6 billion (About USD 11.5 billion), while that of India in Australia was A\$ 34.5 billion (about USD 22.5 billion). A new roadmap for Australia's economic engagement with India is under development. Defence cooperation has burgeoned, with Australia becoming a regular participant in Exercise Malabar and hosting the exercise for the first time in 2023. Australian and Indian warships visit each other's regions frequently, as do maritime patrol aircraft. The intent to enhance cooperation to secure the shared maritime space is clearly visible. Of particular note is the intent to update the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation of November 2009²³, which was framed when the principal threat to regional security was counter-terrorism, transnational crime, disarmament and non-proliferation and maritime security. A similar declaration with Japan is also under revision. The conceptual contours of the revised declarations will be of considerable interest.

Key to securing the shared maritime space will be incorporating Indonesia into the regional security concept. An opening may have been created with the participation of Indonesia in a trilateral India-Australia-Indonesia maritime

²² India Country Brief, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/india-country-brief>

²³ India-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, <https://india.embassy.gov.au/ndli/pa5009jsb.html>

partnership exercise in September 2023²⁴. Australia has already concluded a revised defence cooperation agreement with Indonesia²⁵. With a new administration taken over in Indonesia, the time is right for India to upgrade its relationship with that country, including in defence and security.

Other Indo-Pacific Developments

US Elections. Donald Trump decisively won the US elections held on November 05, receiving 312 of the 538 electoral votes and 50% of the popular vote. His Republican party took control of the senate, gaining four seats to take its total to 53 of the 100 seats in the senate. It also took control of the House of Representatives, gaining two seat to take its tally to 220 of the 435 seats in the House. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi was amongst the first of the world leaders to congratulate him on his victory, saying "Heartiest congratulations my friend @realDonaldTrump on your historic election victory. As you build on the successes of your previous term, I look forward to renewing our collaboration to further strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership. Together, let's work for the betterment of our people and to promote global peace, stability and prosperity"²⁶. Trump will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20, 2025.

Mauritius Elections. General elections were called in Mauritius on November 10 after the Government reached a deal with the UK to end the Chagos Islands dispute. Former Prime Minister Dr Navin Ramgoolam's Alliance du Changement won 60 of the 66 seats, with incumbent Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth's Alliance Lepep obtaining only two seats. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Dr Ramgoolam on his election victory²⁷.

Sri Lanka Elections. Parliamentary elections were held in Sri Lanka on November 14. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's National People's Power coalition won 159 of the 225 seats, giving it a landslide victory. 150 of the 225

²⁴ Indian Naval Ship Sahyadri Participates in the Maiden India-Indonesia-Australia Trilateral Maritime Exercise, September 22, 2023,

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1959717>

²⁵ Australia-Indonesia Defence Cooperation Agreement Signed, August 29, 2024,

<https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2024-08-29/australia-indonesia-defence-cooperation-agreement-signed>

²⁶ PM Congratulates Donald Trump on his Victory in US Presidential Election, November 06, 2024, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pm-congratulates-donald-trump-on-his-victory-in-us-presidential-elections/

²⁷ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Congratulates Mauritius' Prime Minister-elect Dr Navin Ramgoolam on his Election Victory, November 11, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2072562>

MPs elected are first-timers. The 17th parliament of Sri Lanka was inaugurated on November 21st. Harini Amarasuriya was appointed Prime Minister.

Shigeru Ishiba Designated 103rd Prime Minister of Japan. Following voting in the House of Representatives and House of Councillors on November 11, Shigeru Ishiba was designated as the 103rd Prime Minister of Japan²⁹. Takeshi Iwaya continued as Minister for Foreign Affairs, while General Nakatani continued as the Minister for Defence. Ishiba garnered 221 votes, short of a majority in the 465-seat parliament and will have to depend on small opposition parties to pass his policy agenda. Accepting the responsibility, Ishiba set his objective as safeguarding Japan's future by upholding the rules, protecting Japan, protecting the people, protecting local communities, and protecting opportunities for youth and women³⁰. He pledged to advance diplomacy that considers Japan's realistic national interests, strengthen defence capabilities, realise a growth-oriented economy led by wage increases and investments, restart regional revitalisation, and establish a disaster-resilient nation that prioritises human life. His second policy speech on November 29, Ishiba focused primarily on domestic issues³¹. On foreign policy, he noted that strong ties between Japan and the US benefited the entire region, but both countries had their own national interests. Committing to accelerating the debate on promoting joint management of US bases in Japan, he also committed to a realist approach towards Beijing. He was for maintaining and strengthening Japan's deterrence and response capabilities.

