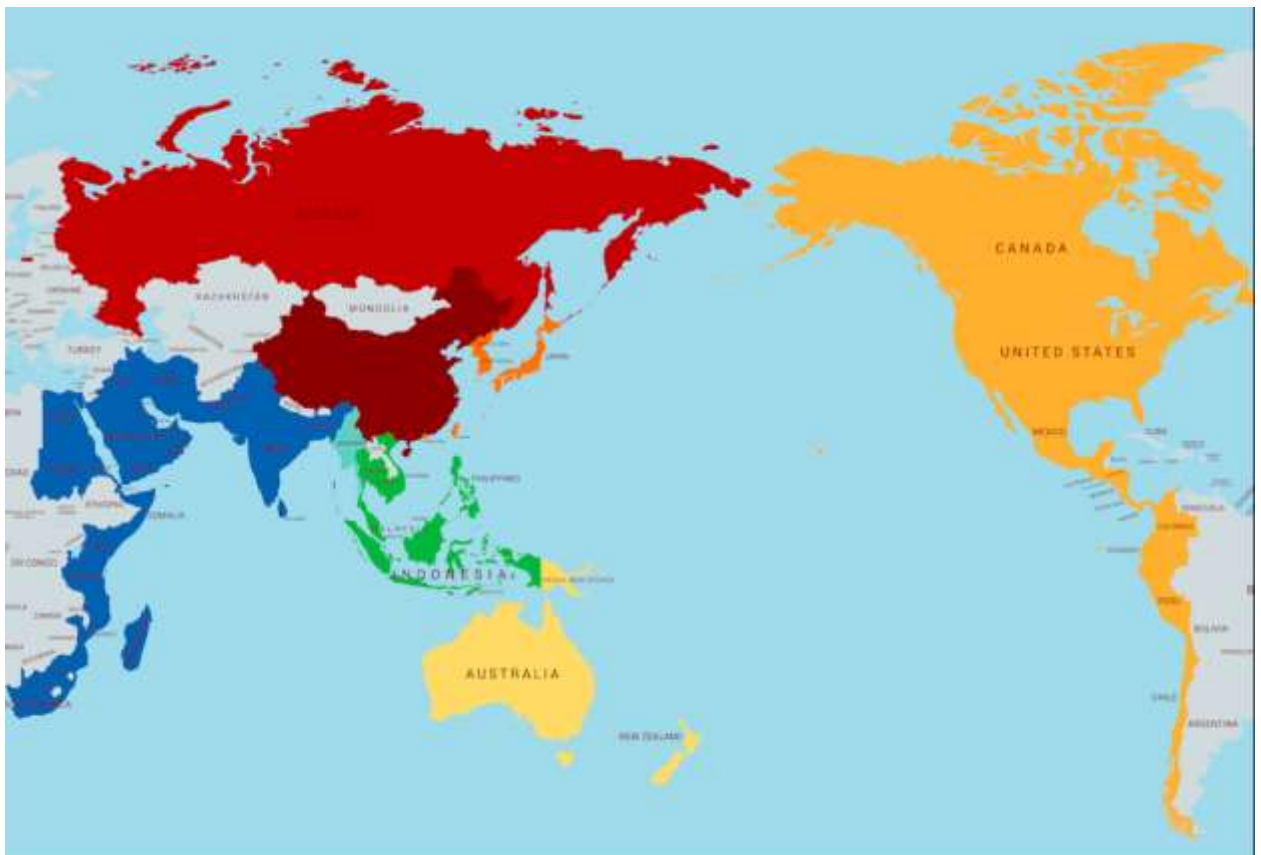




**Delhi Policy Group**

# DPG INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR



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**Delhi Policy Group**

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003  
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# DPG INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

## Volume 1, Issue 1

### ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group is among India's oldest independent think tanks with its primary focus on international and strategic issues of critical national interest. Over the past decades, the Delhi Policy Group has established itself in both domestic and international circles, particularly in the area of national security.

In keeping with India's increasing global profile as a leading power and the accompanying dynamism of India's foreign and security policy, the Delhi Policy Group has expanded its focus areas to include India's broader regional and global role; India's initiatives to strengthen its strategic periphery; India's political, security and connectivity challenges and policies across the Indo-Pacific; and the strategic partnerships that advance India's rise. To support these goals, the DPG undertakes research, publishes policy reports and organises conferences on strategic and geo-political, geo-economic, and defence and security issues.

### DPG INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

The DPG Indo-Pacific Monitor is intended to provide the informed reader with an overview of significant developments, opinions, trends and critical issues pertaining to the Indo-Pacific during the previous month. It is compiled by our research team from open source media. To subscribe, please [click here](#) (link to be attached).

