

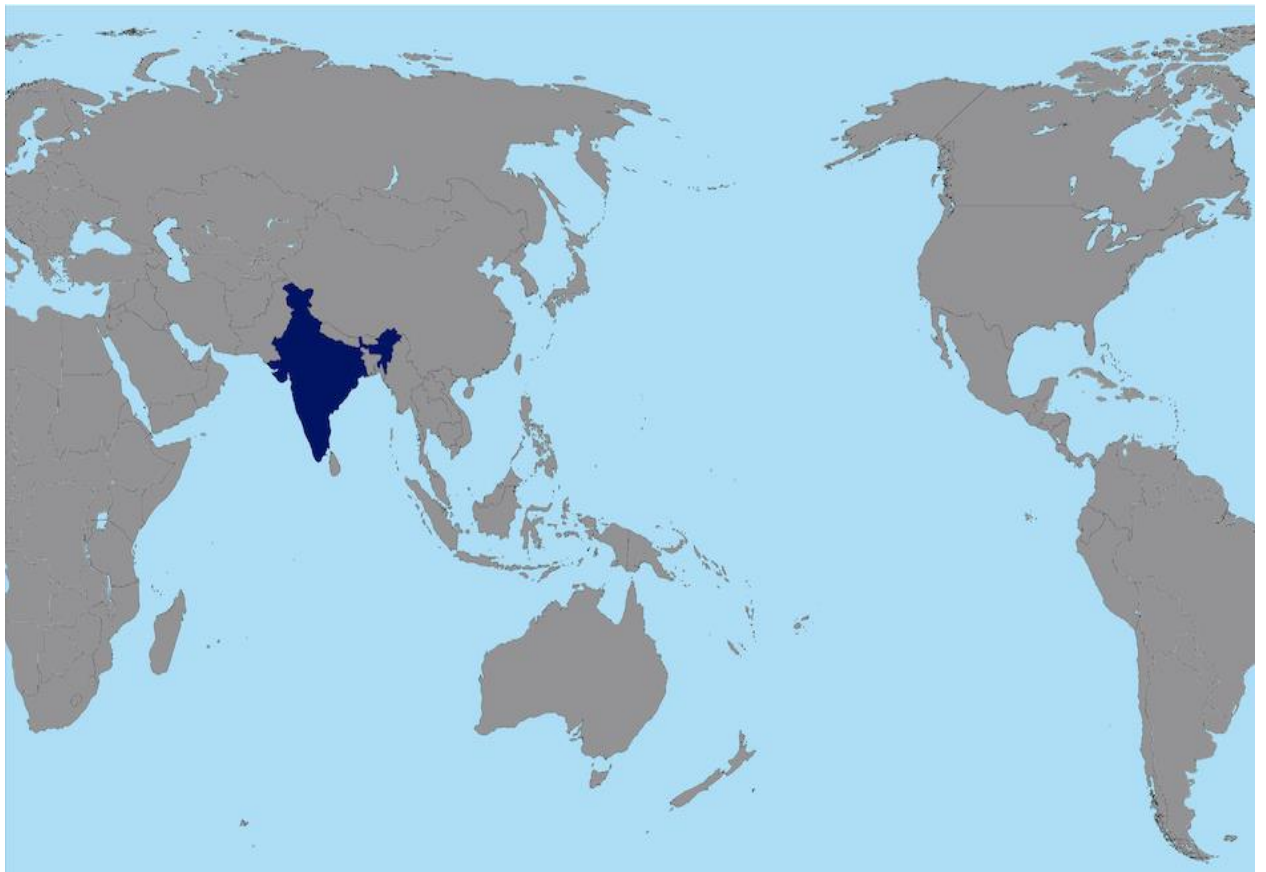


# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR SEPTEMBER 2022



Volume III, Issue 9 | September 2022

Delhi Policy Group  
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### 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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### DPG 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 and assisted by Jayantika Rao Tiruvaloor Viavoori, Research Associate, based on open source reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to Jayantika at [jayantika@dpg.org.in](mailto:jayantika@dpg.org.in). To subscribe, please [click here](#).

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## DPG INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

September 2022

### Abstract

World leaders gathered in New York from September 20–26 for the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly and its annual high-level debate, providing people around the globe a window into how they perceive the world situation and their priorities in dealing with its myriad problems. The sharp divergence between the views and priorities of the West, Russia, China and the Global South was in evidence. The war in Ukraine dominated the West's agenda, with little sign of efforts to find diplomatic solutions to the conflict. There were ritual statements about the need to act to overcome crises like climate change, terror and the variety of emerging global challenges as well as the need for UN reform, but little indication that rhetoric would lead to action that could deliver meaningful results in the foreseeable future.

The Samarkand Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on September 15-16 resulted in an expansion of the organisation's footprint into the Indian Ocean. Iran was inducted as a member from 2023; the Maldives, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE and Myanmar became Dialogue Partners and the process for induction of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar as Dialogue Partners was given the green light. This expansion will inevitably be of concern to the West, whose dominance over the maritime world faces new challenges.

The Second India–Japan 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue took place in Tokyo on September 8. It was marked by the announcement of Japan's intention to fundamentally reinforce its defence capabilities through substantial enhancement of the defence budget and the possible acquisition of counter-strike capabilities. This general direction was also reflected in Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada's meeting with the US Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III at the Pentagon on September 14.

The Fifth Quad Ministerial Meeting took place in New York on September 23. The ministers signed guidelines to operationalise the Quad HADR partnership, issued a joint statement on ransomware and agreed that they would meet in New Delhi in early 2023. A trilateral meeting between the

Foreign Ministers of India, France and Australia also took place on the sidelines of the UNGA, but without a joint statement or a media release.

India's Armed Forces participated in Exercise VOSTOK 2022, held in Sergeyevski Military District, Russia in the first week of September; Exercise JIMEX 2022 in the Bay of Bengal from September 11-16; and Exercise KAKADU-2022, off Darwin, Australia from September 11-24. India also partnered the Coalition Maritime Force in its inaugural Operation Southern Readiness, held in the Seychelles from September 24-27. This increased international outreach reflected India's increasing acceptance of responsibility towards maintaining peace and security in its extended neighbourhood.

Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles witnessed the commissioning of HMS Anson, the United Kingdom's newest nuclear attack submarine on August 31. The UK announced that it would allow Australian personnel to train on board the ship. The visit may have also been intended to evaluate the Astute class as a possible contender for the Australian SSN project. The selected submarine's identity and origin will become known only by end March 2023.

The US State Department approved the sale of \$ 1.1 billion worth of missiles and associated equipment to Taiwan, prompting a strong but predictable protest from China. The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the text of the Taiwan Policy Act of 2022 and sent it to the Senate for consideration. North Korea amended its domestic nuclear law to mandate a pre-emptive nuclear strike under certain specified conditions, effectively making its denuclearisation unlikely. North Korea also tested three short range ballistic missiles even as the USS Ronald Reagan Strike Group began exercising with the South Korean Navy off Busan. The French and German Air Forces demonstrated their ability to deploy rapidly to the Pacific while participating in Exercises Pitch Black and Kakadu, off Darwin.

In other developments, INS Vikrant was commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 2. Three other warships were also launched from Indian shipyards during the month. General Anil Chauhan assumed charge as India's Second Chief of Defence Staff on September 30. An Iranian warship temporarily seized two unmanned surface vessels used by the US Navy in the Red Sea on September 01, before being compelled into releasing them the next day.

## The High-Level Debate at 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

The 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly opened on September 13, with the high-level debate from September 20-26. The latter provided opportunity for nations to express their world views. The sharp divergence between how members of the P5 saw the world and the views of the Global South, as well as different priorities in dealing with the world's problems was evident. This commentary summarises the view of the P-5 and other countries that will play an important role in shaping the Indo-Pacific and larger world in the years ahead.

The Australian perspective was provided by Ms Penny Wong, the Minister for Foreign Affairs on September 23<sup>1</sup>. Her statement reflected alarm at the fact that the UN's Human Development Index had declined consecutively for two years, adversely impacting women, food security and sustainable development and threatening global stability. She identified focal areas for the government she represents as designing a new development policy, climate change (with Australia targeting that 83% of its energy supply would be renewable within this decade) and enhancing defence, maritime and economic cooperation with Pacific Island Countries. Other focal areas were seeking deeper engagement with Southeast Asia, to shape a region that was peaceful and predictable, and contributing to the strategic balance of the region, not allowing any one country to dominate or large countries to determine the fate of smaller ones. She made a point of calling out Russia's actions in Ukraine and China's "no limits partnership" with Russia. Australia also called for reform of the Security Council, with greater permanent representation for Africa, Latin America and Asia, including India and Japan.

China's statement came from its Foreign Minister, Wang Yi on September 25<sup>2</sup>. China saw a time fraught with challenges, with the pandemic resurfacing, global security facing uncertainty, the global economic recovery fragile and unsteady, and the world entering a new phase of turbulence and transformation. The positives it saw were a world moving towards multipolarity, deepening economic globalisation and societies becoming

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<sup>1</sup> National Statement to the UN General Assembly, New York,  
<https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/statements/national-statement-un-general-assembly-new-york>

<sup>2</sup>Shouldering the Responsibility for Solidarity and Progress Making Every Effort for Peace and Development,  
[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/202209/t20220925\\_10771160.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202209/t20220925_10771160.html)

increasingly interconnected and interdependent. China prescribed six musts to build a community with a shared future for mankind: upholding peace and opposing war and turbulence; pursuing development and eliminating poverty; remaining open and opposing exclusion; staying engaged in cooperation and opposing confrontation; strengthening solidarity and opposing division; and upholding equity and opposing bullying. Wang Yi portrayed China as a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, defender of the international order, a provider of public goods and a mediator of hotspot issues. He spoke extensively of Taiwan being an inalienable part of China's territory, the transformation of China under Xi Jinping and its new development philosophy and its efforts to build the community with a shared future for mankind. His speech would have achieved greater resonance but for the wide gulf between China's words and deeds and the fact that its narrative appears self-serving.