Russia to Retaliate to US Missile Deployment in Japan. Russia said on November 27 that it would retaliate if the US deploys Short and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles in Japan³². The retaliation could include deployment of short and intermediate range ballistic missiles on its territory, in accordance with Russia's new nuclear doctrine. The US and Japan had earlier contemplated deploying IRBMs on Japanese territory to counter a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

²⁸ Gazette Extraordinary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, November 12, 2024, http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2024/11/2410-02_E.pdf

²⁹ Designation of the Prime Minister, November 11, 2024, <https://japan.kantei.go.jp/103/actions/202411/11shime.html>

³⁰ Statement by Prime Minister ISHIBA Shigeru, November 11, 2024, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/103/statement/202411/11danwa_00001.html

³¹ Ishiba Sticks to the Basics in Second Policy Speech, November 29, 2024, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2024/11/29/japan/politics/ishiba-policy-speech/>

³² Russia says it will respond if US places missiles in Japan, November 27, <https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-says-it-will-respond-if-us-places-missiles-japan-2024-11-27/>

US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Summit. Leaders of the US, Republic of Korea and Japan convened in Lima, Peru, on the sidelines of the APEC Summit, on November 15³³. This was their second summit, after Camp David in August 2023³⁴. They took stock of trilateral developments over the last year and announced the establishment of the Trilateral Secretariat responsible for coordinating and implementing their shared commitments. The meeting signifies the continued support of Japan for the trilateral, notwithstanding Prime Minister Ishiba having assumed power this month.

APEC Meeting. The economic leaders of APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) met in Lima, Peru on November 15-16. They endorsed the Machu Picchu Declaration³⁵, a consensus declaration to achieve the economic growth objectives of APEC countries.

President Murmu Witnesses Naval Operations. The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, witnessed a day of naval operations on board INS Vikrant on November 07³⁶. 15 frontline warships and submarines of the Indian Navy and over 30 aircraft participated in the demonstration.

India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029. Prime Ministers Narendra Modi of India and Georgia Meloni of Italy met on the sidelines of the Rio G20 Summit on November 18. To give further impetus to the India-Italy Strategic Partnership, the two leaders agreed on a Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-29, with cooperation spread across ten pillars³⁷. These include political dialogue; economic cooperation and investments; connectivity; science, technology, IT, innovation and start-ups; the space sector, energy transition; defence cooperation; security cooperation; migration and mobility; and culture, academic and people-to-people exchanges, cinema and tourism. Among the constituents in defence cooperation is the decision to negotiate a Defence Industrial Roadmap between the two Ministries of Defence and the promotion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Society of Indian Defence

³³ Joint Statement of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States, November 15, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/11/15/joint-statement-of-japan-the-republic-of-korea-and-the-united-states/>

³⁴ For an overview, see Lalit Kapur, "The Camp David Trilateral Summit", The Indo-Pacific Monitor, Volume IV Issue 8, August 2023, https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/indo-pacific-monitor-4965.pdf

³⁵ 2024 APEC Leaders' Machu Picchu Declaration, November 16, 2024, <https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/leaders-declarations/2024/2024-apec-leaders%27-machu-picchu-declaration>

³⁶ The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, Witnesses Indian Navy Operations on Board INS Vikrant, November 08, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2071695>

³⁷ Italy-India Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029, November 19, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2074459>

Manufacturers (SIDM) and the Italian Industries Federation for Aerospace, Defence and Security (AIAD).

Vietnam Malaysia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Vietnam and Malaysia upgraded their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during a summit held on November 21, 2024, in Putrajaya City³⁸. Malaysia thus became Vietnam's ninth comprehensive strategic partner. The partnership aims to enhance cooperation across sectors including politics, defence and security, digital economy, and maritime collaboration.

Malaysia South Korea Elevate Relations to Strategic Partnership. Malaysia and South Korea elevated their relations to a strategic partnership during the visit of Malaysia Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim to Seoul from November 24-26³⁹. The two countries agreed to enhance cooperation in four areas: Peace and Security; Economic; Culture, Education and Tourism; and Regional and Global issues.

