

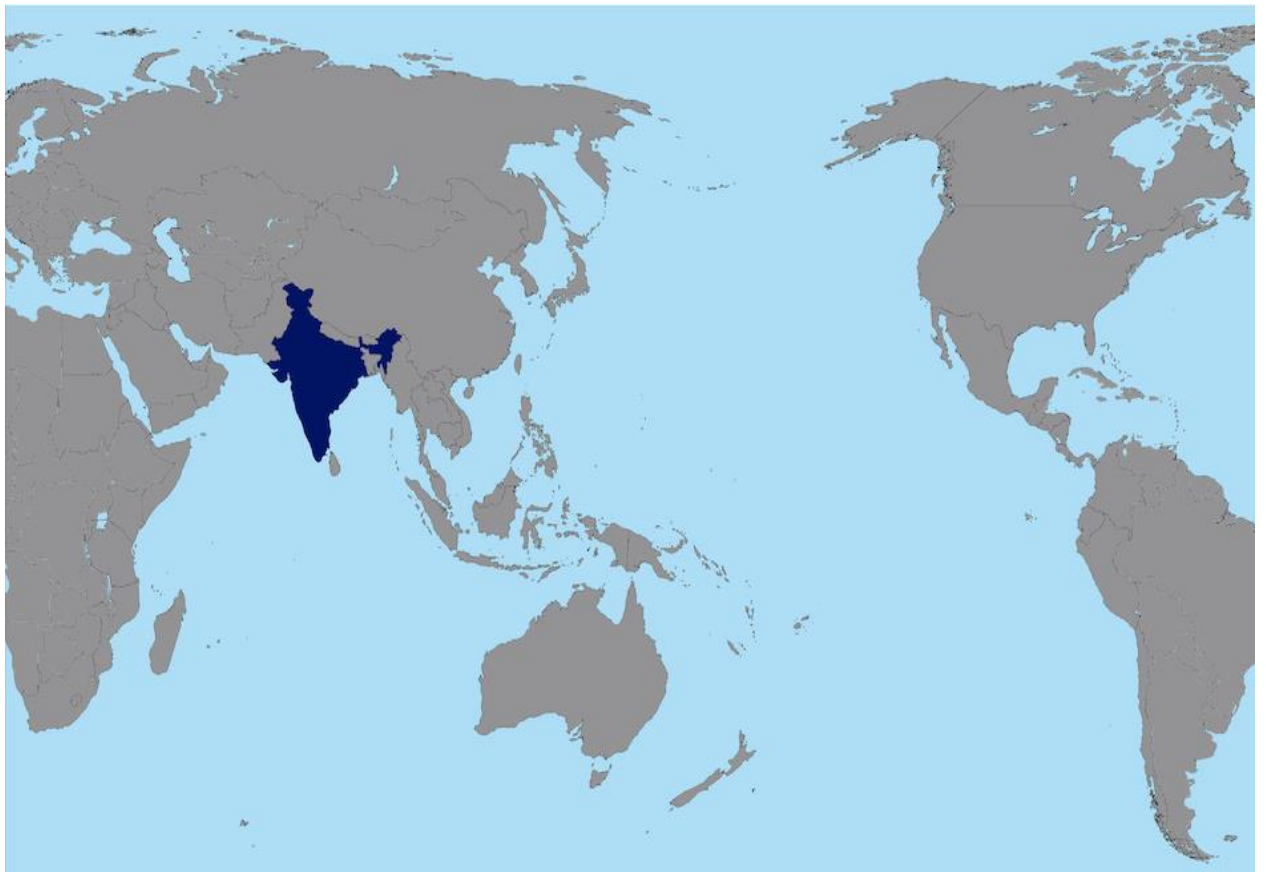


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



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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, based on open source reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be send at lalit@dpg.org.in. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

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DPG INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

November 2021

Abstract

Nearly ten months after the Biden administration assumed office and eight months after its first substantive interaction with China at Anchorage, Alaska, Presidents Biden and Xi came together in a virtual summit on November 15/16. Official readouts indicated that China sought a relationship of equality and mutual benefit, proper management of differences, revival of cooperation and coordination mechanisms, and a return by the US to the constructive track of pragmatic engagement (effectively, a great power G-2). The US, on the other hand, underscored its determination to defend its interests and values while upholding its commitments in the Indo-Pacific, raised concerns about the PRC's actions in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, and reaffirmed its commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act as well as its One-China policy. Subsequent reports indicated that Biden had also proposed a new dialogue on strategic stability, prospects for which are unclear.

A week later, China and ASEAN held a special commemorative summit on November 22, to mark 30 years of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations. President Xi's speech on the occasion was noteworthy not only for its misleading narrative on contentious issues, but also his ambition to turn the region into a dependent economic hinterland. He offered to sign the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty of 1995 designating South East Asia as a nuclear weapons free zone; to underwrite security, including defence, counter terrorism and all aspects of maritime governance; and announced \$ 1.5 billion for ASEAN's economic recovery as well as the intent to purchase \$ 150 billion of agricultural products from South East Asian countries over the next five years. However, with coercive Chinese actions ongoing at the Second Thomas Shoal, President Duterte of the Philippines made plain his 'abhorrence' of China's actions in the South China Sea, a direct riposte to Xi's projection of China as a benign benefactor for ASEAN.

The prospect of the US levying sanctions on India under CAATSA came to the fore as reports indicated that delivery of the S-400 missile defence system had commenced. Voices for and against imposition of sanctions were raised in the US, but a decision remains pending.

The commissioning of India's first Project 15B destroyer, INS Visakhapatnam on November 21 and of INS Vela, the fourth Kalvari-class submarine on November 25, provided a significant fillip to India's maritime capability. Earlier, China had delivered PNS Tughril, described as the largest and most advanced warship China has ever exported, to the Pakistan Navy on November 8. The implications are explored in separate commentaries in this issue.

India's position on maritime security was once again articulated in speeches by Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla at the Goa Maritime Conclave on November 8, and Secretary (East) Riva Ganguly Das at the 5th EAS Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation at Kolkata on November 23.

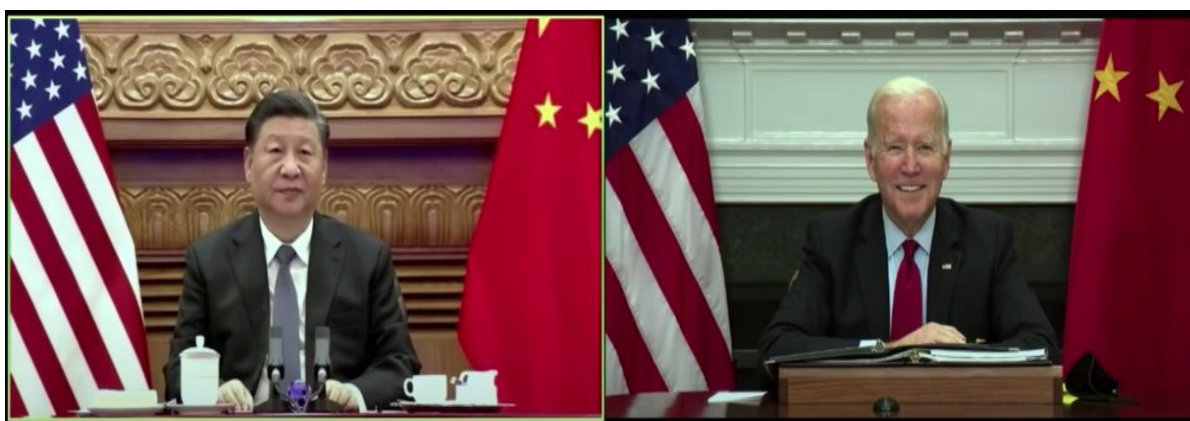
As the month ended, an unclassified summary of the Biden administration's defence posture review was released. It largely endorsed the current deployment posture of the US military worldwide, with new commitments in the Indo-Pacific including expansion of air force facilities in Guam and Australia.

The final section of this month's issue provides a snapshot, along with brief commentaries, on other developments of significance during the month. These include an elaboration of India's position at the COP 26 Summit in Glasgow, Bangladesh taking over as the Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Sri Lanka as the Vice Chair and the induction of Russia as its 10th Dialogue Partner, developments in India-Japan and India-US cooperation, exercises by the Indian Navy involving Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, indicators of the outlook of Japan's new government towards China, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, reports to US Congress on China released by the Pentagon and by the US-China Security Review Commission, progress of AUKUS, and developments related to Taiwan, among others.

The Biden Xi Summit

Nearly ten months after the Biden administration came into office and eight months after its first substantive interaction with China at Anchorage, Alaska, Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping came together in a virtual summit on November 15/16, 2021. Both had moved, albeit in different directions, to strengthen their perceived positions in advance. Biden had participated in summit level interactions with the Quad (both virtual, in March, and an in-person, in September), Japan, the UK, NATO, EU, the G20 and the ASEAN, and even Russia and signed the AUKUS Agreement before coming around to China.

He signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act¹, committing a spending of \$ 1.2 trillion² to revitalise and upgrade US infrastructure to global standards³. His Interim National Security Guidance of March 2021 described China as “the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system”⁴ and announced the intent to “engage in meaningful dialogue with Russia and China on a range of emerging military technological developments that implicate strategic stability”⁵. On his part, Xi Jinping had tightened his domestic grip and assured himself of a third term as President by getting the Central Committee of the CPC to elevate him and Xi Jinping thought to a position beyond critique at the sixth plenum just days before the summit.