The French statement came from President Emmanuel Macron on September 20<sup>3</sup>. More than half of his extensive speech was devoted to a passionate defence of the West's action in Ukraine and the need for the world to stand together to defend the UN Charter and its principles. He also spoke of the need to ensure that ramping up of tension between China and the US did not turn into a new Cold War, the impact of climate change, the return of famine, the 55 civil wars currently raging on the planet, displaced persons and the rise in poverty, the threat of terrorism and the need for international organisations to address these challenges. He reiterated Prime Minister Modi's words that this was not an era of war, but nor was it one of revenge on the west, or of western opposition to the rest of the world. It was one in which sovereign, equal countries needed to work together on today's challenges. He called for the G7 to lead by example in eradicating coal dependency and enabling global energy transitions, for health and education partnerships, for implementation of commitments and supporting the G20, and of the need to finally begin Security Council reform.

India's statement was made by the External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, on September 25<sup>4</sup>. The EAM shared five pledges India had committed itself to: the resolve to make India a developed country in the next 25 years; the resolve

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<sup>3</sup> Speech the President of the French Republic at the United Nations General Assembly, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2022/09/20/speech-by-the-president-of-the-french-republic-at-the-uunited-nations-general-assembly>

<sup>4</sup> India's Statement delivered by the external Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar at the General Debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, [https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35757/Indias\\_Statement\\_delivered\\_by\\_the\\_External\\_Affairs\\_Minister\\_Dr\\_S\\_Jaishankar\\_at\\_the\\_General\\_Debate\\_of\\_the\\_77th\\_session\\_of\\_the\\_UN\\_General\\_Assembly](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35757/Indias_Statement_delivered_by_the_External_Affairs_Minister_Dr_S_Jaishankar_at_the_General_Debate_of_the_77th_session_of_the_UN_General_Assembly)

to liberate India from a colonial mindset; the determination that our rich civilisational heritage would be a source of pride and strength, including care and concern for the environment; the promotion of greater unity and solidarity, including coming together on global issues such as terrorism, pandemics and the environment; and the instilling of the consciousness of duties and responsibilities amongst both citizens and nations. He recognised the sharp deterioration in the international landscape due to the pandemic, the precarious debt situation of the developing, rising costs and shrinking availability of fuel, food and fertiliser along with trade disruptions and diversions, concerns about stability and security and the climate crisis, and the need for global conversations to recognise that these impacted the South the most. He repeated that India was firmly on the side of peace, the side that respected the UN Charter and founding principles, the side that calls for dialogue and diplomacy as the only way forward. He spoke of India's actions to address the multiple challenges, its steadfast commitment to South-South cooperation and the need to work with other G-20 members to reform governance of multilateral financial institutions. He spoke of India's belief that multipolarity, rebalancing, fair globalisation and reformed multilateralism, including reform of the UN Security Council, can no longer be kept in abeyance.



External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar Making India's Statement at the General Debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNGA on September 24, 2022. Source: United Nations



Indonesia's statement came from Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi<sup>5</sup> on September 26. She described the state of the world as "worrying", with the pandemic persisting, the global economy remaining sluggish, war among nations having become a reality and violation of international law having become a norm. She observed that continuing along the same path would lead to disaster and offered a new paradigm of collaboration not competition, of engagement not containment, of win-win and not zero-sum as a solution. This would necessitate turning trust deficit into strategic trust through upholding international law, abiding by the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and finding peaceful solutions to settle conflicts, not only in Europe but also in Palestine and Afghanistan. She called on the world to focus on global recovery, abandon trade discrimination and monopolies in global supply chains, and to make the G20 a catalyst of global economic recovery, especially for developing countries. Her third prescription was bolstering regional partnerships and promoting the paradigm of collaboration with all countries as ASEAN was doing in South East Asia, of working together to address shared challenges including climate change. Her final prescription was reform of the UN, renewed multilateralism that delivers, and for walking the talk instead of just talking.

Japan's statement was delivered by Prime Minister Kishida on September 20<sup>6</sup>. He began by observing that the foundations of international order had been shaken by Russia's action against Ukraine, an act that trampled on the vision and principles of the UN Charter. He pointed out that the UN does not exist solely for the benefit of great powers. It exists for the entire international community, to fulfil the claims of not just the powerful and the loud but also those whose voices that are often unheard but are equally legitimate. To realise the Japan's strong commitment to the UN and multilateralism, he identified three thrust areas. First the reform of the UN, including the Security Council, to strengthen the role of not just the Security Council, but also the General Assembly. Second, the realisation of a UN that promotes the rule of law in the international community. Third, the promotion of efforts based on the concept of human security in the new era. The world was at a watershed and Japan expected much from the UN.

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<sup>5</sup> Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia at the General Debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly New York, 26 September 2022, <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/4018/berita/statement-by-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-at-the-general-debate-of-the-77th-session-of-the-un-general-assembly-new-york-26-september-2022>

<sup>6</sup> Address by Prime Minister Kishida at the Seventy-Seventh Session of the United Nations General Assembly, [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101\\_kishida/statement/202209/\\_00004.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202209/_00004.html)

The Russian statement was made by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on September 24<sup>7</sup>. Lavrov saw Russia as having been left with no choice but conflict as its vital interests were impacted by NATO expansion. He saw the ongoing conflict as one between the west's unilateralism and the aspiration of other states for a more equitable world order. He called for fairer geographical representation of member states within the UN Secretariat and for greater injection of democracy into the UN Security Council, through broader representation of Africa, Asia and Latin American Countries, including of India and Brazil as permanent Council members. Russia, he said, was ready to work in good faith and believed that the only way to ensure the world's stability was to go back to the roots of UN diplomacy, based on the respect for sovereign equality of states as the key statutory principle for a genuine democracy. He concluded by recalling the words of former UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, who had said, "The UN was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell". Lavrov's credibility was handicapped by the fact that Russia not only went against the UN Charter in attacking Ukraine, but also appears to be losing the plot.

Setting out her blueprint for the current era, British Prime Minister Elizabeth Truss identified three broad lines of action: domestic renewal, partnerships and defence. Towards the first, she sought to build an economy that rewards enterprise and attracts investment, growing at 2.5% annually. This entailed securing affordable and reliable supplies of energy. Her plan was for the UK to transition to renewable and nuclear energy. She also spoke of security of supply chains, critical minerals, food and technology that drives growth and protects the health and lives of people. On the partnership front, she spoke of fortifying deep security alliances in Europe through NATO, deepening links with fellow democracies like India, Israel, Indonesia and South Africa, new trade agreements and deepening partnerships like the G7 and the Commonwealth. She visualised the G7 as an economic NATO, collectively defending the prosperity of the group. On the defence front, she said the UK will spend 3% of GDP on defence by 2030 so as to remain the leading security actor in Europe.

The US perspective was provided by President Joe Biden on September 21. Nearly half of his 3700 word statement dealt with the "brutal and needless" war in Ukraine and how the US had marshalled over \$ 25 billion in security assistance for Ukraine. He said the US was determined to defend and strengthen democracy at home and around the world and rejected "the use of

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<sup>7</sup>Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the General Debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 24, 2022, [https://russiaun.ru/en/news/unga\\_24092022](https://russiaun.ru/en/news/unga_24092022)

violence and war to conquer nations or expand borders through bloodshed". He reiterated US support for increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent seats in the Security Council. He also spoke of the US pursuit of diplomacy to address the climate crisis, global health security and feeding the world, of the US effort to build a new economic eco-system where every nation gets a fair shot and economic growth is resilient, sustainable and shared; of the intent to mobilise \$ 600 billion in investment through the Partnerships for Global Infrastructure and Investment by 2027. A significant part of his speech was directed towards the competition between the US and China, in which the US did not force a binary choice on others or seek a Cold War, but was determined to promote its vision of a free, open, secure and prosperous world and to uphold peace and stability including across the Taiwan Strait. Other areas touched upon by him included the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as promotion of human rights and the values enshrined in the UN Charter.

Six major problems bedevil the world: climate change and its increasingly evident impact; the need to provide for global health security; the imperatives of economic recovery and the battle against poverty; the continuing use of terror by nation states for geopolitical purposes; the need to responsibly manage emerging technology, and the growth of unilateralism in global affairs. The key to successful management of these issues is effective use of the UN and its bodies to ensure meaningful debate and the evolution of just solutions. While all nations have paid lip service to the need for multilateral and equitable solutions, the gulf between their words and deeds remains. The hope that the UN will find a way ahead is ever present. However, the evident polarisation in the views of the powers that can make a difference does not augur well.

## **The SCO – Expanding Its Footprint**

The Presidents of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan gathered in Samarkand for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Summit of the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The event was chaired by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan. Also present at all but the closed sessions were the Presidents of Belarus, Iran and Mongolia, the three observer states, as well as of Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Türkiye, as guests of the Chair.

At the time of taking over Chairmanship of the SCO in September 2021, Tashkent had sought to invigorate economic cooperation and raise the organisation's security potential. This included expansion of the SCO agenda by creating new mechanisms for the development of digital technologies and innovation, reinforcing health cooperation, ensuring peace and stability in the

region, reducing poverty, developing trade, boosting infrastructure development and industrial cooperation, and ensuring food security<sup>8</sup>. The Heads of State signed on the Samarkand Declaration, which summarises achievements towards these objectives.



SCO Member States, Observers, Special Guests of the Chair and representatives of Regional Organisations at the SCO Summit at Samarkand, September 16, 2022.

Source: MEA Photo Gallery

The declaration, stretching to over 7700 words and 121 paragraphs, provides an overview of the SCO's objectives and achievements<sup>9</sup>. It can broadly be divided into five sections: an introductory section that spells out the organisation's world view and essentially reiterates its objectives and principles; a security section that largely focuses on counter-terror aspects while touching on the NBC, space and missile domains; an economic, trade and investment cooperation section; and a section regarding cooperation in other areas. In between, there is a small section dealing with expansion of the SCO and a statement that the organisation sees no alternative to political and diplomatic solutions to resolve conflict.