US-ROK 2+2 Ministerial Meeting. The US-ROK 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting took place in Washington DC on October 31, 2024⁴⁰. Both sides pledged to enhance the Alliance's deterrence posture. The US recommitted its nuclear umbrella to the Republic of Korea, while the ROK reaffirmed its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Both sides strongly condemned the DPRK's dangerous and provocative behaviour, including its ICBM test on October 31. They condemned the deepening military cooperation between the ROK and Russia; recognised the interconnectedness between the Indo-Pacific and the Euro-Atlantic; expressed their strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the waters of the Indo-Pacific and recognised the importance of opposing unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea; emphasised the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait; emphasised the critical importance of deepening trilateral cooperation with Japan to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula; and affirmed that a cyber-attack could,

³⁸ Joint Statement on the Elevation to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Between Vietnam and Malaysia in conjunction With the Official Visit of His Excellency Mr. To Lam, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam to Malaysia, November 21-23, 2024, <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/-/joint-statement-on-the-elevation-to-a-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-between-viet-nam-and-malaysia-in-conjunction-with-the-official-visit-of-hi-1>

³⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Malaysia, "Elevation of Bilateral Relations Between Malaysia and The Republic of Korea to Strategic Partnership". November 25, 2024. <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/-/elevation-of-bilateral-relations-between-malaysia-and-the-republic-of-korea-to-strategic-partnership-25-november-2024>

⁴⁰ Joint Statement of the 2024 United States – Republic of Korea Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting (2+2), November 01, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-of-the-2024-united-states-republic-of-korea-foreign-and-defense-ministerial-meeting-22/>

under some circumstances, constitute an armed attack for the purposes of Article III of the Mutual Defence Treaty.

EAM Visit to Australia. EAM Dr S Jaishankar visited Australia from November 03-07⁴¹. He met with Australia's Prime Minister Mr. Anthony Albanese, the Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Mr. Richard Marles, leader of the opposition Mr. Peter Dutton, and interacted with members of the Parliamentary Friends of India in Canberra. He co-chaired the 15th Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue with his Australian counterpart Ms Penny Wong, reviewing the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual interest. He inaugurated India's new consulate in Brisbane, interacted with members of the Indian diaspora in Brisbane, Canberra and Sydney, held a roundtable with business investors and the Lowy Institute in Sydney, delivered the keynote address at the 2nd Raisina Down Under organised by ORF and ASPI on November 05, and participated in a trilateral session at that dialogue with Australian Foreign Minister Ms. Penny Wong and New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mr. Winston Peters.

Australia Philippines Defence Ministers' Meeting. The inaugural periodic Australia-Philippines Defence Ministers' Meeting took place in Canberra, Australia on November 12. The two ministers underscored the importance of defence cooperation between Australia and the Philippines in supporting a secure and stable region where sovereignty is respected, international law is adhered to and nations can make decisions free from coercion. They reaffirmed their commitment to the centrality of ASEAN to the region's stability and security, and expressed serious concern about the situation in the South China Sea as well as about dangerous conduct by China against vessels from the Philippines. They committed to deepening defence cooperation and looked forward to the second iteration of Exercise Alon in 2025 as an opportunity to increase complexity and enhance interoperability between their armed forces. Australia confirmed its continued participation in Exercise Balikatan and inaugural participation in Exercise Salaknib next year, while the Philippines confirmed its participation in Exercise Talisman Sabre for the first time in 2025. The ministers agreed to develop and sign in 2025 a new arrangement outlining the direction and management of official dialogues,

⁴¹ Visit of External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar to Australia, November 07, 2024, https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/38496/Visit_of_External_Affairs_Minister_Dr_S_Jaishankar_to_Australia_November_0307_2024

training, leadership development and infrastructure under the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Program.