Presidents Xi Jinping and Joe Biden at their Virtual Summit on November 15/16, 2021.
Source: Youtube (@WhiteHouse)

In the lead up to the event, Secretary of State Antony Blinken met State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Rome on October 31⁶. While underscoring the importance of maintaining open lines of communication and identifying areas where US and China could work together including (DPRK, Burma, Iran, Afghanistan and climate crisis), he “raised concerns about PRC actions that undermine international rules-based order and run counter

¹ President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/>

² Biden signs ‘once-in-a-generation’ \$ 1 tn infrastructure bill into law, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-59298981>

³ Bill Signed: H.R. 3684, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/15/bill-signed-h-r-3684/>

⁴ Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Secretary Blinken’s Meeting with PRC State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-meeting-with-prc-state-councilor-and-foreign-minister-wang/>

to US values and interests and those of allies and partners, including actions related to human rights, Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, ECS, SCS and Taiwan”⁷. Wang Yi, on his part, spoke of the wrong China policy followed by the US, its wanton interference in China’s internal affairs, over 300 anti-China bills introduced by current Congress and sanctions on more than 900 Chinese entities and individuals, formation of small cliques to suppress China on a global scale⁸. He said that both countries must respect each other and treat each other equally. He described Taiwan as the most sensitive issue between the two and said that US connivance and support for Taiwan independence are to blame for difficult relations. He urged the US to recognize serious harm of Taiwan independence and to implement the one-China policy⁹.

In an interview on November 10, Secretary Blinken observed that the relationship with China was the most complex and most consequential one for the US, with aspects that were clearly competitive, some that were cooperative, and some that were adversarial¹⁰. The purpose was to manage the relationship across all these aspects, to put the US in a position where it could cooperate where possible, compete effectively where needed, and stand strongly where the relationship was adversarial. He specified that the objective was to defend the liberal value inspired international rules-based order that had been put together decades ago.

The background Press Call on the eve of the summit reiterated this objective and identified much the same areas of concern that had been identified by Secretary Blinken in his interaction with Foreign Minister Wang¹¹. It specified that the engagement was about setting the terms of competition to ensure it did not lead to conflict, and about enforcing the rules of the road. President Biden would thus discuss his approach to dealing with China and the importance of bounding the competition with common sense guardrails; discuss areas of divergence where the US had concerns about China’s behaviour; and discuss areas of potential alignment.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Wang Yi Meets with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/activities_663312/202111/t20211101_10435630.html

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Secretary Antony J. Blinken with Andrew Ross Sorkin of The New York Times DealBook Summit, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-with-andrew-ross-sorkin-of-the-new-york-times-dealbook-summit/>

¹¹ Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on President Biden’s Virtual Meeting with President Xi of the People’s Republic of China, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/11/15/background-press-call-by-senior-administration-officials-on-president-bidens-virtual-meeting-with-president-xi-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

In the event, both sides appear to have stood their ground. The US readout of the summit highlights that Biden underscored that the US will continue to stand up for its interests and values and ensure the rules of the road for the 21st century advance an international system that is free, open and fair¹². He raised concerns about PRC practices in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, and more broadly on human rights issues, while putting across the need to protect American workers and industry from the PRC's unfair trade and economic practices. He discussed the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific and communicated the determination of the US to uphold its commitments in the region, while reiterating the importance of freedom of navigation and safe overflight for the region's prosperity. He also underscored that the US remains committed to 'one China policy', guided by Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiqué's and the Six Assurances, and that US strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Subsequent inputs indicated that the leaders had also discussed nuclear strategic stability^{13,14,15}.

The much more voluminous Chinese readout agreed that the two countries needed to work together, while hoping that President Biden would "display the political leadership needed and steer America's China policy back on the track of reason and pragmatism"¹⁶. It called upon both sides to run their domestic affairs well, shoulder their share of international responsibilities and work together to advance peace and development. President Xi identified three principles: mutual respect including of each other's systems and core interests, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation. He went on to identify four priority areas: global leadership, equality and mutual benefit, constructively managing differences and strengthening cooperation and coordination on major hot spots and public goods. The readout makes clear that there is no scope for lessening of the CCP's exclusive hold on power or return to

¹² Readout of President Biden's Virtual Meeting with President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/16/readout-of-president-bidens-virtual-meeting-with-president-xi-jinping-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

¹³ Biden, Xi Open to Nuclear-Arms Talks, White House Says, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-xi-open-to-nuclear-arms-talks-white-house-says-11637098592>

¹⁴ US Pushes Arms-Control Talks as China's Nuclear Arsenal Grows, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-pushes-arms-control-talks-as-chinas-nuclear-arsenal-grows-11637231400>

¹⁵ As China Speeds Up Nuclear Arms Race, the US Wants to Talk, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/28/us/politics/china-nuclear-arms-race.html?referringSource=articleShare>

¹⁶ President Xi Jinping Had a Virtual Meeting with US President Joe Biden, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1919223.shtml

democratic values or openness. He made it clear that there was no change in China's Taiwan policy and strongly defended its economic system

At the core of discussions about Taiwan lies the One-China Policy, which is portrayed by China as implying universal acceptance that there is only one Chinese nation, it is governed from Beijing, and it includes Taiwan. Consequently, China induces and coerces other nations to break relations with Taiwan, imposes penalties on them when they fail to comply with its desires (as Lithuania has experienced this month) and seeks incorporation of Taiwan into the PRC, preferably peacefully under the "one country, two systems" rubric, but without ruling out the use of force for reunification. This portrayal is not, however, factually correct¹⁷. Taiwan considers itself the true representative of one China. Policies of the US, Australia, Canada, Japan and the UK lie in between. They "take note of", "acknowledge", or "understand" the position of the Chinese government that Taiwan is a part of the PRC, but stop short of formally recognizing this position. These countries and many others, including India, maintain their independent links with Taiwan, for business purposes in the case of most, but also to ensure that the wishes of the Taiwanese people are taken into account and force is not used to unify the PRC and ROC.

So while China explains its actions regarding Taiwan as being due to the island's authorities relying on the US to seek independence, it does not take into account China's own failures in flouting treaty commitments in Hong Kong and unilaterally changing the one country two systems approach, or its unilateral actions in Ladakh. Similar action to change the status quo is visible in China's actions in the South China Sea, East China Sea, its relations with Australia, threats to Lithuania and actions against EU officials, among others. There is need for introspection on China's part as to how much its changed strategic approach is responsible for the pushback it is seeing from its neighbours. China needs to understand that if it has red lines, so do others – and not taking these into account is not conducive to its vision of building a willing "community with a shared future for mankind".

US difficulties in managing dialogue with China will be complicated by its inability to position an Ambassador in Beijing. The post has been vacant since Terry Branstad resigned in October last year and came back to work on Donald Trump's failed election campaign. President Biden had nominated Nicholas Burns to be his Ambassador in August and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had approved the nomination on November 3, 2021, but there is no

¹⁷ One China, Multiple Interpretations, Jessica Drun, <https://www.ccpwatch.org/single-post/2017/12/29/one-china-multiple-interpretations>

indication when the Senate will vote to confirm him¹⁸. A block on his nomination by Senator Marco Rubio due to concerns about his business relationship with China remains an impediment¹⁹.

The summit may have resulted in understanding of each other's positions, but whether it results in lessening of tensions or the building of guardrails to ensure misunderstandings don't spiral into destructive conflict remains to be seen. China sees so called points of convergence, including DPRK, Afghanistan, Iran and climate change as opportunities, not challenges, and will happily play the US on these areas. With Xi heading for an unprecedented third term and apparently fully in charge of his nation while Biden appears to be losing political ground with his party's slim majority in the Congress in jeopardy in next year's elections, there is little incentive for Xi to modify his chosen strategic path.

The China ASEAN Commemorative Special Summit

China and ASEAN convened a special summit on November 22 to commemorate 30 years of ASEAN-China dialogue relations. Chaired by Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, the ruler of Brunei and current Chairman of ASEAN and President Xi Jinping; its intent was to review what has been achieved and chart out the way ahead.

The Summit Joint Statement spoke of advancing "ASEAN-China cooperation in all fields which contribute to the building of an open, inclusive and sustainable region that enjoys peace, security, prosperity and sustainable development"²⁰. It announced "the establishment of an ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that is meaningful, substantive and mutually beneficial"²¹ and tasked ASEAN officials to follow up on its implementation. It reaffirmed the importance of maintaining ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture and supported ASEAN objectives, including advancing cooperation in relevant areas identified in the AOIP, while making a mention of exploring mutually beneficial cooperation

¹⁸US Senate committee approves Biden nominees to be ambassador to China, Japan, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-senate-committee-approves-biden-nominees-be-ambassador-china-japan-2021-11-03/>

¹⁹ Marco Rubio blocks Biden's nominee for ambassador to China, <https://www.yahoo.com/now/marco-rubio-blocks-bidens-nominee-212921335.html>

²⁰ Joint Statement of the ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations: Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace, Security, Prosperity and Sustainable Development, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Joint-Statement-30th-Anniversary-of-ASEAN-China-Dialogue-Relations-Final.pdf>

²¹ Ibid.

with the Belt and Road Initiative. Under political-security cooperation, it reiterated facades such as mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with international law and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, while reaffirming the adherence of ASEAN countries to the one-China policy. It committed to enhancement of frequent high-level exchanges and policy communication, of dialogue and coordination in ASEAN-led frameworks, the strengthening of defence and security cooperation through frameworks and mechanisms like the ADMM-Plus and ARF, and to jointly addressing non-traditional security threats and challenges including terrorism and transnational crime.



ASEAN Leaders and President Xi Jinping at the ASEAN – China Special Summit on November 22, 2021. Source: ASEAN

The statement reiterated the importance of resolving disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law, pointedly ignoring the substantial changes to facts on ground already made by China, including massive reconstruction on disputed islands, their militarisation, China's dishonouring of the final and binding verdict of Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016, and seizure of the Scarborough Shoal, Mischief Reef and Whitsun Reef through gray zone activity. China's action to prevent the Philippines from resupplying its marine outpost on the Second Thomas Shoal, using water cannon from Coast Guard ships, was ongoing even as the summit took place. This effectively established China's duplicity, but that didn't inhibit its economic attractions, displaying to all that ASEAN unity goes only so far. It also reaffirmed the commitment to implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DOC)

and looked forward to the timely conclusion of the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea; ritual statements that ignore the fact that China's administration and domestic law has been unilaterally imposed in globally recognised international waters as well as in the EEZs that are legally under the jurisdiction of SE Asian countries.

The economic cooperation, social-cultural cooperation and regional and international cooperation pillars of the joint statement continued the process of binding ASEAN to China as its economic hinterland, while maintaining the façade of independence and centrality.