<sup>8</sup>Uzbekistan's chairmanship in SCO: Goals and priorities for 2022, <https://tass.com/world/1382231>

<sup>9</sup>Samarkand Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/35724/Samarkand\\_Declaration\\_of\\_the\\_Council\\_of\\_Heads\\_of\\_State\\_of\\_Shanghai\\_Cooperation\\_Organization](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/35724/Samarkand_Declaration_of_the_Council_of_Heads_of_State_of_Shanghai_Cooperation_Organization)

Among the key decisions of the Summit<sup>10</sup> were adoption of the Samarkand Declaration and the Action Plan for 2023-2027, a decision on developing interconnectivity and creating efficient transport corridors; the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for the induction of Iran as a member; beginning the process for the induction of Belarus as a member; granting the Maldives, Myanmar, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE the status of dialogue partners; beginning the process for induction of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar as dialogue partners; approving the reports of the SCO Secretary-General and the Regional Anti-Terrorism structure on their activities during the previous year; and adoption of agreements / concepts / cooperation plans in areas such as tourism, health, museum affairs, plant quarantine, the use of renewable energy sources, industrial cooperation, digital literacy development, telemedicine etc.

Counter-terrorism, including cutting off sources of finance and other support, formed one of the largest sections of the Samarkand Declaration, accounting for as many as 19 paragraphs. The hypocrisy of China, one of SCO's primary anchors, endorsing the resolution while repeatedly blocking sanctions on acknowledged Pakistan-based terrorists cannot have escaped notice.

The core of SCO has always been Central Asia. In fact, the Samarkand Declaration specifies, "The Member States consider Central Asia to be the core of the SCO ..."<sup>11</sup>. The induction of Iran as a new member, of the Maldives, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE and Myanmar as dialogue partners and the planned induction of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar expands the SCO's footprint into a number of Indian Ocean states. The Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula will be covered almost in its entirety, with the exception of Iraq, Oman and Yemen. Egypt will bring in the Red Sea. India's and Pakistan's membership brought in the Arabian Sea. Myanmar will bring the Bay of Bengal into SCO's footprint, while Maldives and Sri Lanka (already a dialogue partner) bring in the Central Indian Ocean. This development cannot but be of concern to the maritime allies comprising the US, UK and Western Europe, more so in light of the visible weakening of US position in the Arabian Peninsula.

On the other hand, India has long sought connectivity into and through Central Asia, specifically through the International North South Transit Corridor (INSTC). The Samarkand Declaration's statement that "Member States

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<sup>10</sup> List of Decisions Adopted at the SCO Council of Heads of State Meeting, [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/35723/List\\_of\\_Decisions\\_adopted\\_at\\_the\\_SCO\\_Council\\_of\\_Heads\\_of\\_State\\_Meeting](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/35723/List_of_Decisions_adopted_at_the_SCO_Council_of_Heads_of_State_Meeting)

<sup>11</sup> Samarkand Declaration, Op Cit, Para 13.

believe that ongoing efforts to enhance connectivity between Central Asia and South Asia contribute to the common goal of ensuring prosperity and security in the vast SCO region by building sustainable trade, economic, transport and communication links and strengthening the dialogue among civilisations<sup>12</sup> is a political positive. It will, however, take more than statements for this connectivity to be built. The concurrence and stability of transit states including Iran and perhaps Pakistan and Afghanistan will be required, as will sources of funding for the corridor. Whether India and China can work together to integrate the INSTC into the global trading system, overcoming opposition not just from the maritime domination of the West but also regional states such as Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, remains a moot point.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin meet at Samarkand on September 16, 2022. Source: President of Russia

The event provided opportunity for political signalling. There were four developments from India's perspective. First was the very visible message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to President Putin when he said, "I know that today's era is not of war and we have spoken to you many times on the phone that democracy, diplomacy and dialogue are such things that touch the world"<sup>13</sup>. President Putin responded, "I know your position on the conflict in

<sup>12</sup> Samarkand Declaration, Op Cit., Para 14.

<sup>13</sup> English Translation of Opening Remarks by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the bilateral meeting with President of Russia, [https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35722/English\\_Translation\\_of\\_Opening\\_Remarks\\_by\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_Shri\\_Narendra\\_Modi\\_at\\_the\\_bilateral\\_meeting\\_with\\_President\\_of\\_Russia](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35722/English_Translation_of_Opening_Remarks_by_Prime_Minister_Shri_Narendra_Modi_at_the_bilateral_meeting_with_President_of_Russia)

Ukraine and the concerns that you constantly express. We will do our best to make it stop as soon as possible"<sup>14</sup>.

Next, there was no bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping. In one perspective, Modi ensured that there was no bilateral meeting with Xi Jinping and no joint photo opportunity<sup>15</sup>. In another, Xi rebuffed Modi and did not acknowledge him even when the latter walked up to Xi at the photoshoot of the organisation's leadership<sup>16</sup>. Both opinions are speculative and designed to create a narrative, without an actual understanding of the events. The only visible reality is that the leaders displayed no interest in meeting each other.

Presidents Putin and Xi Jinping met bilaterally on September 15. President Putin noted, "We appreciate our Chinese friends' balanced position in connection with the Ukraine crisis. We understand your questions and your concerns in this regard. During today's meeting we will certainly explain in detail our position on this issue"<sup>17</sup>. He followed immediately by observing that Russia had always abided by the One China principle and condemning provocations by the US and its satellites in the Strait of Taiwan. The acknowledgement that China has questions on Ukraine implies it does not stand solidly on Russia's side, notwithstanding public statements.

Finally, the bilateral meetings between Prime Minister Modi and his counterparts from Iran and Türkiye are noteworthy. Iran (through Chabahar) provides India's only possible connect to Central Asia. Relations with Türkiye have been difficult, particularly since Erdoğan criticised India's abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. The meeting may have opened the door for a reset in the bilateral relationships.

A prominent American analyst says "The SCO's clumsy push to disrupt the world order"<sup>18</sup>. Coming more than two decades after the SCO was set up, it begs the question: Is that a valid description?

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<sup>14</sup>Meeting with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69362>

<sup>15</sup>Why Jaishankar's US visit more than formality and aims to fix Biden's disinterest in India, <https://theprint.in/opinion/global-print/why-jaishankars-us-visit-more-than-formality-and-aims-to-fix-bidens-disinterest-in-india/1135468/>

<sup>16</sup>While Xi Jinping consolidates his power,

<sup>17</sup> Meeting with PRC President Xi Jinping, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69356>

<sup>18</sup> "The SCO's Clumsy Push to Disrupt the World Order", <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-clumsy-push-to-disrupt-the-world-order-shanghai-cooperation-organization-summit-eurasia-iran-middle-east-borders-sanctions-china-putin-samarkand-11663614601>

Many of the goals and the tasks of the SCO, as described in Article 1 of its charter<sup>19</sup>, are similar to the purposes of ASEAN as identified in the ASEAN charter<sup>20</sup>. They include strengthening mutual trust and friendship between member states, maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region (with the added objective of promotion of a new, democratic, fair and rational political and international order); jointly counteracting terror; encouraging regional cooperation in a variety of areas including politics, trade and economy, defence, law enforcement, environment protection, culture, education, energy, transport etc.; coordinating approaches to integration in the global economy; prevention of international conflict and their peaceful settlement; and promotion of human rights. The SCO's guiding principles, contained in Article 2 include mutual respect of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of States and the inviolability of State borders, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or the threat of its use in international relations, not seeking unilateral military superiority in adjacent areas, equality of all member states, mutual understanding and mutual respect, peaceful settlement of disputes, and the SCO not being directed against other States and international organisations. One of the principles does include prevention of any illegitimate acts directed against SCO interests, but this does not make it an alliance. Decisions, as per Article 16, are by consensus, except that decisions involving suspension of a member or its expulsion from the organisation may be taken by consensus less the vote of the member state concerned. The views of the analyst are thus indicators of frustration in India's straying from the American path and choosing to make its own geopolitical way, rather than a reflection of reality.

Asia remains among the most divided regions in the world, and the SCO offers India an opportunity to lead in the region's stabilisation and economic prosperity. Its actions support its principled belief in sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference and peaceful resolution of disputes, in sharp contrast to the actions of both China and Russia. The challenge lies in ensuring Central Asian partners take note and in doing so, provide opportunities for mutual growth. In parallel, India's western partners must be made to understand India's motives and the fact that the path it has adopted is the only sustainable path to a stable and secure future for Asia.

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<sup>19</sup> Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%202896/Part/volume-2896-I-50517.pdf>

<sup>20</sup>The ASEAN Charter, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf>



## The Japan India 2+2 Dialogue

Five months after the 14<sup>th</sup> India – Japan Annual Summit and just under three years after the first India – Japan 2 + 2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, Shri Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister, and Dr. S Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs, met their Japanese counterparts, Mr Yoshimasa Hayashi and Mr Yasukazu Hamada in Tokyo for the Second India–Japan 2+2 Dialogue on September 8, 2022<sup>21</sup>. A nine-paragraph joint statement was issued on completion. The statement can effectively be divided into three parts: a vision section reflecting how both sides see global developments; a section signalling change in Japan's approach towards national security; and a progress report on bilateral cooperation.

The vision section reflects continuity in the perceptions of the two partners on the need for global cooperation to address security challenges, their commitment to the Rules-Based Order and to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, as well as to ASEAN Centrality and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. The views of both largely converge on the nature of the challenges and the need to cooperate to tackle them.



Shri Rajnath Singh, India's Defence Minister, inspects Guard of Honour during his visit to Japan, September 8, 2022. Source: Ministry of Defense, Japan

<sup>21</sup> Joint Statement: Second India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, 8 September 2022, <https://www.mod.go.jp/en/images/2929010c30a6c5e548860ac6bdd9e8f902f8d672.pdf>

The significant change lies in the Japanese side expressing “its determination to fundamentally reinforce Japan’s defence capabilities within the next five years” and securing “substantial increase of Japan’s defence budget needed to effect it”. This includes the examination of “counterstrike capabilities”. Effectively, Japan has notified India of the change of its outlook from the hitherto pacifist approach to one that could be described as militarist. This will create concern in East Asian neighbours. India, for its part, has signalled tacit acceptance of this decision and announced its continued support “to work towards enhanced security and defence cooperation”<sup>22</sup>.