Australia Japan US Trilateral Defence Ministers' Meeting. Defence Ministers of Australia, Japan and the US met in Darwin for the 14th trilateral Defence Ministers Meeting on November 17⁴². They reinforced their commitment to work with partners, including Canada, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and the UK to increase engagement with Southeast Asian partners and support the region's security priorities. They reiterated their serious concern about destabilising actions in the East and South China Seas, including dangerous conduct by China against the Philippines and other coastal state vessels. They emphasised the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and called for the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues. They condemned North Korea's destabilising activities including its ICBM test of October 31, 2024. To expand trilateral operational cooperation, they announced annual trilateral amphibious training between ground forces of their countries beginning with Exercise Talisman Sabre in 2025. Japan would also increase its contribution to Exercise Southern Jackaroo. In Japan, they committed to trilateralising exercises such as Orient Shield from 2025, and to Australian participation in Exercises Yama Sakura, Keen Edge and Keen Sword. On building advanced capabilities together, they announced the expansion of cooperation on Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) by incorporating a live-fire event into Exercise Talisman Sabre 2027. They also announced measures to plan together and demonstrate their presence in the region, including through enhancing Quad maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific, for which they acknowledged India's leadership role in conceptualising the idea of closer collaboration in maritime surveillance.

Secretary Austin's Visit to the Philippines. US Secretary of Defense visited the Philippines for the fourth time on November 18⁴³. He met President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Secretary of National Defense Gilberto C Teodoro Jr. His discussions highlighted the need for deeper coordination to address challenges posed by China's repeated harassment of lawful Philippines' operations in the South China Sea. He and his Philippines counterpart signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which will enhance

⁴² Australia-Japan-United States Trilateral Defence Ministers' Meeting November 2024 Joint Statement, November 17, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3967118/australia-japan-united-states-trilateral-defence-ministers-meeting-november-202/>

⁴³ Joint Press Release on the Visit of US Secretary of Defense Austin to the Philippines, November 19, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3970660/joint-press-release-on-the-visit-of-us-secretary-of-defense-austin-to-the-phili/>

information sharing. They also led the ground-breaking ceremony of a new Combined Coordination Centre in Camp Aguinaldo, which will improve joint efforts to plan bilateral exercises, operations and humanitarian response to address common challenges in the region.

Secretary Austin's Visit to Laos. Secretary Austin visited Laos on November 21-22⁴⁴. He attended the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus. He also announced the second ever ASEAN-United States Maritime Exercise, to be held in 2025 to advance maritime safety and the rule of law in Southeast Asia. Further, he released the first US Department of Defense Vision Statement for a Prosperous and Secure Southeast Asia⁴⁵.

ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting. The 18th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) convened in Vientiane, Lao PDR on November 20⁴⁶. The ministers declared they would deepen defence and security cooperation and engagement between the ADMM and Plus countries; underscored the significance of maintaining peace, stability, security, safety and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, emphasised the need for the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in accordance with international law; reiterated the need for full implementation of the five-point consensus on Myanmar, and approved the concept note on the 2nd ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise. The ministers also adopted a Joint Statement on resilience to climate related and other natural disasters by the ADMM Plus⁴⁷.

India Gifts Ships to Mozambique. As part of its capacity-building engagement in the Indian Ocean, India gifted two water-jet propelled fast interceptor craft to Mozambique on November 08⁴⁸. The boats were transhipped from India by INS Gharial. They have a top speed of 45 knots and a range of 200 nm at 12 knots. They will help Mozambique in combating maritime terrorism and the

⁴⁴ Fact Sheet: Secretary of Defense Lloyd J Austin III's 12th Trip to the Indo-Pacific, November 22, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3976342/fact-sheet-secretary-of-defense-loyd-j-austin-iiis-12th-trip-to-the-indo-pacif/>

⁴⁵ US Department of Defense Vision Statement for a Prosperous and Secure Southeast Asia, November 21, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3973788/us-department-of-defense-vision-statement-for-a-prosperous-and-secure-southeast/>

⁴⁶ Vientiane Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting on ASEAN: Together for Peace, Security and Resilience, November 20, 2024, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Vientiane-Joint-Declaration-of-the-ADMM-for-ASEAN-Together-For-Peace-Security-and-Resilience_as-adopted-by-18th-ADMM.pdf

⁴⁷ Joint Statement by the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting on Resilience to Climate-Related and Other Natural Disasters, Including Through Best Practices Exchange and Capacity-Building, November 21, 2024, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Joint-Statement-by-the-ASEAN-Defence-Ministers-Meeting-Plus_Adopted-by-11th-ADMM-Plus-on-21-Nov-2024.pdf

⁴⁸ Handing Over Two Interceptors to Mozambique at Nacala, November 09, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2072061>

ongoing insurgency in the Cabo Delgado region. India had also gifted two other large interceptor craft in 2019, and two boats of the same class in 2022.