President Xi Jinping's speech on the occasion revealed the nature of his ambitions for Southeast Asia²². Describing the past 30 years as having spearheaded the economic integration of East Asia, explored the path of good-neighbourliness and win-win cooperation resulting in strides toward building a closer community with a shared future, he attributed the achievements in China to four factors. The first was that both had respected each other and accommodated each other's major concerns, increasing trust through sincere communication and handled disagreements by seeking common ground while shelving differences. Second was that both had cooperated for win-win results and followed the path of peaceful development. Third was that both had looked out for each other and honoured the principle of amity, sincerity and mutual benefit. Fourth was that both had upheld inclusiveness and mutual learning and jointly contributed to open regionalism by forging a friendship that was not exclusionary.

The respect China has shown for major concerns of South China Sea claimants is visible from its continued actions to impose its writ over the region, in utter disregard of their will. A truer manifestation is provided by Yang Jiechi's widely reported retort to ASEAN foreign ministers at Hanoi in 2010, "China is a big country and you are small countries and that is a fact"²³. Accommodation, trust and the handling of disagreements have been vitiated ever since Xi assumed power, with imperious diktats and wolf warrior diplomacy being prioritised over finding common ground. The sincerity of communication must be questioned because of China's penchant for violation of treaty commitments, disregard of international tribunals, use of lawfare and its obduracy in pursuit of objectives, as is evident from the fact that the DOC has now been in existence for nearly two decades without meaningfully impacting China's conduct. The

²² "For a Shared Future and our Common Home", Speech by President Xi Jinping at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations"

²³ Tom Mitchell, "China struggles to win friends over the South China Sea", <https://www.ft.com/content/a9a60f5e-48c6-11e6-8d68-72e9211e86ab>

win-win cooperation he spoke of is increasingly tilted in China's favour, providing disproportionate benefits to it and turning SE Asia into China's economic dependency. The mutual benefit he spoke of is tarnished by China's suppression of the origins of the Wuhan Virus and its penchant for acting harshly towards all who don't follow its line. And the inclusiveness he speaks of is at odds with China's objective of obtaining a veto power over SE Asian nations cooperating militarily or economically with extra-regional powers for development of their offshore potential, evident from the COC negotiations.

Xi's vision of a shared future for the region had five components. The first was a peaceful region, with the commitment that China will never seek hegemony or bully smaller countries. He expressed China's readiness to sign the Protocol to the Treaty of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)²⁴. The protocol has not yet been signed by any nuclear-weapon-state, essentially because of objections to its inclusion of the EEZ and Continental Shelf of regional countries, and restriction on not just the use of nuclear weapons within the zone, but also from within it to targets outside, as well as restrictions of the operation of nuclear powered ships within the zone. China's premier nuclear submarine base is at Sanya, in the South China Sea, and Xi's commitment would appear to express the readiness to prohibit even passage of these SSNs through the South China Sea. Evidently, he is aware of a legal loophole which will enable China to claim compliance while disregarding the relevant provisions. The second related to security, encompassing defence, counter terrorism, joint maritime search, rescue and exercise, countering transnational crime and disaster management. In effect, he is proposing that SE Asia become a Chinese dependency in all these matters. The third related to prosperity, with Xi offering ASEAN \$ 1.5 billion in development assistance to help fight COVID and to aid economic recovery, as well as the readiness to buy over \$ 150 billion in agricultural produce over the next five years from ASEAN. Technology cooperation and scholarships for young scientists to work in China formed other elements of this proposal. Fourth was environmental cooperation, with a focus on clean and renewable energy, green agriculture and a blue economy, among others. His final component related to increasing amicable relations with increased people to people exchanges.

Despite the evident economic lure, it is evident that not all have succumbed to Xi's seductive call. Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte was reported to have told fellow summit participants how much he abhors China's harassment of the

²⁴ Treaty on South East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty), <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/b5518d/pdf/>

Philippine resupply missions in the South China Sea²⁵. The EU, US and Canada have all reiterated their strong opposition to China's unilateral actions in the region, with the US reiterating that it stands with the Philippines in the face of this escalation that directly threatens regional peace and security and emphasising its defence obligations to the nation²⁶.

China's economic inducement and gray zone coercion are both likely to continue, notwithstanding Xi's honeyed words. It is in ASEAN's interest to extract as much economic gain as it can, without completely surrendering the political sovereignty of its constituents. The fact that ASEAN did not allow Myanmar to participate in the summit despite Chinese pressure, and the measured wording of the Joint Statement, indicate that there are still sections that have not completely sold out to China. How effectively these sections can safeguard their freedoms in the years ahead will determine the political fate of this crucial link between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The S-400 Conundrum

Section 231 of Public Law 115-44 of August 2, 2017 (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, CAATSA) states, "... the President shall impose five or more of the sanctions described in section 235 with respect to a person the President determines knowingly, on or after such date of enactment, engages in a significant transaction with a person that is part of, or operates for or on behalf of, the defence or intelligence sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation"²⁷. Questioned about India's planned acquisition of the S-400 AD system and whether this would result in CAATSA sanctions during his visit to New Delhi in March 2021, US Secretary for Defense Lloyd Austin had said, "There has been no delivery of an S-400 system. And so the issue of sanctions is not one that has been discussed"²⁸.

Delivery of the system commenced this month, as indicated by Dmitry Shugaev, Director of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) at the Dubai Air Show on November 14, 2021²⁹. A report

²⁵ Richard Javad Heydarian, "Xi's good neighbour speech falls flat at ASEAN",

<https://asiatimes.com/2021/11/xis-good-neighbor-speech-falls-flat-at-asean/>

²⁶ Press Statement on the Situation in the South China Sea, <https://www.state.gov/on-the-situation-in-the-south-china-sea/>

²⁷ Public Law 115-44-Aug 2, 2017, Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, <https://www.congress.gov/115/plaws/publ44/PLAW-115publ44.pdf>

²⁸ Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Press Conference in New Delhi, March 20, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2544454/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-press-conference-in-new-delhi/>

²⁹ "Russia starts delivery of S-400 to India", Hindustan Times, November 14, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/russia-starts-delivery-of-s-400-to-india-here-s-all-about-the-missile-system-101636878296283.html>

the previous day had indicated that Russian President Vladimir Putin would visit India in the second week of December for the annual summit, to coincide with delivery of the first batch of the S-400 AD systems and to renew India-Russia military technical cooperation for the next decade³⁰ (the Summit has now been scheduled for December 06³¹, with the inaugural India – Russia 2+2 Dialogue preceding it³²). The inference is that delivery of the first of the five batteries contracted for by India will be completed by then. The issue of sanctions under CAATSA, as mandated by US law, thus becomes live.



The S-400 Missile Defence System. Source: Almaz-Antey

First inducted into Russian service in 2007, the S-400 AD system comprises a panoramic radar with a declared targeting range of 150 Km against stealth

³⁰ "Putin to visit India, S-400 may be in tow", Hindustan Times, November 13, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/putin-to-visit-india-s-400-may-be-in-tow-101636740345081.html>

³¹ 21st India-Russia Annual Summit, http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34542/21st_IndiaRussia_Annual_Summit

³² Inaugural 2+2 Dialogue of the Foreign and Defence Ministers of India and the Russian Federation, http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34541/Inaugural_22_Dialogue_of_the_Foreign_and_Defence_Ministers_of_India_and_the_Russian_Federation

aircraft, 230 Km against a 3500 Km range ballistic missile, 390 Km against other small aircraft and 570 Km against strategic bombers; a high-altitude radar; a low altitude radar; a command centre and five different types of missiles, with engagement ranges of 2-400 Km and the ability to hit targets doing speeds up to Mach 14. It has been described as “one of the best air defence systems currently made”³³, and “among the most advanced air defence systems available, on par with the best the West has to offer”³⁴. It scores over Western equivalents in that it offers the ability to defend against cruise missiles, low flying aircraft including stealth variants and ballistic missiles in a single system (the US uses separate systems for each), all at a cost that compares very favourably with Western equipment. For India, facing live threats across both its Northern and Western borders, the system fulfils a crucial national security requirement.

The US position on whether CAATSA sanctions will be imposed or not is yet to emerge. Asked at a Press Briefing on November 15, 2021, the Pentagon Press Secretary said, “I think we’ve been very clear with our Indian partners about our concern over this system. ... we certainly have concerns over that system, but I don’t have any updates for you”³⁵. Arguments for and against imposition of sanctions, however, continue appearing in the US media.

Thinking on the subject at one end of the spectrum is encapsulated in an opinion from John Bolton, President Trump’s one-time National Security Adviser³⁶. While acknowledging India’s need for air defences, he opines that the purchase decision was a strategic mistake on India’s part as it challenged the CAATSA legislation, emboldened no doubt by then President Trump’s reluctance to impose sanctions on Turkey, and risks China exploiting backdoors to cripple India’s defences in a crisis. Further, the decision compromises America’s stealth technology by giving sensor operators a critical advantage in detecting the F-35 and jeopardises critical issues of interoperability among national militaries. He goes on to argue that India’s arguments about its acquisition decision pre-dating CAATSA and dependence

³³ “Turkey and Russia cosy up over missiles”, The Economist, March 6, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/05/04/turkey-and-russia-cosy-up-over-missiles>

³⁴ Yarno Ritzen, “Why do countries want to buy the Russian s-400?”, Al Jazeera, October 6, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/10/8/why-do-countries-want-to-buy-the-russian-s-400>

³⁵ Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby Holds a Press Briefing, November 15, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2844284/pentagon-press-secretary-john-f-kirby-holds-a-press-briefing/>

³⁶ “India’s S-400 missile system problem”, John Bolton, The Hill, November 10, 2021, <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/580864-indias-s-400-missile-system-problem?amp>

on Russian spare parts for legacy weapon systems are arguments of inertia and complacency, and should carry no weight for the US. These arguments undermine "our global efforts to counter the spread of the Kremlin's arms sales"³⁷.