The rest of the joint statement acts as a report card on bilateral cooperation. The decision to add Joint Service Staff Talks to the bilateral agenda adds to the plethora of dialogues, enabling continued familiarisation with each other’s perceptions and determination of areas of cooperation. There is increased engagement through training exercises with Japan participating in India’s Exercise MILAN for the first time in 2022 and both sides expressing their resolve to continue with Exercises Dharma Guardian, JIMEX and Malabar (the sixth edition of JIMEX was held during this month). Air Forces of both countries are working towards early conduct of an India-Japan fighter exercise. Both sides have also expressed their shared intention to work towards more complex and sophisticated bilateral exercises. There is a statement of resolve to expand bilateral cooperation in the areas of defence equipment and technology.

The vision section is noteworthy for its omissions. There is no mention of common intent to explore trilateral partnerships, for example with Australia, South Korea, Vietnam and perhaps Indonesia. All these countries are significant Indo-Pacific players and share the same Indo-Pacific vision. Trilateral cooperation among them, in addition to bilateral and plurilateral mechanisms already in place, would significantly supplement the growing Indo-Pacific consensus and help counter China’s narrative. There is no mention of the Indo-Pacific Oceans’ Initiative or of developments in the South China Sea, a vital thoroughfare for both partners, or of enhancing bilateral exchange programmes for training purposes. There is also no mention of Afghanistan or the need for cooperation in countering terror. These areas had figured not only in the Joint Statement following the First India-Japan 2+2

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. All quotes from Para 5 of Joint Statement.

Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting<sup>23</sup>, but also in the Joint Statement following the 14<sup>th</sup> India-Japan Summit<sup>24</sup>.

The change in Japan's military outlook, seeking to move beyond purely defensive capability and acquiring the ability to strike, has been visible for some time. Induction of the experienced Yasuoka Hamada as the Defence Minister to oversee major revision to Japan's security policies and near doubling of defence expenditure was covered in the previous edition of the Indo-Pacific Monitor<sup>25</sup>. While India has extended tacit approval, the reaction of other East and Southeast Asian countries will indicate how comfortable they are with the change.

The first 2 + 2 dialogue on November 30, 2019 had spoken of the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, which has since been concluded and operationalised. A Japanese Liaison Officer has been positioned at the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR). The first India – Japan Joint Fighter Exercise still remains under discussion, though India has begun similar exercises with Malaysia and Australia. Cooperation in the areas of Unmanned Ground Vehicles and Robotics has been mentioned in statements for at least the last four years; whether it will yield results remains to be seen.

The statement regarding concurrence of both sides to further identify concrete areas for future cooperation in defence equipment and technology is a virtual repeat of what was said last time. Reports indicate that India and Japan have identified projects in the fields of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, anti-drone systems, underwater communications, Lithium-ion battery technology and intelligence systems and a range of other technologies<sup>26</sup>. However, the official record only states "The Raksha Mantri emphasised on the need to expand the scope of the partnership in the field of Defence Equipment and Technological Cooperation. He invited Japanese industries to invest in India's defence

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<sup>23</sup> Joint Statement: First India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1594385>

<sup>24</sup> India-Japan Summit Joint Statement: Partnership for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Post-COVID World, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100319162.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Indo-Pacific Monitor Volume III, Issue 8, [https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads\\_dpg/publication\\_file/indo-pacific-monitor-4108.pdf](https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/indo-pacific-monitor-4108.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> India, Japan identify key areas of defence cooperation ahead of 2+2 dialogue at Tokyo, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-japan-identify-key-areas-for-defence-co-operation-ahead-of-22-dialogue-at-tokyo/article65833058.ece>

corridors where a conducive environment for the growth of the defence industry has been created by India”<sup>27</sup>.

As two of Asia’s three biggest economies, India and Japan will inevitably influence Asia’s security landscape in the years ahead. The outlook of both is changing, as the former comes to terms with China’s desire for a unipolar Asia and a subordinated India, while the latter invests more in its own security, instead of outsourcing it to the US. The convergence in the perceptions of both with regard to the China challenge is striking. Whether this convergence extends to a joint approach towards tackling the challenges, as was the trend during the lifetime of former Premier Shinzo Abe, will be revealed in the years ahead.

## The Fifth Quad Ministerial Meeting

The fifth Quad Ministerial Meeting took place in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session on September 23, 2022. Quad Ministers had earlier met in New York on September 26, 2019<sup>28</sup>, at Tokyo on October 06, 2020<sup>29</sup> and virtually on February 18, 2021<sup>30</sup> before the first Quad Summit, as well as on February 11, 2022<sup>31</sup>. The latest meeting resulted in three joint documents, a proposal for the ministers to meet annually on the sidelines of the UNGA, and a consensus view that the Quad is getting stronger and is a force for good, committed to bringing about tangible benefits to the region. Secretary Blinken called for regular meetings of the Quad Foreign Ministers at the annual UNGA session, while Dr. S. Jaishankar sought annual meetings in respective countries in addition<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Raksha Mantri and his Japanese counterpart review defence cooperation and regional security situation during bilateral talks in Tokyo, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-japan-identify-key-areas-for-defence-co-operation-ahead-of-22-dialogue-at-tokyo/article65833058.ece>

<sup>28</sup> Japan – Australia – India – US Ministerial, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page3e\\_001112.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page3e_001112.html)

<sup>29</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Australia-Japan-USA Ministerial Meeting, [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33098/2nd\\_IndiaAustraliaJapan\\_USA\\_Ministerial\\_Meeting](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33098/2nd_IndiaAustraliaJapan_USA_Ministerial_Meeting)

<sup>30</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> India – Australia – Japan – USA Quad Ministerial Meeting, [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33540/3rd\\_IndiaAustraliaJapanUSA\\_Quad\\_Ministerial\\_Meeting](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33540/3rd_IndiaAustraliaJapanUSA_Quad_Ministerial_Meeting)

<sup>31</sup> Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Australia, India and Japan and the Secretary of State of the United States following the 4<sup>th</sup> Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/quad-cooperation-indo-pacific>

<sup>32</sup> Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa Before Their Meeting, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-with-australian-foreign-minister-penny-wong-indian-external-affairs-minister->



US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshimasa Hayashi meet on the Sidelines of the UNGA, September 23, 2022. Source: Twitter

In the Joint Readout of Quad Ministerial Meeting<sup>33</sup>, the ministers re-iterated their opposition to unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo or increase tensions in the region while reaffirming unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality, the ASEAN led regional architecture and practical implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. They underscored their commitment to advancing a comprehensive UN reform agenda, including through expansion in permanent and non-permanent seats of the UNSC so that it reflects current global realities and incorporates more geographically diverse perspectives. They signed guidelines to operationalise the Quad Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) partnership announced by their leaders during their summit on May 24, 2022. They also unveiled a statement on ransomware. They reiterated Quad commitment to supporting regional partners to improve their maritime security and domain awareness and to take forward the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness and announced that the next ministerial meeting would be in New Delhi in early 2023.

[dr-subrahmanyam-jaishankar-and-japanese-foreign-minister-hayashi-yoshimasa-before-their-meet/](#)

<sup>33</sup> Joint Readout of Quad Ministerial Meeting, <https://www.state.gov/joint-readout-of-quad-ministerial-meeting/>

The guidelines for the Quad Partnership on HADR came into effect on September 23, 2022<sup>34</sup>. They specify that a request for international assistance (by the impacted country) is needed to enable the partners to act under the partnership. Response operations are to be guided by the core principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality as outlined in UNGA Resolution 46/182<sup>35</sup>. The partners may provide joint or coordinated individual assistance in crisis preparation or alert, crisis-response or post crisis review phases of disaster response. Any humanitarian action will be carried out with respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the affected state. Quad partners will meet twice a year to share lessons and operational updates and will conduct at least one scenario-based table-top exercise to improve preparedness, coordination and interoperability. The first such table-top exercise is to be conducted in Australia later this year.

The joint statement on ransomware<sup>36</sup> calls on states to take reasonable steps to address ransomware operations emanating from within their territory. The partners undertook to assist each other in the face of malicious cyber activity, including from ransomware, against critical infrastructure. They committed to further cooperate on capacity building programmes and initiatives aimed at enhancing regional cybersecurity and improving resilience against ransomware attacks in the Indo-Pacific, so as to deny safe haven to ransomware actors in the region. They recognised that a multi-stakeholder approach will uphold shared values in the design and use of technologies and cyberspace across the Indo-Pacific and welcomed negotiation of a possible new UN cybercrime convention. They underscored the need for the treaty to be drafted in a technologically neutral and flexible manner which does not describe specific technologies or criminal methodologies.

It may be recalled that India and UK had conducted a counter-ransomware exercise to address a ransomware attack on multiple electricity distribution companies for 26 nations on September 6<sup>37</sup>. This was as part of the International Counter Ransomware Initiative – Resilience Working Group which is currently led by India. The exercise explored the complexity of

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<sup>34</sup> Guidelines for Quad Partnership on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in the Indo-Pacific, <https://www.state.gov/guidelines-for-quad-partnership-on-humanitarian-assistance-and-disaster-relief-hadr-in-the-indo-pacific/>

<sup>35</sup> 46/182 Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/582/70/IMG/NR058270.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>36</sup> Quad Foreign Ministers' Statement on Ransomware, <https://www.state.gov/quad-foreign-ministers-statement-on-ransomware/>

<sup>37</sup> India and UK Conduct Counter Ransomware Exercise for 26 Nations, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1857243>

decision-making around response to ransomware attacks on critical national infrastructure.

The absence of any mention regarding the Quad Vaccine Initiative was striking. An oversupply of vaccines in the region, with over 15.1 billion doses delivered globally, including 1.76 billion doses shipped to 146 countries through COVAX, may have reduced interest in this initiative<sup>38</sup>.

Unusually, there was no response from China or its spokesperson. Given China's oft-expressed allergy to the Quad, this was striking.

Progress in fleshing out commitments at leaders' level with policy statements is commendable. However, for all the fanfare, the Quad still doesn't have much to show. Its challenge lies in resourcing the Quad's policies adequately and overcoming hurdles to ensure that they fructify, and thus fulfill its objective of serving the common good.