Flight Test of Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile. The DRDO conducted the successful maiden flight test of the Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM) on November 12⁴⁹. The missile, with a range of 1,500 Km, will be operated by both the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force once development is completed. It is compatible with the launcher used for BRAHMOS missiles on Indian warships. An anti-ship variant of the missile is also reported to be under development.

Flight Test of India's Long Range Hypersonic Missile. The DRDO reported conducting the flight test of India's first long-range hypersonic missile on November 16⁵⁰. The indigenously developed missile is designed to carry different payloads for ranges greater than 1,500 Kms for the Armed Forces. The test puts India at the cusp of membership of a small club of nations with hypersonic capability, comprising China, Russia, India and the US.

Missile Test from INS Arighaat. In a significant advancement of capability, India reportedly tested a nuclear capable K-4 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile from INS Arighaat on November 27. The missile has a maximum range of 3,500 Km⁵¹. The range is sufficient to reach Beijing from the Bay of Bengal.

Unicorn Antenna. One November 16, the governments of India and Japan signed a Memorandum of Implementation for the co-development and production in India of the Unified Complex Radio Antenna (UNICORN) for fitment on Indian Naval ships⁵². The antenna will be co-developed and co-produced by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). When implemented, this will be the first case of co-development and co-production of defence equipment between India and Japan.

AUKUS Partners Sign Hypersonics Agreement. Defence ministries from the US, UK and Australia announced on November 18 the signing of an agreement to enhance testing of hypersonic vehicles and accelerate implementation of

⁴⁹ DRDO conducts maiden flight-test of Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile off Odisha Coast, November 12, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2072829>

⁵⁰ DRDO carries out successful flight-trial of India's first long-range hypersonic missile off the Odisha coast, November 17, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2073994>

⁵¹ Nuclear Capable Ballistic Missile Tested from INS Arighaat, November 28, 2024, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/nuclear-capable-ballistic-missile-tested-from-ins-arighaat/articleshow/115747030.cms>

⁵² Memorandum of Implementation Signed with Government of Japan for Co-development of Unicorn Masts for the Indian Navy, November 16, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2073843>

related technologies⁵³. Under AUKUS Pillar II, the three nations have entered the Hypersonic Flight Test and Experimentation (HyFLiTE) Project Arrangement (PA) to use each other's testing facilities and share technical information to develop, test, and evaluate hypersonic systems. The project arrangement includes up to six trilateral flight test campaigns to occur by 2028, with a total funding pool of US \$ 252 million.

Australia's Future Frigate. Australia announced on November 25 the short-listing of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' Mogami frigate and ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems Meko A200 design for its future frigate programme⁵⁴. The designs which were excluded at this stage include South Korea's Daegu Class FFX Batch II and Batch III as well as Spain's Alfa3000. Eleven ships of the design finally chosen are to be acquired for the Royal Australian Navy, to replace the existing ANZAC-class frigates. The design finally chosen is expected to be announced next year. Three ships will be delivered by the chosen shipbuilder, while the remaining eight are to be built in Australia.

Japan Italy ACSA Agreement. Japan and Italy concluded an agreement for the reciprocal provision of supplies and services between their armed forces on November 25⁵⁵. The agreement will promote closer cooperation, enabling support for Italian ships and aircraft operating in the Indo-Pacific.

Exercise GARUD SHAKTI 2024. The 9th edition of India-Indonesia Special forces Exercise Garuda Shakti was conducted in Cijantung, Jakarta, from November 01-12⁵⁶. 40 personnel from each side participated in the exercise.

Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2024. The 15th edition of the India-US Special Forces Exercise Vajra Prahar was conducted at the Orchard Training Centre in Idaho, US, from November 02-22⁵⁷. 45 personnel participated from each side.

⁵³ Aukus Partners Sign Landmark Hypersonics Agreement, November 18, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3966986/aukus-partners-sign-landmark-hypersonics-agreement/>

⁵⁴ General purpose frigate milestone reached with down-selection of shipbuilders, November 25, 2024, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2024-11-25/general-purpose-frigate-milestone-reached-down-selection-shipbuilders>

⁵⁵ Signing of the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Italian Republic Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Armed Forces of the Italian Republic, November 25, 2024, https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/we/it/pageite_000001_00675.html

⁵⁶ Indian Army Special Forces Contingent Departs for Indonesia for Joint Exercise Garuda Shakti, November 01, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2069969>

⁵⁷ Indian Army contingent Departs for India-US Special Forces Exercise Vajra Prahar, November 01, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2070099>

Exercise VINBAX 2024. The 5th edition of Vietnam India Bilateral Army Exercise VINBAX-2024 was conducted at Ambala and Chandimandir from November 04-23⁵⁸. 47 representatives of the Army and Air Force from each side participated in the exercise.