Bolton's arguments reflect a dogmatic white supremacist mindset and are logically unsupportable. India is not a US ally and values its strategic autonomy too much to become one. The argument regarding US stealth technology being compromised is unsupportable. Were these concerns real, F-35s from CSG 21 would not have conducted operations in the Eastern Mediterranean (where a British F-35 was reported to have crashed on November 17, 2021³⁸), or in the Philippine and East China Seas, with Chinese (and perhaps Russian) ships shadowing its movements, during its recent deployment to the Western Pacific. In any case, India's S-400 systems are intended to protect its continental borders. There is no conceivable necessity for F-35s, which will inevitably come into contact with India's maritime forces, to come into their detection envelope. Professed concerns about jeopardising interoperability are similarly groundless: interoperability between US and Indian forces may be necessary in the maritime domain, but serves no foreseeable strategic purpose in the continental domain where the Indian S-400 will be deployed.

The real reasons for such opinions come out in the acknowledgement that the purpose of CAATSA is commercial: the global US "effort to undermine the Kremlin's arms sales". India's arms acquisitions, however, are driven by the need to provide its armed forces the best available capability at least cost. This need can either not be fulfilled by the US defence industry for political reasons (nuclear attack submarines, for example, are not on offer from the US, whereas India will get its third leased SSN from Russia in the years ahead) or cost far too much. For air defence purposes, the S-400 is far superior to any system available or on offer from the US, or indeed the West.

At the other end of the spectrum are voices calling for waiving sanctions so that CAATSA sanctions don't sour a warming relationship³⁹. These have bipartisan support. Senators Mark Warner and John Cornyn had written President Biden last month not to impose sanctions. Senators Ted Cruz, Todd Young and Roger Marshall have, on October 29, 2021, introduced a bill to be called the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ British F-35 fighter jet crashes while flying off aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/11/17/europe/british-f-35-crash-aircraft-carrier-intl-hnk-ml-scli/index.html>

³⁹ Don't Let Sanctions Chill Warming Ties With India, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-11-17/u-s-should-waive-sanctions-for-india-s-s-400-purchase>

"Circumspectly Reducing Unintended Consequences Impairing Alliances and Leadership (CRUCIAL) Act in the US Congress, requiring the President to certify to the appropriate Congressional Committee that a member of the Quad is not participating in cooperation on security matters that are critical to US strategic interests before imposing sanctions under CAATSA⁴⁰.

These voices place the relationship above commercial interests and freely acknowledge that professed concerns about stealth technology and interoperability can be worked around. Levying sanctions will inevitably set the US-India relationship back, while bringing to the fore concerns about US-reliability as a partner that have long dogged the bilateral relationship. The ball rests in the court of the Biden administration. The decision it takes will shape the future of India-US relations, and of the Indo-Pacific, in the years ahead.

The Birth of INS Visakhapatnam

INS Visakhapatnam, the first ship of the Project 15B class of indigenous destroyers, was commissioned into the Indian Navy by Shri Rajnath Singh, the Defence Minister, on November 21. Mormugao, the second ship of the class, is expected to commission in 2022, while two others, Imphal and Surat, will join the fleet in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Rajnath Singh lauded the self-reliance efforts of the Indian Navy and expressed the confidence that "we will soon build ships not just for India, but for the entire world"⁴¹. In a thinly veiled reference to China and its disregard of UNCLOS, he said, "Some irresponsible nations, for the sake of their narrow partisan interests, keep on giving new and inappropriate interpretations to these international laws from hegemonic tendencies. The arbitrary interpretations create obstacles in the path of a rule-based maritime order. We envision a rule-based Indo-Pacific with freedom of navigation, free trade and universal values, in which the interests of all participating countries are protected"⁴².

The ship is similar to the preceding Kolkata class of destroyers in dimensions, propulsion arrangements, weapon fit and capability. It displaces 7400 tons; is propelled by a Combined Gas and Gas configuration giving it a top speed in excess of 30 knots; has a range of over 4000 nautical miles and an endurance of 45 days. Weapons carried include 32 Barak-8ER SAMs, 16 Brahmos anti-

⁴⁰ https://www.cruz.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/20211028_crucial_act.pdf.pdf

⁴¹ INS Visakhapatnam commissioned into Indian Navy in the presence of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1773700>

⁴² Ibid

ship/land attack missiles, a twin 76mm naval gun, AK 630 CIWS, RBU-6000 ASW rocket launchers and 533 mm torpedo tubes. Sensors include modern air, surface search and multi-function radars and a bow-mounted sonar. The ship has an indigenous EW suite, indigenous launchers for missile decoys, an advanced indigenous torpedo defence system and an indigenous communications intelligence suite. Its capabilities are extended by two on-board medium helicopters. In sum, it is among the most powerful ships in the region, and the most modern destroyers in the world.



INS Visakhapatnam at Mumbai. Source: Twitter (@IndianNavy)

Differences from the preceding Kolkata-Class lie in a revised bridge layout and mast designed to reduce the ship's radar cross-section; the relocated position of the sonar dome, a rail-less helicopter traversing system and systems such as the Ship Data Network, an Automatic Power Management System and the Combat Management System.

Visakhapatnam (and the preceding Kolkata class) bring to the fleet both offensive and defensive capabilities. Their 16 Brahmos missiles enable them to engage other ships and land targets to a range of 290 Km. This will be enhanced to 800 Km as new generations of the missile become available. Over-the-horizon targeting information enabling utilisation of the full range capability is provided by the onboard helicopters, maritime patrol aircraft or other units. Their 32 Barak-8ER Surface to Air Missiles enable provision of area air defence

to accompanying ships. Anti-submarine capability comes from the onboard helicopters, the rocket launchers and torpedo tubes. The EW suite and CIWS provide good capability to defend against enemy anti-ship missiles.

Critics may cavil at the smaller size of INS Visakhapatnam as compared to the USN's Arleigh Burke class or China's Type 055 (Renhai Class). Both those are designed for global operations, with resupply of onboard weapons being dependent on the availability of bases. Another factor is the weight of attack they are designed to deliver, or repulse. Consequently, their onboard inventory of both defensive and offensive weapons must be larger. Indian ships, however, are designed primarily for regional operations, with the Indian Ocean being their primary operating area. This enables them to return home to resupply after an engagement, resulting in a smaller weapon outfit.

Two limitations are, however, visible. The first is the absence of ballistic missile defence capability. China's fielding of the DF-21D and DF-26 missiles necessitates the incorporation of ballistic missile defence technology, such as the USN's Aegis BMD system or an alternative using laser weapons or railguns, particularly on ships designed to escort aircraft carriers. Consideration could be given to using the Russian S-500 system to overcome this limitation. That, however, will be more difficult for the US to ignore – while the S-400 intended for continental use can be geographically separated from advanced US aircraft like the F-35B, doing the same for India's maritime forces would preclude cooperation between the IN and USN in the Indo-Pacific, including during Exercise Malabar. The alternative is induction of the Aegis system from the US, with the latest Standard SM3 Block II missiles, or advancing the development of an indigenous BMD system for shipboard use.

The other is the absence of an active Low Frequency Towed Array sonar, either on the destroyers themselves, or on accompanying ships. However advanced, a hull-mounted sonar is limited by both the ship's own propeller and other noises, as well as its inability to look 'below the layer'. Submarines, which can change depth at will, can thus exploit the layer to detect and target surface ships long before they themselves can be detected. Helicopters with 'dunking sonars' do ameliorate this deficiency to some extent, but the IN lacks enough helicopters to equip all its frontline platforms. The impending arrival of 24 MH-60R helicopters will mitigate this limitation to only a limited extent, being insufficient to provide the two helicopters each that all of India's frigates and destroyers are designed to carry.

There is also the aspect of numbers. With the commissioning of INS Visakhapatnam, the IN has a strength of ten destroyers. Three of these are the

ex-Soviet Rajput class, commissioned in the 1980s, three are the Delhi class, commissioned between 1997 and 2001, and three of the Kolkata class, commissioned between 2014 and 2016. Construction rates will not suffice to maintain this strength: the three Rajput class are approaching the end of their useful life and will be increasingly difficult to maintain. Assuming a serviceability of around 60% for the remaining platforms, not more than 3-4 modern destroyers can be expected to be available at any one time. This will suffice for one aircraft carrier task group (Vikramaditya or Vikrant), but not for both.

In sum, the induction of INS Visakhapatnam is certainly a moment of pride, but should also spur the need for review of the increasing shortfall between capability and need, given the increasing salience of the Indo-Pacific and China's maritime focus. The pressure will grow as China increasingly uses Pakistan as its proxy and transfers more equipment to its Navy, thus tying IN resources and leaving little for deployment in the wider Indian Ocean.

PNS Tughril Joins the PN Fleet

The delivery of PNS Tughril to the Pakistan Navy on November 08, 2021, generated substantial media excitement. Designed and built by the China State Shipbuilding Corporation Limited (CSSC) at the Hudong-Zhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai, it was billed as the largest and most advanced warship China has ever exported⁴³. Delivery of the vessel was a "major achievement of China-Pakistan friendship", and would "further enhance the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries"⁴⁴. Pakistan's Ambassador to China was quoted as saying that the class of ships would "strengthen Pakistan Navy's capabilities to respond to maritime challenges to ensure seaward defence, maintain peace, stability and balance of power in the Indian Ocean Region"⁴⁵. Pakistani media described the ship as having "the capacity to simultaneously execute a number of naval warfare missions in a highly intense multi-threat environment"⁴⁶.

PNS Tughril becomes the first ocean-going ship to join the PN in nearly a decade. Three more ships of the class are expected to be inducted in the next year or so. They are a Pakistan-specific variant of China's Type 054A (Jiangkai-

⁴³ Liu Xuanzun, China delivers largest, most advanced warship to Pakistan, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202111/1238452.shtml>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Modern Frigate Delivered to PN in China, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1656891/modern-frigate-delivered-to-pn-in-china>

II) class frigates, which first entered service in 2007. A comparison of these ships with recent Indian frigate classes is at the table below.

Table 1: Tabulated Comparison of Characteristics: PNS Tughril with Recent Indian Navy ship classes.