## The Evolving East Asian Strategic Landscape

Days after participating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting, Hamada Yasuzuka flew to Washington DC for his first visit after being appointed Japan's Defense Minister. He received a warm welcome. General Lloyd Austin, the US Defense Secretary spoke of their shared vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and the challenges posed by Russia and China to this vision, while describing the US-Japan alliance as the cornerstone of peace and prosperity in the region<sup>39</sup>. He reaffirmed the "unwavering" US commitment to the defence of Japan, including through credible and resilient extended deterrence using the full range of conventional and nuclear US capabilities. He also discussed ways to deepen cooperation with like-minded partners including building upon the recent trilateral engagement with South Korea and Australia.

On his part, Defence Minister Hamada drew attention to the landing of China's ballistic missiles near the waters of Japan and China and Russia's joint exercise around Japan. He spoke of his intention to "realise fundamental reinforcement of our defense capabilities, reformulation of strategic documents, (and) examining all options, including the so-called strike – counter-strike

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<sup>38</sup> UNICEF COVID-19 Market Dashboard, accessed on September 25, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/supply/covid-19-market-dashboard>

<sup>39</sup> Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Remarks Welcoming Japanese Minister of Defense Yasuzuka Hamada to the Pentagon, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3158265/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-remarks-welcoming-japanese-minister-of/>

capabilities", and of securing a substantial increase of the defense budget needed to effect it<sup>40</sup>. He highlighted the importance of strengthening intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities and welcomed the temporary deployment of USAF MQ-9s to MSDF Kanoya Air Base. The Ministers agreed that Japan and the US would conduct joint analysis on counter-hypersonic technologies and components, and accelerate cooperation on unmanned aerial vehicles that could cooperate with manned aircraft<sup>41</sup>.

Japan's perceptions of its security outlook have undergone substantial change in the last 2-3 years. It now cites China's attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion in the East and South China Seas and actions against Taiwan, its joint operations with Russia in areas surrounding Japan, Russia's aggressive action against Ukraine challenging the existing global power balance and North Korea's numerous missile launches as security challenges<sup>42</sup>. "As a way of defending against such changes to the prevailing order, Japan must not delay in bringing together its knowledge and technology and putting all its collective efforts into strengthening its national defense capabilities"<sup>43</sup>. On August 31, Japan's Defense Ministry sought a budget of ¥5.59 trillion; the final amount was expected to exceed ¥6 trillion as the request listed 100 items to strengthen defense capabilities whose costs were still being worked out<sup>44</sup>. The amount appears nominally larger than the ¥5.4 trillion it had received for FY 2022, but in dollar terms, it is roughly about \$ 43 billion as against the over \$ 49 billion budgeted for the current year. The Japanese Yen has depreciated sharply during the last year. The current year's amount includes the construction of two ballistic missile defense warships displacing over 20,000 tons each, in lieu of the Aegis-ashore missile defense installations that the JSDF had backed out of in 2020<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Japan-US Defense Ministerial Meeting (Summary),

<https://www.mod.go.jp/en/article/2022/09/7ab1b7730b9e3562893e4bc5adac3acc6b66698d.html>

<sup>42</sup>Defense of Japan 2022,

[https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w\\_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022\\_Digest\\_EN.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_Digest_EN.pdf)

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Japan's defense spending likely to exceed 1% of GDP,

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-s-defense-spending-likely-to-exceed-1-of-GDP#:~:text=The%20final%20budget%2C%20which%20will,spending%20within%201%25%20of%20GDP.>

<sup>45</sup>Japan to Build Two 20,000-ton Missile Defense Warships,

<https://news.usni.org/2022/09/06/japan-to-build-two-massive-20000-ton-missile-defense-warships-indian-carrier-commissions#more-97081>



While Russia, North Korea and China have emerged as adversaries on Japan's continental flank, South Korea is coming back into the US fold. Japan and South Korea came together with the US for Exercise Pacific Dragon, to defend against ballistic missiles, last month. A meeting of the US – South Korea Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group (EDSCG) on September 16 resulted in both sides committing to employ all elements of both countries' national power to strengthen the Alliance deterrence posture<sup>46</sup>.

As tensions generated by China's revisionist actions increase in East Asia, the trend towards increased defence spending can be expected to accelerate. Japan's changing military outlook reflects its concern not only about pressures generated by the three challengers on its continental flank, but also about the continued efficacy of deterrence, including nuclear, provided by the US alliance. China's ambition of subjugating Taiwan, possibly through the use of military force will become more difficult to achieve, particularly if the US and Japan decide to intervene. For the present, Japan appears to be contemplating a strategy other than exclusive dependence on the US for its security, but whether this contemplation will lead to significant change by way of deterring China remains debatable.

From India's perspective, the developing situation portends that significant advancement of the India-Japan Strategic Partnership may prove more difficult, notwithstanding the pronouncements at the March 19 Summit<sup>47</sup> and the recently concluded India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting<sup>48</sup>. India's resolve to maintain issue based partnerships while remaining unaligned will face growing pressure. The national interest, however, clearly lies in keeping options open, rather than bandwagoning with either side. This will entail a test for India's diplomacy and weathering growing pressure while building up own capability. There is sufficient reason for confidence that India will succeed in this endeavour.

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<sup>46</sup> Joint Statement on the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group Meeting, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3161720/joint-statement-on-the-extended-deterrence-strategy-and-consultation-group-meet/>

<sup>47</sup> India-Japan Summit Joint Statement Partnership for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Post-COVID World, [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34991/IndiaJapan\\_Summit\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_Partnership\\_for\\_a\\_Peaceful\\_Stable\\_and\\_Prospereous\\_PostCOVID\\_World](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34991/IndiaJapan_Summit_Joint_Statement_Partnership_for_a_Peaceful_Stable_and_Prospereous_PostCOVID_World)

<sup>48</sup> Joint Statement: Second India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, 8 September 2022, <https://www.mod.go.jp/en/images/2929010c30a6c5e548860ac6bdd9e8f902f8d672.pdf>

## The India France Australia Trilateral

A year ago President Macron reacted strongly to AUKUS, labelling the secret negotiation that led to it “a stab in the back” and “unacceptable between allies and partners” and withdrawing his Ambassador from Canberra and Washington DC. The development resulted in stalling of the India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue Macron had mooted in May 2018<sup>49</sup>. However, France’s Indo-Pacific vision, announced during the same speech, remained alive. It was thus a matter of time before geopolitical imperatives ended French pique and resulted in a renewal of France-Australia relations. When Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visited Paris on July 01, 2022, the joint statement following the visit spoke of the determination of the two leaders to enhance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific<sup>50</sup>.

This determination has begun showing results. In August, three French Rafale fighters, two A330M Multi-Role Tanker Transports and two A400M transport aircraft deployed from mainland France to New Caledonia in the Southern Pacific within 72 hours to carry out an exercise to destroy an enemy ship based on guidance from mainland France. They thus displayed French ability to intervene anywhere in the world at short notice<sup>51</sup>. The aircraft staged through Sulur in India and Darwin in Australia, demonstrating continued defence cooperation with both countries. Later in the month, the French frigate FS Vendémiaire participated in Exercice La Perouse 2022 and Exercice Kakadu-2022 with Australian frigate HMAS Warramunga and the Japanese destroyer JS Kirisame<sup>52</sup>, once again demonstrating defence cooperation<sup>53</sup>. French aircraft also participated in the Australian Air Force Exercise Pitch Black 2022 and Exercice Kakadu-2022 in August/September 2022<sup>54</sup>, while FS Vendémiaire participated in Australian Navy Exercise Kakadu-2022 this month. These

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<sup>49</sup> Speech at Garden Island, Naval Base Sydney, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2018/05/03/discours-a-garden-island-base-navale-de-sydney>

<sup>50</sup> Joint Statement by France and Australia, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2022/07/01/joint-statement-by-france-and-australia>

<sup>51</sup> Update on operations from Friday August 12 to Thursday August 18, 2022, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/point-situation-operations-du-vendredi-12-au-jeudi-18-aout-2022>

<sup>52</sup> Japan-France-Australia Trilateral Exercise (La Perouse 22), <https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/release/202209/en20220902.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Update on operations from Friday August 19 to Thursday August 26, 2022, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/point-situation-operations-du-vendredi-26-aout-au-jeudi-1er-septembre-2022>

<sup>54</sup> Update on operations from Friday September 2 to Thursday September 8, 2022, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/point-situation-operations-du-vendredi-2-au-jeudi-8-septembre-2022>

cooperative activities demonstrate that normalisation of relations, including defence relations, between Australia and France is on track.

On September 01, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles met Sébastien Lecornu, the French Minister for Armed Forces. The Ministers underlined their shared commitment to strengthening the Australia-France defence partnership, focusing on the 'Defence and Security' pillar of the joint statement following the summit-level meeting in July<sup>55</sup>. They welcomed the increase of European engagement in the Indo-Pacific and agreed to support French forces in more readily projecting military assets to the region. This includes deepening of military interoperability, more joint regional deployments and training activities, increase mutual access to military infrastructure and expanded secure communication links to improve intelligence exchanges. A dialogue between armament officials to foster two-way industrial and technological defence cooperation is expected shortly.

The visit of Catherine Colonna, the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs to India on September 14 & 15 marks a further step forward. Ms. Colonna met with External Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. She also visited Mazagon Docks Limited Mumbai and delivered a speech on French and European ambitions in the Indo-Pacific, apart from business and people-centred engagements. The EAM rightly described France as a major power with a global outlook and in independent mindset, central to the emergence of multipolarity<sup>56</sup>. He said, "We also look forward to the meeting of the Indo-France-Australia trilateral in New York later in the month with our colleague, Minister Penny Wong. Another trilateral – with the UAE – would also be upgraded to the Ministerial level given the positive feedback we had from the official one"<sup>57</sup>.