Exercise AUSTRAHIND 2024. The third edition of joint India-Australia military exercise AUSTRAHIND was conducted at Pune from November 8-21⁵⁹. 154 personnel from the Indian side and 120 from Australia participated.

Russia Indonesia and Russia-Thailand Naval Exercises. Orruda 2024, the first naval exercise between the Russian and Indonesian Navies, was conducted in and off Surabaya from November 05-08. Russia fielded the corvettes Gromky, Rezky and Hero of the Russian Federation Aldar Tsydenzhapov from the Russian Pacific Fleet, while Indonesia participated with the frigate Gusti Ngurah Rai and corvette Frans Kaisiepo. Indonesia's new President Prabowo Subianto has committed to building closer ties with Russia on defence as part of his country's non-aligned policy⁶⁰. The Russian fleet subsequently exercised with ships of the Royal Thai Navy after a port call at Sattahip, Thailand⁶¹.

Exercise SITMEX 2024. The fourth edition of Exercise SITMEX, involving the Indian, Thai and Singapore Navies was conducted at and off Port Blair from 08-11 November⁶². Participating units included RSS Tenacious, HTMS Krabi, INS Saryu, INS Karmuk and an IN Dornier-228 maritime patrol aircraft. The exercise is important to deepen mutual understanding and build interoperability.

Exercise SANGAM-24. The 9th Edition of Exercise SANGAM-24, a joint training exercise between the Indian Navy's MARCOS (Marine Commandos) and the U.S. Navy SEALs, began in Goa on November 12⁶³. The exercise lasts for three

⁵⁸ India-Vietnam Joint Military Exercise VINBAX 2024 Commences at Ambala, Haryana, November 04, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2070563>

⁵⁹ India-Australia Joint Military Exercise AUSTRAHIND Commences in Maharashtra, November 08, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2071767>

⁶⁰ Indonesia, Russian navies hold first joint drills in Java Sea, November 4, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/indonesia-russia-navies-hold-first-joint-drills-java-sea-2024-11-04/>

⁶¹ Pacific Fleet's corvette detachment conducts exercise with ships of Royal Thai Navy, November 26, 2024, https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12538966@egNews

⁶² Singapore, India and Thailand Conclude Trilateral Maritime Exercise, November 11, 2024, https://www.mindef.gov.sg/news-and-events/latest-releases/11nov24_nr

⁶³ Western Naval Command- Indian Navy, X (Formerly Twitter). n.d. November 11, 2024. https://x.com/IN_WNC/status/1855995229444460874.

weeks and aims to enhance interoperability and facilitate combined operations between the two elite naval special forces.

Navika Sagar Parikrama II. INSV Tarini with its all-woman crew arrived at Fremantle after completion the 4900 nm first leg of its round-the-world voyage on November 09⁶⁴. The vessel departed Fremantle for its 3400 nm second leg, destined for Lyttleton, New Zealand, on November 24⁶⁵.

Taiwan Strait Transit. A US Navy P-8A Poseidon aircraft transited the Taiwan Strait on November 26, remaining in international airspace⁶⁶. A spokesperson for the Chinese Air Force slammed this provocative move in a written statement⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ Navika Sagar Parikrama II INS Tarini Arrives at Fremantle, Australia, November 10, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2072182>

⁶⁵ Navika Sagar Parikrama II INS Tarini Embarks on the Second Leg of the Expedition from Fremantle, Australia to Lyttleton, New Zealand, November 24, 2024, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2076632>

⁶⁶ 7th Fleet Aircraft Transits Taiwan Strait, November 26, 2024, <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/3978390/7th-fleet-aircraft-transits-taiwan-strait/>

⁶⁷ Chinese military slams US P-8A aircraft's transit of Taiwan Strait, November 26, 2024, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/NewsRelease/16354349.html



Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi - 110003
India

www.delhipolicygroup.org