Class of Ship →	<u>Tughril</u>	<u>Talwar</u>	<u>Shivalik</u>	<u>Nilgiri</u>
Characteristics ↓				
Entry into Service	2021	2003	2010	2022 (expected)
Displacement (Tons)	4503	4440	6200	6670
Propulsion	CODAD	COGAG	CODOG	CODAG
Max speed (knots)	27	32	32	32
Range (nm)	8000	4850	5000	5500
Complement	165	180	257	150
SAM (range in Km)	HQ-16 (70)	Shtil-1 (42)	Shtil-1 (42)	Barak-8 (100)
SSM (range in Km)	C-802 (180)	Klub (220) / Brahmos (290)	Klub (220) / Brahmos (290)	Brahmos (290)
Guns	76mm	100 mm	76 mm	76 mm
CIWS	Type 730	AK-630/ Kashtan	AK-630	AK 630
ASW torpedoes	Yu-7	Two triple torpedo tubes		Varunastra
ASW Rockets	Type 87	RBU 6000	RBU 6000	RBU 6000
Helicopters	1 Ka-28 or Z-9C	1 multirole	2 multirole	2 multirole

Source: Author

For anti-ship or land attack purposes, even the Talwar class that became part of the Indian fleet more than a decade ago outrange PNS Tughril (and its sister ships, when they are inducted) substantially. Their integral helicopters and the presence of Airborne Early Warning (AEW) capability by way of Ka-31 helicopters enable them to utilise their greater weapon ranges more effectively. Those entering service now (the modified Talwar and Nilgiri classes) will be far superior. For defensive purposes, the Tughril class may have a marginally better weapon range against attacking aircraft than the older IN frigates, but that alone does not count for much. Similarly, for ASW purposes, the IN ships are better equipped, especially if they have both integral helicopters with dunking sonars embarked. Statements about PNS Tughril being able to

maintain the balance of power are thus meant for the media and are not realistic.

The ship's induction does, however, Pakistan's highlight the turn away from the West. PN blue water surface capability presently vests two British-origin Type 21 frigates (Tariq and Khaibar) which first entered service in UK in 1975 and 1976 respectively; one ex-US Oliver Hazard Perry class frigate which entered service in 1979 and was transferred to the PN as PNS Alamgir in 2011; and four Chinese origin Type 053H3 Jiangwei II class frigates (Zulfiqar, Shamsheer, Saif and Aslat). The first three were built by Hudong-Zhongua and were delivered in 2009-2010. The last was built at Karachi and commissioned in 2013. PNS Tughril continues the trend. It is Pakistan's biggest surface warship, and as such will form the mainstay of its fleet in the years ahead. It does enhance the capability of Pakistan to escort traffic from the Gulf region staying close to the coast, where shore-based aircraft can provide air cover. It will help the PN show the flag and contribute to constabulary operations, including for multinational operations.

The same trend is visible in submarines. The mainstay of PN submarine capability has been the French-origin Agosta 90B submarines Khalid, Saad and Hamza, commissioned between 1999 and 2006. The last of these was built in Karachi, with French assistance. However, souring of relations has reportedly resulted in France deciding against helping Pakistan upgrade these submarines, along with its Mirage fighter aircraft and air defence system. Pakistan contracted to purchase eight Type 039B submarines from China for \$ 5 billion in 2015⁴⁷. The first four of these are to be built in China and delivered by 2023. The remaining four are to be built in Karachi, for delivery by 2028⁴⁸.

Two concerns merit attention. The increasing dependence of Pakistan on China for its naval equipment will necessitate the setting up of facilities including dry docks and maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities, including spares support, to be able to support operations of the ships. These facilities will also become available to the PLA (Navy) as it steps up its Indian Ocean deployment, providing a de facto base. China's development of Gwadar and submarine facilities at Ormara, as well as shipbuilding/repair facilities at Karachi, must be assessed in this light.

⁴⁷ "Beijing eyes bigger arms exports after Pakistan deal, experts say", <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1776522/beijing-eyes-bigger-arms-exports-experts-say>

⁴⁸ "China to build four submarines in Karachi", <https://www.dawn.com/news/1211363/china-to-build-four-submarines-in-karachi>

The second is speculative reports⁴⁹ that Tughril and its sister ships may be equipped with the domestically developed P 282 anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM), whose existence was revealed by Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi, the erstwhile Pakistan Navy Chief, in his farewell address last year⁵⁰. The P 282 is believed to be the Chinese CM-401 ASBM, whose range has been estimated as 290 Km⁵¹. This could complicate the IN's hard-kill defences, given the absence of capability to kinetically engage hypersonic ballistic missiles. The need for BMD on board IN warships stands out. Soft-kill options would still remain, as would limitations on Pakistan's ability to detect IN warships at the required range. But hard-kill measures are also necessary.

The US Global Posture Review

Speaking on "America's Place in the World" at the Harry S. Truman Building on February 24, 2021, President Biden had announced "Defence Secretary Austin will be leading a Global Posture Review (GPR) of our forces so that our military footprint is appropriately aligned with our foreign policy and national security priorities"⁵². A Pentagon press release on November 29 announced conclusion of the 2021 Global Posture Review⁵³. Conducted with participation from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Military Departments, the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the National Security Council staff, the US State Department, the US Agency for International Development and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and in consultation with allies and partners worldwide, the outcomes of the review remained classified for operational security reasons and to preserve confidentiality of consultation with allies and partners. A Press Conference by Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby and the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Dr Mara Karlin, however, provided some information on its contents⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ Arnab Jha, "India not losing any sleep as Pak gets 'most advanced' warship from China", <https://www.news9live.com/world/india-not-losing-any-sleep-as-pak-gets-most-advanced-warship-from-china-132651>

⁵⁰ "P 282 Anti-ship Ballistic Missile: Strengthening Navy's Conventional Deterrence", <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/defense-security/p282-anti-ship-ballistic-missile-strengthening-navys-conventional-deterrence/>

⁵¹ CM-401 anti-ship ballistic missile, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/cm-401.htm>

⁵² Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>

⁵³ DoD Concludes 2021, Global Posture Review, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2855801/dod-concludes-2021-global-posture-review/>

⁵⁴ Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby and Dr. Mara Karlin, Performing the Duties of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Hold a Press Briefing,



USS Jackson and JS Yudachi Sail Together in the South China Sea, November 1, 2021.
Source: Indo-Pacific Command

Dr Karlin said that President Biden had approved Secretary Austin's findings and recommendations resulting from the GPR. She indicated that NATO allies, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and over a dozen partners in the Middle East and Africa had been consulted before finalizing these recommendations. The GPR would inform the DoD's approach to the National Defense Strategy. It assessed the DoD's overseas forces and footprint along with the framework and processes that govern posture decision-making. Based on this assessment, the GPR developed near term force posture assessments and established guidance for ongoing and future posture planning.

Consistent with the Defense Secretary's focus on China as the pacing challenge, the priority region for the GPR was the Indo-Pacific. The GPR thus directed additional cooperation with allies and partners across the region to advance initiatives that contribute to regional stability, while deterring potential military aggression from China and North Korea. These initiatives included seeking greater regional access for military partnership activities, enhancing infrastructure in Australia and the Pacific Islands, planning rotational aircraft deployments in Australia, and approval of the permanent stationing of an Attack Helicopter Squadron and Artillery Division Headquarters in South Korea which the DoD had announced earlier. This would result in new rotational fighter and bomber deployments in Australia,

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2856143/pentagon-press-secretary-john-f-kirby-and-dr-mara-karlin-performing-the-duties/>

increased ground forces training and logistics cooperation, and infrastructure improvement including logistics facilities, fuel and munitions storage and airfield upgrades in Guam, the Mariana Islands and Australia. There would also be increased cooperation with the Philippines. The scope and scale of exercises with allies and partners across the region would be increased. Dr Karlin refused, however, to be drawn out on whether the GPR contained any initiatives on Taiwan.

In Europe, President Biden had rescinded the 25,000 active-duty force cap in Germany that was established by the previous administration. Secretary Austin had announced the permanent stationing of an army multi-domain task force and a theatre fires command in Germany earlier, while retaining seven military sites that had previously been designated for return to host nations. The GPR had identified additional capabilities to reinforce US deterrence posture in Europe, which would be discussed with allies in the near future.

In the Middle East, the GPR had assessed evolving counterterrorism requirements following the end of DoD operations in Afghanistan and the US approach towards Iran. The DoD would continue to support defeating the ISIS campaign and building the capacity of partner nations. The GPR had directed additional analysis on enduring posture requirements in the Middle East. The capability to rapidly deploy forces to the region based on the threat environment would be retained. In Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean, the GPR directed that DoD posture continue to support US efforts on the range of transnational challenges and partnerships. Finally, it provided foundational information for the National Defense Strategy.

The gap between available resources and continuing needs has long plagued the USN force posture, resulting in overstretch leading to maintenance shortfalls and accidents. The future fleet design is still work in progress, even as the disparity in numbers between the USN and PLAN continues to grow. Whether the USN will remain dependent on its large ship Carrier Task Groups, or will shift more towards unmanned and smaller ships remains to be decided. Strategic analysts thus looked forward to the GPR for an indication of how the US would balance declining force levels and budgetary shortfalls with increased Indo-Pacific needs. The press releases merely indicate that commitments in Europe and the Indo-Pacific will increase, while commitments in other regions continue without significant change. How this will be managed remains to be seen.

The statements about seeking greater engagement with allies and partners in the region are a clear indicator of the US expecting greater burden-sharing

from allies and partners. The main focus of this engagement will be the Western Pacific, with only occasional activity to show presence in the Indian Ocean. The importance of Diego Garcia, the only USN base in the Indian Ocean, can be expected to remain unchanged or grow. Australia will be a major beneficiary, with increased aircraft deployments tying it more closely to the US. Resuscitation of the First Fleet talked about in the closing days of the previous administration however, appears unlikely, given the resource gap.

The GPR is but one element of the complex issues involved in framing a National Defense Strategy, but it will have an outsize impact on how effective that strategy is. In the absence of more details, it becomes impossible to assess whether the GPR is just an aspirational statement, or a strategic one, representing the much-talked about but only partially executed US pivot to the Indo-Pacific.