Speaking at an event in Mumbai on September 15, Ms Colonna said, "What makes our partnership so strong is that it rests on a shared vision of international relations, as our two countries are both equally attached to the rule of law and multilateralism, both feeling highly independent, and both

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<sup>55</sup>Joint Statement by France and Australia, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2022/07/01/joint-statement-by-france-and-australia>

<sup>56</sup>Opening Remarks by External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar at the Joint Press Interaction following India-France Ministerial Meeting, [https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35712/Opening\\_Remarks\\_by\\_External\\_Affairs\\_Minister\\_Dr\\_S\\_Jaishankar\\_at\\_the\\_Joint\\_Press\\_Interaction\\_following\\_IndiaFrance\\_Ministerial\\_Meeting](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35712/Opening_Remarks_by_External_Affairs_Minister_Dr_S_Jaishankar_at_the_Joint_Press_Interaction_following_IndiaFrance_Ministerial_Meeting)

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

eager to retain our strategic autonomy”<sup>58</sup>. She said France shared India’s view that the Indo-Pacific should not become a confrontation ground between global powers and “What is at stake is the very possibility to uphold what President Macron called ‘the liberty of sovereignty’”<sup>59</sup>. This was the foundation for the India-France partnership, to maintain through cooperation the highest level of strategic autonomy. Describing India as the centre of emerging global dynamics, she said India had a central role to play in the Indo-Pacific. Regional states did not want to be locked into a binary choice and even less to be part of a confrontational gear, a desire they had in common with France and the European Union. The French thrust was, therefore, to enhance security and defence as well as the economy and connectivity. She foresaw the EU engagement in the Indo-Pacific yielding considerable results in the next decades, with India as a key partner. Revitalisation of the India-France-Australia trilateral is a necessity for fulfilment of these objectives.

Although the three Foreign Ministers did meet on September 24, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly<sup>60</sup>, there was no media release or joint statement. This could be because some details need to be ironed out before the trilateral is announced, or in anticipation of a summit-level meeting. Whatever the reason, all three countries desire to counter China’s growing influence, without turning confrontationalist. Perhaps the only difference between them is that Australia prefers unipolar US led order, while India and France are strong proponents of multilateralism and a multipolar world. The impending rejuvenation of the India-France-Australia trilateral is thus good news.

## India’s Military Partnership Development

India’s Armed Forces participated in three major international exercises during the month: Exercise VOSTOK 2022, Exercise JIMEX, and Exercise KAKADU 2022. This was after having participated in Exercise RIMPAC 2022 and Exercise Pitch Black in August.

VOSTOK is one of Russia’s four major theatre-level exercises, the others being TSENR, ZAPAD and KAVKAZ. This year’s event held from September 01-07 despite Russia’s commitments to the ongoing war in Ukraine, involved the

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<sup>58</sup>France and India in the Indo-Pacific: An Essential Partnership in Challenging Times (September 15, 2022), <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/india/news/article/france-and-india-in-the-indo-pacific-an-essential-partnership-in-challenging>

<sup>59</sup>Ibid

<sup>60</sup>Senator Penny Wong on Twitter, <https://twitter.com/SenatorWong/status/1573686961973342208?cxt=HHwWgMCtwYj97dYrAAAA>

participation of over 50,000 personnel<sup>61</sup>, 5000 vehicles and units of military equipment including 140 aircraft and 60 ships, and personnel from the CSTO, SCO and partner states including Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Tajikistan and Syria. The exercise area was the Sergeevski Military Range in Russia's Eastern Military District and the Sea of Japan. China participated with over 2000 personnel, 300 vehicles and equipment of various types, 21 aircraft and helicopters and three ships<sup>62</sup>, including the Type 055 Destroyer Nanchang, Type 054A missile frigate Yancheng and Type 903A supply ship Dongpinghu. India sent a contingent from the 7/8 Gorkha Rifles and did not participate in the maritime part of the exercise in deference to Japan's sensitivities<sup>63</sup>.

Held in the Bay of Bengal from September 11 – 17, the Japan India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX) was the sixth such bilateral exercise. It involved Japanese Navy ships Izumo and Takanami<sup>64</sup>, along with IN ships Sahyadri, Ranvijay, Jyoti, Sukanya, Kadmat and Kavaratti, apart from a submarine, Mig-29K, P-8I and Dornier-228 aircraft, and ship borne helicopters<sup>65</sup>. The two navies carried out advanced anti-submarine and air defence exercises, weapon firings and replenishment at sea, bringing into use the Reciprocal Provisions for Supply and Services agreement. The exercise reflects the increased scale and scope of cooperation between India and Japan, but whether the increasing cooperation and interoperability is sufficient to deter China is questionable.

Representatives of 26 countries (Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, Fiji, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, United Kingdom, the United States of America and Vanuatu) came together off Darwin, in Northern Australia, for Exercise KAKADU-2022 from September 12-24. Described as the Royal Australian Navy's flagship biennial international engagement activity, this was the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the exercise that began in 1993. It involved 15 warships, more than 30 aircraft and over 3000 personnel, including INS

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<sup>61</sup> Vostok 2022, <https://eng.mil.ru/en/mission/practice/more.htm?id=12436016@egNews>

<sup>62</sup> China sends over 2,000 troops to Vostok-2022 exercises, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2022-09/01/content\\_10182185.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2022-09/01/content_10182185.htm)

<sup>63</sup> Indian Army Contingent Participates in Exercise Vostok-2022 at Sergeevsky, East Military District Russia, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1856018>

<sup>64</sup> Japan-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (JIMEX 2022) <https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/release/202209/20220913en.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Japan – India Maritime Bilateral Exercise – Jimex 2022, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/japan-india-maritime-bilateral-exercise-%E2%80%93-jimex-2022>

Satpura and a P-8I from India<sup>66</sup>, providing regional partners good opportunity to undertake multinational maritime activities ranging from constabulary operations to high end maritime warfare in a combined environment<sup>67</sup>. Of note was the European presence, from France, Germany and the UK, and the opportunities this provided for interaction with India's contingent.



Crew of P-8 Aircraft from the Indian Navy, the Royal Australian Air Force and the US Navy in Front of their respective P-8 aircraft at RAAF Base Darwin, September 20, 2022.

Source: Royal Australian Navy

The scale of international exercises is growing, reflecting both a return to normal after the Covid-19 pandemic as well as increased concern of Indo-Pacific nations regarding the security environment. There is evidently greater interest in cooperation to secure the sea lanes, both for constabulary purposes as well as to tackle high-end maritime challenges. Given this trend, the exercises serve multiple purposes. They familiarise participating nations with India's capability and display its intent to play a meaningful role in international security cooperation. They also enable an assessment of India's operational, professional and material capability, including reach, sustainability, state of training, quality of equipment etc. Nations participating in Exercise KAKADU, for example, would not have failed to note that the indigenously built INS Satpura has, in the last few months, exercised with the Philippine Navy off Manila, gone to Hawaii to participate in Exercise RIMPAC

<sup>66</sup> INS Satpura and P8 I Maritime Patrol Aircraft Arrive in Darwin, Australia to Participate in Multinational Naval Ex Kakadu, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1858965>

<sup>67</sup> Exercise Kakadu begins in Darwin, <https://news.defence.gov.au/media/media-releases/exercise-kakadu-begins-darwin>

2022, then been across the Pacific to show India's flag for the first time at San Diego on August 15, come back via Fiji and now come to Darwin, traversing a distance of over 35,000 Km without even once having needed to come back to home port for maintenance. This provides a major boost to confidence in the quality of indigenously built platforms, apart from displaying this quality to the world.

Even as INS Satpura begins its journey back home after Ex KAKADU, another Indian warship, INS Tarkash, is also on its way back after having displayed India's flag at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. INS Tarkash visited Lome, on Africa's West Coast, becoming the first Indian warship to ever visit Togo<sup>68</sup>. She then exercised with the Togolese Navy<sup>69</sup>, visited Lagos<sup>70</sup>, exercised with the Nigerian Navy and participated in India's first ever anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Guinea<sup>71</sup>. She then visited Port Gentil in Gabon, becoming the first ever Indian warship to visit this West African country<sup>72</sup>.

In the Southwest Indian Ocean, INS Sunayna's represented India in the Combined Maritime Force's inaugural Operation Southern Readiness, designed to enhance regional capacity for constabulary action. The program included a demonstration of Visit Board Search and Seizure operations led by the Seychelles Special Forces with close support from an Indian Naval team, and was witnessed by Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan<sup>73</sup>. Cooperative activities of this nature help in the SAGAR commitment of strengthening maritime capacities of Indian Ocean island states.

Exercise Malabar will be coming up, as will numerous other bilateral exercises. As India seeks to play a larger role on the global stage, the Indian Navy, Army and Air Force will serve a significant purpose in demonstrating the strength of the nation's convictions and commitments.

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<sup>68</sup> INS Tarkash Visited Port Lome, Togo, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/ins-tarkash-visited-port-lome-togo>

<sup>69</sup> INS Tarkash Undertakes MPX with Togolese Navy, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/ins-tarkash-undertakes-mpx-togolese-navy>

<sup>70</sup> INS Tarkash at Lagos Nigeria, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/ins-tarkash-lagos-nigeria-1>

<sup>71</sup> Operational Deployment – INS Tarkash Gulf of Guinea – West coast of Africa, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/operational-deployment-ins-tarkash-gulf-guinea-west-coast-africa>

<sup>72</sup> INS Tarkash in Port Gentil, Gabon, First Ever Visit by an Indian Naval Warship, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1862275>

<sup>73</sup> INS Sunayna Participates in Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) Exercise at Seychelles, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/ins-sunayna-participates-combined-maritime-forces-cmf-exercise-seychelles>

## AUKUS Developments

Among the witnesses of the commissioning of HMS Anson<sup>74</sup>, the fifth of the Royal Navy's Astute Class nuclear attack submarines on August 31, 2022, was Richard Marles, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. The event was marked by the announcement that Royal Australian Navy (RAN) submariners would soon join UK crews to train on the newly commissioned British submarine<sup>75</sup>. The UK and the US had earlier announced training of RAN personnel in specialised nuclear courses ashore. RAN personnel have been sailing on USN attack submarines as part of an exchange programme: in fact, two Australian submariners were on board the Los Angeles-class SSN USS Key West on September 16, 2021, when the AUKUS announcement was made<sup>76</sup>. The US Congress is considering the Australia-US Submarine Officer Pipeline Act<sup>77</sup>, which will enable a minimum of two RAN officers to train in US nuclear facilities, including on operational submarines at sea. The British announcement opens up the gates for sea training Australians on Royal Navy (RN) submarines also.



An Astute Class Nuclear Attack Submarine on the Surface at Sea.  
Source: Royal Navy

<sup>74</sup> New attack submarine HMS Anson joins the Royal Navy fleet, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2022/august/31/220831-hms-anson-joins-the-royal-navy-fleet>

<sup>75</sup> Australian submariners to join Royal Navy crews as UK and Australia deepen defence ties through AUKUS pact, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/australian-submariners-to-join-royal-navy-crews-as-uk-and-australia-deepen-defence-ties-through-aucus-pact>

<sup>76</sup> Relationships are the key to submarine success, <https://news.defence.gov.au/international/relationships-are-key-submarine-success>

<sup>77</sup> S. 4718 – Australia-United States Submarine Officer Pipeline Act, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4718>



The BAE Systems yard at Barrow-in-Furness, the builder of the Astute Class SSN, has historically taken about ten years to commission a boat from the date the keel was laid. It has displayed the ability to build at least three boats, if not four, in parallel: the keel of the fourth SSN, HMS Audacious, was laid in March 2009, well before the first, HMS Astute, commissioned in August 2010. HM Submarines Agamemnon and Agincourt are currently building; the former began construction in 2013 and the latter in 2018. Based on past record, delivery can be expected around 2023 and 2028 respectively. The yard is also building two Dreadnought-class SSBNs for nuclear deterrent purposes; with delivery of the first expected about a decade hence.

Assuming a life of 25 years, HMS Astute will remain in service till 2035 at least<sup>78</sup>. Work on the successor project commenced last year, with BAE Systems and Rolls Royce each being given £85 million to carry out design and concept work over the next three years<sup>79</sup>. The first successor class boat can thus start building in 2025-26, if the design is completed and accepted on schedule. The fact that Richard Marles visited the yard indicates it may have a window to begin construction of one submarine for the RAN after Agamemnon is delivered provided Australia adopts the proven Astute design. This could result in the first Australian SSN being commissioned around 2033-34.

The other source for Australia lies in expanding US production facilities. The US currently builds nuclear submarines at the General Dynamics Electric Boat, Groton, Connecticut and the Huntington Ingalls Industries at Newport News, Virginia. These take three to four years to build an SSN and commission roughly one boat each every year. Their hands, however, are full in building Virginia class SSNs and Columbia class SSBNs for the USN. Capacity could be expanded to build a few boats for the Australian Navy till Australia's own shipyard can step in. This will, however, entail incurring costs for expansion, with Australia footing at least part of the bill<sup>80</sup>.

Selection of the design to be used by the RAN is, however, expected only in the first quarter of 2023. When asked if Britain was in a position to supply Australia with an Astute-class submarine, British Secretary of State for Defence Secretary

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<sup>78</sup> Design work begins on successor to Astute-class submarines in £170m deal, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2021/september/17/20210917-astute-successor>

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> US in Talks to Build First Nuclear Subs for Australia, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administration-in-discussion-to-build-first-nuclear-subs-for-australia-in-u-s-11663963244>

Ben Wallace did not provide a clear answer<sup>81</sup>. He did, however, say, “We are onto our next design and our new one, and that might well be fully shared with all three nations as a collaborative design”<sup>82</sup>.

The Virginia-class SSN currently used by the USN entered service about six years before HMS Astute. It is substantially larger, carries nearly double the number of torpedoes and missiles, and costs considerably more<sup>83</sup>. The US Navy has requested \$ 237 million in research and development funding for the next generation SSN, the design for which has not yet been determined<sup>84</sup>. However, as per current projections, the USN will start funding replacements only in the mid 2030s, while the RN could start around 2025. Secretary Wallace’s statement about a shared design may just be political posturing. But however unlikely, the possibility of the three countries adopting a joint design cannot be discounted.

A Joint Leaders Statement to mark one year of AUKUS reiterates the commitment to provide SSN capability to Australia at the earliest and states significant progress has been made<sup>85</sup>. Tying up the training of the first generation of nuclear submariners is a major step forward. The next major signpost will be identification of the boat to be built, due by March 2023. The building blocks required to fulfil the AUKUS plan appear to be coming into place.

## Other Indo-Pacific Developments

Nearly ten months after the tragic death of General Bipin Rawat on December 08, 2021, India announced on September 28 the appointment of Lt Gen Anil Chauhan (Retired) as the second Chief of Defence Staff<sup>86</sup>. General Chauhan

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<sup>81</sup> Joint Press Conference with UK Secretary of State for Defence Ben Wallace, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/rmarles/transcripts/joint-press-conference-uk-secretary-state-defence-ben-wallace>

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> The cost of two Virginia-class boats currently building is \$ 7.3 billion, or about \$ 3.65 billion each, in comparison with HMS Astute’s cost of below \$ 1.5 billion at current rates of exchange. CRS Report RL 32418, Navy Virginia (SSN-774) Class Attack Submarine Procurement: Background and Issues for Congress, August 26, 2022.

<sup>84</sup> CRS report IF 11826: Navy Next-Generation Attack Submarine (SSN(X)) Program: Background and Issues for Congress, August 26, 2022.

<sup>85</sup> Joint leaders statement to mark one year of AUKUS, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-leaders-statement-to-mark-one-year-of-aukus-23-september-2022/joint-leaders-statement-to-mark-one-year-of-aukus>

<sup>86</sup> Government appoints Lt General Anil Chauhan (Retired) as Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1863084>

assumed charge on September 30, 2022<sup>87</sup>. He will also function as the Principal Military Adviser to the Raksha Mantri on all Tri-Service matters as well as the Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs and the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the India-UAE Joint Commission was chaired by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Foreign Minister of the UAE, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on September 01, 2022<sup>88</sup>. The ministers expressed happiness at the entry into force of the bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement on May 1, 2022 and organisation of various activities for effective implementation of the agreement. They reiterated the commitment of achieving the goal of \$100 billion of bilateral trade in the next five years. They also reviewed progress in various elements of bilateral cooperation. The meeting reflected significant progress in India's integration into the geo-economic and geopolitical structures that will impact the future of India's gateway into the Mediterranean and Europe.

The Iranian frigate IRIS Jamaran briefly seized two Saildrone Explorer Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs) operated by the US Fifth Fleet engaged in collecting imagery from international waters in the Red Sea on September 01, 2022. The Fifth Fleet uses such commercially available, unmanned and unarmed drones to monitor smuggling and other maritime activity in the region. USS Delbert D Black and USS Nitze, which were operating in the vicinity, responded and eventually compelled the Iranian ship to release the drones the next morning<sup>89</sup>. Iran claimed that the drones were seized to prevent any possible accident to shipping and later released in a safe area<sup>90</sup>. Unless the USN can come up with effective methods of deterring such actions, its usage of USVs will come up against interference by both non-state and state actors.

INS Sunayna entered Port Victoria, in the Seychelles on September 24 for India's maiden participation in the Combined Maritime Force (CMF) Operation

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<sup>87</sup> General Anil Chauhan takes over as Chef of Defence Staff; Vows to fulfil the hopes of the Nation & deal with challenges together, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1863755>

<sup>88</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting, [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/35669/14th\\_IndiaUAE\\_Joint\\_Commission\\_Meeting](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/35669/14th_IndiaUAE_Joint_Commission_Meeting)

<sup>89</sup> US Navy Statement on Iranian Incident in Red Sea, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/3148765/us-navy-statement-on-iranian-incident-in-red-sea/>

<sup>90</sup> Iran Seizes and Releases Two US Sea Drones in Red Sea, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202209027481>

Southern Readiness<sup>91</sup>. This is the first iteration of the operation, which the CMF is leading in partnership with the Seychelles People's Defence Force, the European Union Naval Force, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and India<sup>92</sup>. The operation is intended to strengthen regional collaboration and enhance operational readiness. India had in February 2022 participated in the US Naval Forces Africa Exercise Cutlass Express in the Seychelles.

India and the UK conducted a cyber-security exercise for 26 countries as part of the International Counter Ransomware Initiative-Resilience Working Group, which is led by India<sup>93</sup>. The exercise was themed on responding to a ransomware attack on multiple electricity distribution companies and designed to explore the complexity of response to attacks on critical national infrastructure.

INS Vikrant was commissioned into the Indian Navy by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at Cochin Shipyard Limited on September 02<sup>94</sup>. The Indian Navy's new ensign was also unveiled. Addressing all present on the occasion, the Prime Minister described it as the sunrise of a new future, a manifestation of the dream of the freedom fighters when they envisioned a capable and strong India. Observing that security concerns in the Indo-Pacific and the Indian Ocean had been ignored had been ignored in the past, but the area was now a major defence priority for the country. The government was thus increasing the budget for the Navy and increasing its capability. The Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh echoed these words, adding that the commissioning of INS Vikrant was an assurance to friendly foreign countries that India was fully capable of meeting the collective security needs of the region.

Yard 12653 (Taragiri), the fifth of India's Project 17A frigates, was launched at Mazagon Docks Limited (MDL) on September 11, 2022<sup>95</sup>. She joins her two sister ships being fitted out by MDL prior to delivery. Two others are similarly fitting out at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd, Kolkata, while one more ship of the class is under construction at both shipyards. Two Diving Support Vessels being built by Hindustan Shipyard Ltd Visakhapatnam were

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<sup>91</sup>INS Sunayna in Seychelles: Indian Navy's Maiden Participation in Combined Maritime Forces Exercise, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1862198>

<sup>92</sup>International Naval Forces Partner in Seychelles to Build Cooperation, <https://combinedmaritimeforces.com/2022/09/18/international-naval-forces-partner-in-seychelles-to-build-cooperation/>

<sup>93</sup>India and UK Conduct Counter Ransomware Exercise for 26 Nations, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1857243>

<sup>94</sup>Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Commissions India's First Indigenous Aircraft Carrier INS Vikrant in Kochi, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1856230>

<sup>95</sup>Launch of Yd 12653 Taragiri, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/launch-yd-12653-taragiri>

launched on September 22<sup>96</sup>. They will be equipped with an array of complex Diving Support Systems and will be deployed for deep sea diving and submarine rescue operations, adding to India's maritime capability.