India's Position on Maritime Security

Two speeches this month spelt out India's position on Maritime Security to partner nations in the Indian Ocean. In the first, at the Goa Maritime Conclave on November 8, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla highlighted that the world was witnessing a transformation and shift of the global economic centre of gravity to the East⁵⁵. The blue economy was gaining ground and maritime transport and logistics formed its major components. Non-traditional threats and challenges had combined to form a whole new spectrum of sub-conventional security threats and problems.

Accordingly, the focus of diplomatic effort had shifted to cooperative activity in tackling these challenges. The expanded concept of security thus focused less on military threats and more on a cooperative approach, necessitating sharing of information, prevention, interoperability beyond borders and pooling of policing and law enforcement. In parallel, lack of commitment to settled international law had led to increased militarisation of the region, adding to its complexities.

While nations could not anticipate each and every problem, they could strengthen the structures, understanding, procedures and resources that were employed, enabling better management of the problems and creation of surge

⁵⁵ Foreign Secretary's Remarks at the Goa Maritime Conclave on 'Maritime Security and Emerging Non Traditional Threats: A Case for Proactive Role for IOR Navies, Naval War College, Goa, https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34486/Foreign_Secretarys_Remarks_at_the_Goa_Maritime_Conclave_on_Maritime_Security_and_Emerging_Non_Traditional_Threats_A_Case_for_Proactive_Role_for_IOR_N

capacity to deal with the unknown. He emphasised that India was ready to do its share, and more, in tackling these problems and cited numerous examples where India had responded, demonstrating solidarity with partners and commitment to the principles of humanitarianism.



Ships from Quad Countries Participating in Ex Malabar in the Arabian Sea, October 2021. Source: Indian Navy

Using Prime Minister Modi's remarks, he explained India's thinking on maritime security. He quoted the Prime Minister who had said, "The Ocean is our joint heritage. Our sea routes are the lifeline of international trade. And, the biggest thing is that these oceans are very important to the future of our planet. But today our shared maritime heritage is facing many challenges. Sea routes are being misused for piracy and terrorism. There are maritime disputes between many countries. And climate change and natural disasters are also maritime domain related issues. In this broad context, we must make a framework of mutual understanding and cooperation for the preservation and use of our common maritime heritage. No country can make such a framework alone. It can only be realised through common effort. He then went on to identify five principles that defined India's approach to maritime security: removal of barriers for legitimate maritime trade; settlement of maritime disputes peacefully and only on the basis of international law; collectively address natural disasters and maritime threats by non-state actors; preserve the maritime environment and maritime resources by addressing ocean pollution, oil-spills, over-fishing and increasing cooperation in ocean science; and encouraging responsible maritime connectivity based on sustainability and absorption capacity of countries.

He went on to draw attention to India's SAGAR vision as well as its Indo-Pacific vision, which together with the commitment to UNCLOS and the customary law of the seas, provided a direction and framework for efforts to expand public good in the Indian Ocean and the broader Indo-Pacific. He concluded by stating that prosperity and the well-being of our people are built on the foundation of law, order and security. A new cooperative architecture for our common maritime space that ensures security for its inhabitants, driven by both realities and aspirations for a better life, was necessary to grasp the opportunity we had.

The second was by Secretary (East), Ms Riva Ganguly Das, at the 5th East Asia Summit Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation at Kolkata, on November 23⁵⁶. Highlighting the convergence between India's Indo-Pacific vision and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), she identified the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative as practical implementation of the shared vision on the Indo-Pacific, with a focus on collaborative effort to better manage, conserve, sustain and secure our maritime domain. India and ASEAN had announced a Joint Statement for cooperation on AOIP for practical implementation during the ASEAN-India Summit last month.

The conference enabled practical and result-oriented cooperation among the EAS participating countries within the existing architecture and initiatives, while exploring new ideas of maritime cooperation. Draft guidelines for Search and Rescue Operations SOP and a draft handbook on HADR cooperation had been prepared by India as a consequence of the 4th EAS Maritime Security Conference at Chennai last year and would be circulated to EAS countries for comments shortly.

Thinking about maritime security cooperation during the post WW II period, including during the Cold War, has been driven by the alliance model, with its focus on hard security challenges and relative neglect of other problems posed by the maritime domain. India's SAGAR and Indo-Pacific visions, along with the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and the Maritime Security debate at the UNSC in August, mark a focused attempt to come to grips with the governance and humanitarian challenges that are of much greater import for a globalised and multipolar world. This does not mean that military challenges generated by geopolitical considerations will go away – they will remain and will always need to be addressed. The line of thought, however, is to prioritise response to

⁵⁶ Keynote Address by Secretary (East) at the 5th EAS Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation, http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34523/Keynote_Address_by_Secretary_East_at_the_5th_EAS_Conference_on_Maritime_Security_Cooperation

non-traditional challenges and the building of regional capacities to deal with them. This will enable decentralised addressing of challenges that increasingly imperil the transportation and ecological systems of a globalised, interconnected world, while keeping the preparation for the hard aspects recessed. The approach also enables greater participation of the large group of third world nations, fulfils their aspirations and provides them a more palatable alternative, thus countering the impact of authoritarian coercion.

November 2021 Indo-Pacific Snapshot

The month began with Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the COP 26 Summit at Glasgow. His National Statement⁵⁷ highlighted the fact that India was the only big economy to have delivered in letter and spirit on the Paris Commitment. He committed India to raising its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW, to meeting 50% of its energy needs from renewable energy, to reducing total projected carbon emissions by a billion tonnes, and reducing the carbon intensity of its economy to less than 45% by 2030. He also committed to achieving Net Zero by 2070, while asking developed countries to provide climate finance of \$ 1 trillion at the earliest. His address at the event on 'Action and Solidarity – The Critical decade' at the COP 26 Summit in Glasgow⁵⁸ invited all countries to join the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), launched by India at the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019. 26 countries and seven organizations are presently members of the CDRI⁵⁹. He congratulated the CDRI for launch of the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) Initiative⁶⁰, committing ISRO to build a special data window for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that would provide them timely information about cyclones, coral-reef monitoring and coast-line monitoring through satellites. He also launched the 'One Sun, One World, One Grid' initiative, seeking to provide clean energy from a world-wide grid to all regions and countries⁶¹. This ambitious initiative will not only harness technology and

⁵⁷ National Statement by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at COP 26 Summit in Glasgow, https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34466/National_Statement_by_Prime_Minister_Shri_Narendra_Modi_at_COP26_Summit_in_Glasgow

⁵⁸ Prime Minister's address at the event on 'Action and Solidarity – The Critical Decade' at COP 26 Summit in Glasgow.

⁵⁹ Members of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure as on September 13, 2021, <https://www.cdri.world/members>

⁶⁰ English translation of Prime Minister's address at the launch of 'Infrastructure for Resilient Island States' initiative at COP 26 Summit in Glasgow, https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34469/English_translation_of_Prime_Ministers_address_at_the_launch_of_Infrastructure_for_Resilient_Island_States_initiative_at_COP26_Summit_in_Glasgow

⁶¹ English Translation of Prime Minister's remarks at the session on 'Accelerating Clean Technology Innovation and Deployment' at COP 26 Summit in Glasgow, <https://mea.gov.in/Speeches->

solar energy to address climate change, but also open a new avenue for cooperation between different regions and countries.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the COP 26 Summit in Glasgow, November 2, 2021.
Source: Press Information Bureau

Russia was inducted as the 10th Dialogue Partner for the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) at the 21st Annual Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting on November 17⁶². It joined China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US. UAE handed over the chair of IORA to Bangladesh, who adopted “harnessing the opportunities of the Indian Ocean sustainability for inclusive development” as the theme for its Chairship 2021 – 2023⁶³. Sri Lanka assumed the position of Vice-Chair. The COM adopted the 2nd IORA Action Plan (2022 – 2027); congratulated Ambassador Salman Al

[Statements.htm?dtl/34476/English_Translation_of_Prime_Ministers_remarks_at_the_session_on_Accelerating_Clean_Technology_Innovation_and_Deployment_at_COP26_Summit_in_Glasgow](#)

⁶² 21st Indian Ocean Rim Association Annual Council of Ministers' Meeting, https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34510/21st_Indian_Ocean_Rim_Association_Annual_Council_of_Ministers_Meeting

⁶³ Official Press Release: 21st IORA Council of Ministers Meeting on 17 November 2021 held by the People's Republic of Bangladesh, <https://www.iora.int/en/events-media-news/news-updates-folder/official-press-release-21st-iora-council-of-ministers-meeting-on-17-november-2021-held-by-the-peoples-republic-of-bangladesh>

Farisi from Indonesia on being selected as the new Secretary General of IORA; adopted the MoU between the CRRI and IORA for promoting resilience of new and existing infrastructure to reduce and eliminate climate and disaster risks in the IOR; adopted the IORA Guidelines for HADR; welcomed Guidelines on strategic management of IORA's engagement with Dialogue Partners and the establishment of the Working Group on Disaster Risk Management, among other decisions.

The second India-Japan Space Dialogue took place in the virtual mode on November 2, 2021⁶⁴. The two sides exchanged information on their respective space policies and priorities, international developments in space including space security, situational awareness, global navigation satellite systems and bilateral cooperation. The first such bilateral dialogue had taken place in March 2019.

The 2nd DTTI Industry Collaboration Forum Virtual Expo took place on November 8. A cornerstone of the US-India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), the Forum enables identification of opportunities to jointly research, develop and produce warfighting abilities. This DICF focused on securing supply chains in critical sectors and partnering for innovation in emerging domains such as artificial intelligence and space⁶⁵. The Forum was followed by the 11th DTTI Group Meeting, held virtually on November 9⁶⁶. The co-chairs noted that the first Project Agreement for Air-Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicles under the Joint Working Group Air Systems had been signed. While expectations from the DTTI remain unfulfilled on both sides, the potential remains. Whether and how quickly this will be realised remains a matter of political will on both sides. The results of DTTI will be compared with delivery on the AUKUS initiative, signalling how serious the countries concerned are about their technology and trade cooperation.

The Indigenous Aircraft Carrier Vikrant completed its second sea trial on October 31, 2021. This trial encompasses detailed trials and testing of propulsion machinery, electrical and electronic equipment suites, deck machinery, lifesaving appliances and other ship systems. The thrust is to

⁶⁴ Second India Japan Space Dialogue, https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34474/Second_India_Japan_Space_Dialogue

⁶⁵ Readout of US-India Defence Industry Collaboration Forum Virtual Expo, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2837908/readout-of-us-india-defense-industry-collaboration-forum-virtual-expo/>

⁶⁶ Indian and US Defense Delegations Conduct Virtual Discussion of Defense Cooperation, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2839936/indian-and-us-defense-delegations-conduct-virtual-discussion-of-defense-coopera/>

deliver the ship by April 2022, so as to enable its commissioning by August 15, 2022⁶⁷.



IAC-1 Vikrant Undergoing her Second Sea Trial, end October 2021.
Source: Indian Navy

INS Vela, the fourth of the Kalvari-class submarines built at Mazagon Docks Limited, was commissioned into the Indian Navy by Admiral Karambir Singh, the Chief of the Naval Staff, on November 25⁶⁸. The crew of the old INS Vela, which decommissioned in 2010, was also present to mark rebirth of the name.

The 32nd India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) was conducted in the Andaman Sea from November 12-14. INS Karmuk and HTMS Tayanchon participated, along with MR aircraft from both navies⁶⁹. The patrol was followed by the 3rd India – Singapore – Thailand Trilateral Maritime Exercise SITMEX hosted by Thailand from November 15-16, where RSS Tenacious joined the same two ships in the Andaman Sea. Later in the month, INS Khanjar joined Indonesia's KRI Sultan Thaha Syaifuddin for the 37th India – Indonesia

⁶⁷ 2nd Sea Trials of IAC Visit by Minister of Port, Shipping & Waterways, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/2nd-sea-trials-iac-visit-minister-port-shipping-waterways>

⁶⁸ Fourth Submarine of Project-75 'INS Vela' Commissioned at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1774977>

⁶⁹ 32nd Edition of Indo-Thai Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT), <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/32nd-edition-indo-thai-coordinated-patrol-corpat>

CORPAT, from November 23-24⁷⁰. The CORPATs help build up understanding and cooperation between the participating navies in governance missions, although being sporadic, they remain largely symbolic and of limited utility. SITMEX is similarly aimed at synergising operational capacity of the three countries involved to deal with governance challenges and to build mutual familiarity and understanding. True benefit would be visible if such patrols were continuous, enabling uninterrupted monitoring of the region, and exercises were more frequent, enabling the development of fresh tactics and procedures to improve effectiveness. However, limited capacity and political will prevent this from happening.

After exercising with the Armed Forces of Oman and UAE in the Persian Gulf, the HMS Queen Elizabeth led CSG-21 departed the Indian Ocean and moved into the Mediterranean⁷¹. One of the eight British F-35 aircraft on board was reported to have ditched soon after taking off on November 17, in the Eastern Mediterranean⁷². Reports indicated that the cause of the crash was failure to remove a rain cover before launch⁷³. The USN dispatched a ship and crew to help recover the aircraft and prevent its falling into the hands of Russia or China⁷⁴.

The 7th IONS conclave of Chiefs took place in Paris from November 15-16, signalling increased French interest and involvement in Indian Ocean affairs⁷⁵. A two member Indian team headed by Vice Admiral R Harikumar, designated to assume charge as India's 25th Chief of the Naval Staff on November 30⁷⁶. The conclave helps generate better understanding among the navies and chiefs, enabling better cooperation between them.

⁷⁰ 37th edition of India – Indonesia Coordinated Patrol,

<https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/37th-edition-india-indonesia-coordinated-patrol>

⁷¹ USNI News Fleet and Marine Tracker: Nov 1, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/11/01/usni-news-fleet-and-marine-tracker-nov-1-2021#more-89543>

⁷² Probe after British F-35 fighter crashes in the Mediterranean, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-59323895>

⁷³ British F-35B Crash in the Med Possibly Cause by 'Rain Cover' Left On During Launch, <https://theaviationist.com/2021/11/24/f-35b-crash-cover-possible-cause/>

⁷⁴ US Navy Sending Salvage Ship, Crew to Help Recover Crashed British F-35B, <https://news.usni.org/2021/11/24/u-s-navy-sending-salvage-ship-crew-to-help-recover-crashed-british-f-35b>

⁷⁵ Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) – 2021 Conclave of Chiefs 15-16 November 2021, Paris, France, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-ocean-naval-symposium-ions-%E2%80%93-2021-conclave-chiefs-15-16-november-2021-paris-france>

⁷⁶ Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar to be the next Chief of the Naval Staff, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1770412>



The IONS Conclave of Chiefs in Paris on November 15-16, 2021.

Source: Twitter (@IndianNavy)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi handed over the indigenous DRDO developed Shakti Electronic Warfare suite to the Indian Navy at Jhansi on November 19⁷⁷. The suite enables detection, identification, classification and jamming of conventional and modern radars, providing the IN an electronic layer of defence against surveillance radars and the homing radars of anti-ship missiles. The first of the 12 systems on order has been installed on board INS Visakhapatnam. Another is being installed on INS Vikrant. Others will be installed on the Project 15B destroyers and Project 17A frigates on order.

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won a comfortable majority in the elections held on October 31, 2021, winning 261 of the 456 seats in the lower house. The stable majority allowed it to chair all standing committees and its

⁷⁷ Prime Minister to Formally Hand over DRDO Designed and Developed Advanced Electronic Warfare Suite 'Shakti' for Indian Naval Ships to the Chief of Naval Staff, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1773020>

representatives make up the majority of members in these bodies⁷⁸. Its junior ruling partner Komeito won another 32 seats. Fumio Kishida, who had assumed office on October 4, 2021, continued as the Prime Minister. His 20 member cabinet team included Yoshimasa Hayashi as the Minister for Foreign Affairs; Shunichi Suzuki as the Minister of Finance and Nobuo Kishi as the Minister for Defence⁷⁹. Erstwhile Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, who assumed charge as the LDP Secretary General, signalled the party's intention to promote discussions on constitutional amendment, given that favourably inclined lawmakers now constitute more than two-thirds of the membership of both houses of parliament⁸⁰.



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida Reviews Japanese Troops on the Anniversary of the Establishment of the Japanese Self Defence Force, November 27, 2021. Source: Kantei.go.jp

An indicator of hardening of Japan's posture towards China came when units from the JMSDF and the USN came together on November 16 to conduct the first Japan-US Anti-Submarine Exercise in the South China Sea⁸¹. The

⁷⁸ The LDP won the Lower House election, but it has few reasons to celebrate, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/11/01/national/politics-diplomacy/ldp-election-analysis/>

⁷⁹ The Cabinet, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/meibo/daijin/index_e.html

⁸⁰ LDP's Motegi believes time is ripe to revise Constitution, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/11/19/national/motegi-constitution-revision/>

⁸¹ Japan – US Bilateral Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise, <https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/release/202111/20211116.pdf>

significance comes from the fact that the South China Sea is the likely bastion for operation of PLA SSBNs and China claims most of it. Another came from media reports citing Kurt Campbell, the White House Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, saying that Japan would host the next Quad Summit, possibly as early as spring 2022⁸². Japan's Ministry of Defense followed up by seeking an additional 773.8 billion Yen (about \$ 6.7 billion) to spend during the current year in a supplementary request on November 26, citing the increasingly severe international security environment⁸³. The additional funds would cover the purchase of missiles, patrolling aircraft, torpedoes, helicopters and other equipment, some of which were scheduled for purchase next year. The LDP had earlier included the objective in its election manifesto of doubling Japan's defense budget to 2% of the GDP, noting that Japan's spending was outpaced not only by China, but also by South Korea⁸⁴. A revised Japanese national security strategy is expected around the end of next year⁸⁵.

The Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China approved a resolution on November 11 that explained China's history mainly over the last eight years, placed Xi Jinping at par with Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping and all but anointed him as the party's leader for a third term commencing next year. The text of the resolution was released on November 16⁸⁶. The Central Committee called upon "the entire party, the military, and all Chinese people to rally more closely around the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, to fully implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and to champion the great founding spirit of the party"⁸⁷. Earlier, explaining the resolution, Xi Jinping had identified the need for the resolution to focus on the Party's major achievements and historical experiences, to highlight the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and to ensure that the appraisal of major events, significant meetings and important figures must be consistent

⁸² Japan to host Quad meeting with US, Australia and India next year, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/11/20/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-quad-china-us/>

⁸³ Japan extra defense budget hits record amid China tensions, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/11/27/national/japan-defense-spending-budgets-record/>

⁸⁴ Japan's LDP vows sharp budget hike, but public focus elsewhere, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/10/18/national/politics-diplomacy/ldp-defense-budget-hike/>

⁸⁵ Japan approves extra defense spending and hits a record, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-approves-extra-defense-spending-and-sets-a-record-11637916622>

⁸⁶ Communiqué of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/11/c_1310305166.htm

⁸⁷ Ibid.

with the Party Central Committee's existing conclusions⁸⁸. He described the resolution as containing six sections: an analysis of the background of the founding of the party and how it achieved a transformation from a feudal autocracy to a people's democracy; transformation of the new democracy to socialism and the rationale for Mao Zedong Thought; the phase of reform, opening up and socialist modernisation under Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao; the dawn of a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the last nine years; the historical significance of the Party's endeavours over the past century; and the Party's Second Centenary Goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects. Having consolidated his rule and all but assured himself of an unprecedented third term, it can be expected that the world will see an increasingly confident Xi, continuing and accelerating along the strategic path he has chosen for China.