The US State Department notified Congress of its intent to sell a range of military equipment, including 100 AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder AAMs and 60 AGM-84L-1 Harpoon missiles and other support equipment to Taiwan on September 02<sup>97,98,99</sup>. The total value of the equipment to be sold is over \$ 1.1 billion. China said the arms sales "gravely undermine China's sovereignty and security interests, severely harm China-US relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait", and that it would "take resolute and strong measures to firmly defend our own sovereignty and security interests"<sup>100</sup>. Though both the USA and China have continued their confrontational approach towards Taiwan, the situation has generally remained under control. However, Taiwan remains a point of discord that could easily transform into a flashpoint.

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee overwhelmingly approved the Taiwan Policy Act of 2022 and sent it to the Senate for consideration<sup>101</sup>. The Act seeks to expand US efforts to promote the security of Taiwan, ensure regional stability and deter further PRC aggression against Taiwan, while setting up a broad economic sanctions regime to impose costs on hostile action by the PRC. In response, China's spokesperson said, "The Act seriously breaches the US commitment to China on the Taiwan question, and violates the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués. It constitutes interference in China's internal affairs, violates international law

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<sup>96</sup> Mrs Kala Hari Kumar Launches Yard 11190 Nistar and Yard 11191 Nipun, Diving Support Vessels at Hindustan Shipyard, Ltd, Visakhapatnam on 22 Sep 22, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1861514>

<sup>97</sup>Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States – AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder Missiles, <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/taipei-economic-and-cultural-representative-office-united-states-aim>

<sup>98</sup>Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States – AGM-84L-1 Harpoon Block II missiles, <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/taipei-economic-and-cultural-representative-office-united-states-agm>

<sup>99</sup>Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States – Contract Logistics Support for Surveillance Radar Program (SRP), <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/taipei-economic-and-cultural-representative-office-united-states-24>

<sup>100</sup>Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on September 5, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202209/t20220905\\_10762340.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202209/t20220905_10762340.html)

<sup>101</sup>Senate Foreign Relations Committee Overwhelmingly Approves Taiwan Policy Act of 2022, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/dem/release/senate-foreign-relations-committee-overwhelmingly-approves-taiwan-policy-act-of-2022>

and basic norms in international relations, and sends a seriously wrong signal to the Taiwan independence separatist forces<sup>102</sup>. He also indicated that China's Ambassador Qin Gang had told US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman that China-US ties would face disintegration if the Taiwan Policy Act is passed<sup>103</sup>, and only by handling Taiwan-related issues prudently and properly could further damage to China-US relations be prevented. It is evident that a meeting point between the China and US on Taiwan issues still remains to be found.



INS Ranvijay and JS Izumo during Exercise JIMEX in the Bay of Bengal, September 17, 2022.  
Source: PIB

USS Higgins and the Canadian Navy frigate HMCS Vancouver conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit on September 20, upholding their right to sail anywhere the law allows<sup>104</sup>. They conducted bilateral surface action group

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<sup>102</sup>Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on September 15, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202209/t20220915\\_10766522.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202209/t20220915_10766522.html)

<sup>105</sup>Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on September 16, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202209/t20220914\\_10766079.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202209/t20220914_10766079.html)

<sup>104</sup>7<sup>th</sup> Fleet Destroyer Transits Taiwan Strait with Canadian Frigate, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3165147/7th-fleet-destroyer-transits-taiwan-strait-with-canadian-frigate/>

operations in the South China Sea the next day<sup>105</sup>. China denounced the transit describing it as a provocative move, and said its navy and air force had tracked the ships throughout<sup>106</sup>. This is the second time a Canadian warship has joined the USN in a Taiwan Straits transit.

North Korea passed a law spelling out its nuclear policy on nuclear forces on September 08, 2022<sup>107</sup>. The law permits North Korea to carry out nuclear strikes under five conditions: when a nuclear or other WMD attack has been carried out or is imminent; when a nuclear or other WMD strike on leadership and national nuclear force command body has been carried out or is imminent; when a lethal military attack on important strategic targets of the state has been carried out or is imminent; when it is operational unavoidable to prevent the expansion of a war and seize the initiative in times of contingencies; and when a situation causes catastrophic crisis to the existence of the state and safety of its people<sup>108</sup>. The law effectively prepares the legal framework to ensure that nuclearisation is irreversible and there can be no further talks on denuclearisation. It could result in the deployment of US nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea carried out its 17th ballistic missile test on September 24, days after USS Ronald Reagan arrived in South Korea's Busan port for a joint exercise with the Republic of Korea Navy<sup>109</sup>. The short range missile flew 373 miles before falling into the Sea of Japan. The US Indo-Pacific Command noted that the test did not pose an immediate threat to US personnel or territory or to allies. It described North Korea's unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programmes as destabilising, and reiterated that US commitments to the defence of South Korea and Japan remained ironclad<sup>110</sup>. North Korea's missile launches did not deter the US and South Korean navies from exercising with each other in the

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<sup>105</sup>USS Higgins (DDG 76) Conducts Operations with Royal Canadian Navy in South China Sea, <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/Newsroom/News/Article/3166092/uss-higgins-ddg-76-conducts-operations-with-royal-canadian-navy-in-south-china/>

<sup>106</sup>Chinese military slams US, Canadian warships' transit through Taiwan Strait, [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2022-09/21/content\\_4921526.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2022-09/21/content_4921526.htm)

<sup>107</sup>Second-day Sitting of 7<sup>th</sup> Session of 14<sup>th</sup> SPA of DPRK Held, [http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01\\_02\\_01&newsID=2022-09-09-0023](http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2022-09-09-0023)

<sup>108</sup>North Korea States it Will Never Give Up Nuclear Weapons, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/north-korea-states-it-will-never-give-nuclear-weapons>

<sup>109</sup>North Korea Launches Ballistic Missile Off Its East Coast, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/world/asia/north-korea-ballistic-missile-launch.html>

<sup>110</sup>US INDOPACOM Statement on DPRK Missile Launch, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3169641/usindopacom-statement-on-dprk-missile-launch/>

East (China) Sea from September 26-29<sup>111</sup>. Meanwhile, North Korea fired two more short-range ballistic missiles off its East Coast on September 28, a day before Vice President Kamala Harris was scheduled to visit South Korea<sup>112</sup>.

China's 42nd fleet mission to the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa set sail from Shandong province on Sep 21 to take over escort mission<sup>113</sup>. The mission comprises ships and personnel from the Northern Theatre Command, including the missile destroyer Huainan, missile frigate Rizhao and a supply ship. The composition indicates a conscious effort to provide international exposure to ships and personnel from all maritime Theatre Commands.

The PLA (Navy) commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China's first aircraft carrier, Liaoning on September 25, by highlighting that China had made significant progress in building an aircraft carrier fleet in the past decade<sup>114</sup>. It claimed that having carried out the first night landing on the Liaoning in 2017, Chinese naval aircraft were now capable of night time aerial refuelling, ultra-low altitude defence penetration and carrier-based air-sea fighting.

The French and German Air Forces used the opportunity provided by the 2022 editions of Australia's Exercise Pitch Black and Exercise Kakadu to display their capability to deploy rapidly to the Pacific. The French Air Force with Operation Henri Brown, with three Rafales, 2 A 330 Phenix transports and 2 A400M tanker aircraft deployed from France to New Caledonia within 72 hours, staging through Sular (Coimbatore) and Darwin<sup>115</sup>. The German Air Force followed with Operation Rapid Pacific 2022<sup>116</sup>. Six Luftwaffe Eurofighters, four A 400M transports with 250 soldiers embarked and an A 330 tanker aircraft departed Germany on August 15 and flew direct to Singapore (overflying India en route),

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<sup>111</sup> Republic of Korea and US Navies Conduct Joint Maritime Counter-Special Operations Exercise, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3170918/republic-of-korea-and-us-navies-conduct-joint-maritime-counter-special-operatio/>

<sup>112</sup> North Korea fires two ballistic missiles ahead of Harris visit to South, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkorea-fires-ballistic-missile-off-east-coast-skorea-2022-09-28/>

<sup>113</sup> China sends new naval fleet on Gulf of Aden escort mission, [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2022-09/21/content\\_10186380.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2022-09/21/content_10186380.htm)

<sup>114</sup> China makes significant progress in building aircraft carrier fleet in past decade, [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2022-09/26/content\\_4921808.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2022-09/26/content_4921808.htm)

<sup>115</sup> Update on operations from Friday August 12 to Thursday August 18, 2022, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/point-situation-operations-du-vendredi-12-au-jeudi-18-aout-2022>

<sup>116</sup> This is Rapid Pacific 2022, <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/luftwaffe/aktuelles/this-is-rapid-pacific-2022-5484614>



before going on to Darwin via Indonesia<sup>117</sup>. This was the Luftwaffe's first deployment to the Pacific, following the deployment of the Bundeswehr Marine's frigate Bayern to the region from August 2021 – February 2022. Both deployments demonstrate the ability of these NATO partners to participate in operations in the Indo-Pacific and thus add their teeth to implement NATO's new strategic concept. On completion of Exercise Kakadu on September 25, the aircraft were going back to parent nations exercising with Indo-Pacific partner countries en route.

19 countries bordering the Atlantic joined hands in announcing Atlantic cooperation on September 20, 2022, in an evident counter to China's growing influence in Africa and Latin America<sup>118</sup>. The countries resolved to cooperate in tackling common challenges explore opportunities to advance sustainable development and develop a shared approach to Atlantic issues. They invited other Atlantic countries to join them.

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<sup>117</sup>With drills and fighter jets, German defence minister seeks stronger Indo-Pacific ties. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/09/26/asia-pacific/german-defense-minister-asia-pacific-engagement/>

<sup>118</sup>Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/09/20/joint-statement-on-atlantic-cooperation/>



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