Two reports assessing China were released by the US during the month. The first was the 2021 edition of the Pentagon report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China⁸⁹. This assesses China's national strategy, foreign policy, economic policy, military – civil fusion development strategy, defence policy and military strategy and missions and tasks of China's armed forces in the "New Era". The PLAA has accelerated its training and fielding of equipment; the PLAN already has the largest navy in the world in numerical terms with 355 ships and submarines, including more than 145 surface combatants. It has acquired the capability to conduct long-range precision strikes against land targets and is enhancing its ASW capabilities. The PLAAF and PLAN aviation together constitute the largest aviation force in the region and the third largest in the world. The PRC has determined that its armed forces should take a more active role in advancing its foreign policy goals and is increasingly using military coercion and inducements to advance its global security and developmental interests. The second was the 2021 Report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission⁹⁰. This contains 32 recommendations for congressional consideration and prioritises ten of them, pertaining to investments in Chinese instruments; strengthening the credibility of US military deterrence; effective implementation of export control reform; screening offshoring of critical supply chains and production capabilities to

⁸⁸ Explanation of the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century, http://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202111/17/content_WS61945ecbc6d0df57f98e5141.html

⁸⁹ Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF>

⁹⁰ 2021 Report to Congress of the US – China Economic and Security Review Commission, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/2021_Annual_Report_to_Congress.pdf

the PRC; expanding jurisdiction of existing US investment restrictions targeting Chinese entities; erosion of US strategic nuclear superiority; requiring publicly traded companies with facilities in China to report the presence of CCP committees in their operations; ensuring Chinese authorities sanctioned by one US authority are automatically sanctioned under other authorities; mandating an annual updated of accurate US portfolio investment in China; and sanctions on products originating from Xinjiang for congressional action.



Presidents Joko Widodo and Joe Biden at their Summit in the White House, November 1, 2021. Source: Official Website of the President of Indonesia

President Joe Biden met President Joko Widodo of Indonesia at the White House on November 1. Describing Indonesia as a vital strategic partner in remarks to the press before the meeting⁹¹, he highlighted the shared commitment to democratic values and respect for the rule of law and

⁹¹ Remarks by President Biden and President Widodo of the Republic of Indonesia before bilateral meeting, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/11/01/remarks-by-president-biden-and-president-widodo-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-before-bilateral-meeting/>

international order. President Widodo on his part voiced his belief that the two countries could strengthen their cooperation. The press readout of the meeting spoke of ASEAN centrality and US support for the AOIP and discussion on regional issues as well as maritime security and the importance of freedom of the seas⁹², as well as the situation in Myanmar, the climate crisis and measures to strengthen global health security. Even as the leaders met, navies of the two nations began Exercise Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) virtually, in Surabaya and in the waters of the Java Sea⁹³. The 11 day exercise focuses on the full spectrum of naval capabilities and cooperative evolutions highlighting the ability of the two countries to work towards the common goal of ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific maritime environment. Representatives of the two nations also met at the Pentagon later in the month for the 19th annual Indonesia United States Security Dialogue⁹⁴. They agreed to expand size, scope and jointness of bilateral exercises, enhance collaboration on MDA and other maritime capacity building initiatives, strengthen bilateral cyber security cooperation, collaborate on human capital development and education, and work together to address the security implications of climate change. The US – Indonesia security engagement continues, though without indication that it will overcome Indonesia's traditional hesitation about foregoing its non-aligned outlook.

A press release from Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that Indonesia and Philippines had begun the process of negotiating their Continental Shelf Boundary by convening a preparatory meeting for the first special meeting of the joint permanent working group on maritime and ocean concerns on October 28, 2021⁹⁵. Both sides exchanged views on the principles and guidelines that will serve as the basic guidance for the negotiation and identified their respective base-points. The negotiation will be watched keenly by China, as part of the Continental Shelf lies under the area claimed by China in the South China Sea.

⁹² Readout of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.'s Meeting with President Joko Widodo of Indonesia, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/01/readout-of-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-s-meeting-with-president-joko-widodo-of-indonesia/>

⁹³ US, Indonesia begin bilateral exercise CARAT Indonesia, <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/News/Article/2828555/us-indonesia-begin-bilateral-exercise-carat-indonesia/>

⁹⁴ Readout of Indonesia – United States Security Dialogue 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2852539/readout-of-indonesia-united-states-security-dialogue-2021/>

⁹⁵ Indonesia and the Philippines Took Important Early Step in Negotiating Continental Shelf Boundary, <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/3113/berita/indonesia-and-the-philippines-took-important-early-step-in-negotiating-continental-shelf-boundary>



HMS Astute. Source: Royal Navy

HMS Astute, the British SSN accompanying CSG 21, was reported to have visited Perth, the first such visit after the announcement of AUKUS in September⁹⁶. A Press Release by Australia's Defence Minister said that the ship's company had "conducted a 14 day quarantine period prior to entering Australia and will abide by all COVID-19 restrictions set by the Western Australian Government (the entire crew was effectively in quarantine on board throughout their period at sea)⁹⁷. The visit was ostensibly intended to provide the submarine crew a short respite after a prolonged period at sea. It also served to expose the submarine to Australian naval personnel even as their government wrestled with which SSN would be built for the RAN. On November 19, President Biden formally approved AUKUS and determined that "performance of the agreement will promote and will not be an unreasonable risk to the common defense and security". He authorised "execution of the agreement in a manner specified by the Secretary of State"⁹⁸. Australia's

⁹⁶ British nuclear powered sub visits Perth, <https://www.australiandefence.com.au/defence/sea/british-nuclear-powered-sub-visits-perth>

⁹⁷ UK nuclear-powered submarine visit to Perth, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/peter-dutton/media-releases/uk-nuclear-powered-submarine-visit-perth-aus>

⁹⁸ Memorandum on the Presidential Determination on the Proposed Agreement between the Government of the United States of America, the Government of Australia and the

Defence Minister Peter Dutton joined British High Commissioner Victoria Treadell and US Charge d'Affaires Michael Goldman to formally sign the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Agreement on November 22 and tabled the agreement in Australian Parliament the same day⁹⁹. Reports indicate that a parliamentary committee headed by Liberal MP Dave Sharma will hold an inquiry into the nuclear submarine deal¹⁰⁰.

Following the damage to USS Connecticut last month due to its colliding with a sea mount, V Adm Karl Thomas, Commander of the US 7th Fleet, relieved Cdr Cameron Aljilani as the submarine's commanding officer, Lt Cdr Patrick Cashin as the Executive Officer and Master Chief Sonar Technician Cory Rodgers as Chief of the Boat¹⁰¹. He cited loss of confidence as reason for his action and determined that sound judgement, prudent decision-making and adherence to required procedures in navigation planning, watch team execution and risk management could have prevented the incident.

The US publicly designated Chau Phirun, Director General of Cambodia's Defence Ministry's Material and Technical Services Department, and Tea Vinh, Commander of Royal Cambodian Navy, for corruption and profiting from activities in construction of Ream Naval Base¹⁰². The US accused the two of conspiring to profit from activities regarding the construction and updating of base facilities. The base has been in the media spotlight since a Wall Street Journal article claimed that a secret treaty had been signed granting the PLA (Navy) use of its facilities for 30 years. Cambodia had described the story as "fake news". Cambodia's ruling party spokesman said that the government would not investigate the allegations. The designation will result in freezing any assets the two may have in the US, and bar American citizens and

Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/11/19/a-memorandum-on-the-presidential-determination-on-the-proposed-agreement-between-the-government-of-the-united-states-of-america-the-government-of-australia-and-the-government-of-the-united-kingdom-o/>

⁹⁹ Australia signs exchange of naval nuclear propulsion information sharing agreement, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/peter-dutton/media-releases/australia-signs-exchange-naval-nuclear-propulsion-information>

¹⁰⁰ Controversial AUKUS alliance to be the subject of a parliamentary inquiry, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/controversial-aukus-alliance-to-be-the-subject-of-a-parliamentary-inquiry/cbc96d28-9d8d-4d5e-8ca1-921bbbe34be2>

¹⁰¹ USS Connecticut (SSN 22) Command Leadership Relief, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/2833857/uss-connecticut-ssn-22-command-leadership-relief/>

¹⁰² Public Designation of Cambodian Officials Due to Involvement in Significant Corruption, <https://www.state.gov/public-designation-of-cambodian-officials-due-to-involvement-in-significant-corruption/>

companies from doing business with them. The State Department has also prohibited the entry of the two and immediate relatives into the US¹⁰³.

China's pressure on Taiwan continued unabated, with Taiwan's Ministry of Defence reporting intrusions by Chinese aircraft into its ADIZ on 27 days during the month. The continued existence of Taiwan is anathema to the PRC, primarily because it displays to China's inhabitants (and to the rest of the world) that a democratic Chinese society can be prosperous, innovative and a respected member of the global community, without intimidating either its own population or neighbour states. The US responded with two Congressional delegations visiting Taiwan¹⁰⁴ (while the Chinese Embassy in Washington DC peremptorily called up delegation members to tell them to cancel their visit¹⁰⁵), demonstrating bipartisan support for its continued separate existence, and inviting Taiwan to participate in the inaugural Summit for Democracy while excluding China¹⁰⁶. USS Milius conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit on November 23¹⁰⁷, even as the US conducted the 2nd US-Taiwan Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue¹⁰⁸. The events demonstrate Taiwan's continued existence as among the foremost hot spots vitiating US-China relations, with neither side willing to accommodate each other's perspectives.

¹⁰³ US sanctions Cambodian navy chief for alleged graft, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/usa-sanctions-11102021183811.html>

¹⁰⁴ Taiwan hosts Second US Congressional Delegation in Two Weeks, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/taiwan-hosts-second-u-s-congressional-delegation-in-two-weeks-11637918337>

¹⁰⁵ China irked by US lawmakers Taipei visit, <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/china-irked-by-us-lawmakers-taipei-visit20211127091355/>

¹⁰⁶ US invites Taiwan to its democracy summit, China angered, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/biden-administration-invites-taiwan-its-summit-democracy-2021-11-24/>

¹⁰⁷ 7th Fleet Destroyer Transits Taiwan Strait, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2852442/7th-fleet-destroyer-transits-taiwan-strait/>

¹⁰⁸ 2021 US-Taiwan Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue, <https://www.state.gov/2021-u-s-taiwan-economic-prosperity-partnership-dialogue-eppd/>



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