Your comments and feedback may be addressed to Anushka Nair at [anushka@dpg.org.in](mailto:anushka@dpg.org.in)

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# Contents

## INDIAN OCEAN REGION

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>South Asia</b> .....                                | 4  |
| 1. <i>Official Statements and Press Releases</i> ..... | 4  |
| 2. <i>Media Discourse and Analyses</i> .....           | 6  |
| <b>West Asia</b> .....                                 | 11 |
| 3. <i>Official Statements and Press Releases</i> ..... | 11 |
| 4. <i>Media Discourse and Analyses</i> .....           | 11 |
| <b>East Africa</b> .....                               | 15 |
| 5. <i>Official Statements and Press Releases</i> ..... | 15 |
| 6. <i>Media Discourse and Analyses</i> .....           | 15 |

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 7. <i>Official Statements and Press Releases</i> ..... | 16 |
| 8. <i>Media Discourse and Analyses</i> .....           | 19 |

## EAST ASIA

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 9. <i>Official Statements and Press Releases</i> ..... | 38 |
| 10. <i>Media Discourse and Analyses</i> .....          | 39 |

## SOUTH WESTERN PACIFIC

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 11. <i>Official Statements and Press Releases</i> ..... | 45 |
| 12. <i>Media Discourse and Analyses</i> .....           | 45 |

## ABSTRACT

As the geostrategic space linking the world's most advanced power on the one hand and its most populous, dynamic and consequential region on the other, the Indo-Pacific is of critical import to India, and indeed to all of Asia. The region has become the acknowledged theatre for geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order.

The monthly DPG Indo-Pacific Monitor aims to provide informed readers with a snapshot as well as a compendium of significant developments, opinion, trends and issues pertaining to the security and stability of this region. It will explore how these developments impact the stability and security of the Indo-Pacific, the global maritime transportation system and resource exploitation from the seas. The Monitor will be based on reports, commentaries and analyses appearing in open source media during the month.

The assassination of Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, Commander of Iran's Quds Force, by a US drone strike near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020 inflamed tensions between Iran and the US and threatened to escalate into open conflict. Iran vowed revenge and went into diplomatic overdrive to convince other nations of the righteousness of its position. It launched ballistic missiles at two US bases in Iraq, signalling capability but causing no casualties. Iraq's parliament thereafter voted to ask the US to withdraw its forces from the country. Oil prices spiked by around 4% due to widespread concerns regarding the impact of conflict on the global energy transportation system. India positioned a warship in the Gulf for protection of its shipping.

Iran's heightened state of alert led to the inadvertent shooting down of a Ukrainian civilian aircraft on January 8, resulting in the death of 176 passengers and crew. However, with Iran and US both pulling back from escalation, the crisis appears to have blown over for the time being.

In a significant development, Japan announced the deployment of a destroyer and two maritime patrol aircraft for operations in the Gulf of Oman and North Arabian Sea, albeit after having explained its rationale to Iran. South Korea also extended the area of operations of its anti-piracy unit in the Gulf of Aden to the Straits of Hormuz.

The civil war in Yemen continued unabated.

Following closely after a China–Russia–Iran naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman, China and Pakistan joined hands in the sixth edition of Exercise Sea Guardian 2020, which was held from January 6-14, 2020. The stated purpose was cooperation to tackle maritime terrorism and transnational crime. Reports indicated that aircraft from INS Vikramaditya monitored the Sino-Pak exercise.

Moving Eastward, India's flagship Raisina Dialogue was held from January 14-16, featuring as many as nine discussions focusing on the Indo-Pacific and related subjects, signifying the growing importance of this region in India's foreign policy. The differing perspectives of Russia and other Indo-Pacific countries came in for extensive discussion. A significant development was the US Deputy NSA, Mr Matt Pottinger, asserting that differing perspectives of India and the US on the geographic extent of the Indo-Pacific had been reconciled and both agreed that it extended from "California to Kilimanjaro".

India's maritime capability was strengthened with the back-to-back tests of the K-4 SLBM, with a range of 3,500 Km, on January 19 and 24, 2020. India also enhanced strike capability towards the South by positioning the first Brahmos ALCM equipped Su-30 MKI Squadron at Thanjavur. Indian Naval ships were at the forefront of providing Disaster Relief in the Indian Ocean following cyclone Diane, after a request from Madagascar. The end of the month witnessed reports that India was considering inviting Australia to take part in the 2020 edition of Exercise Malabar to be held in the Bay of Bengal around July-August. If correct, this would portend a significant shift by India and be welcomed by its Quad partners.

President Xi Jinping's visit to Myanmar on January 17-18 resulted in 33 agreements, 13 of which were related to infrastructure. Key among these are plans to connect Mandalay and eventually Myanmar's coast to Southern China with a high-speed railroad, a renewed push to the Kyaukphyu port project, building of a new city near Yangon, and the establishment of a 'Border Economic Cooperation Zone'. Taken together, these four projects tighten China's economic and strategic hold over Myanmar while bypassing the contested South China Sea and giving it direct access to the Bay of Bengal for the first time. Separately, the International Court of Justice on January 23, 2020 directed Myanmar, in a unanimous verdict, to take all measures to prevent the killing, or causing of serious bodily harm to Rohingyas, to prevent commitment of genocide against them, as well as to ensure preservation of evidence relating to alleged acts of genocide. This case has been brought forward by The Gambia on behalf of the OIC, and a final outcome could take years to materialise.

The South China Sea heated up further as China continued its strategy of asserting control over its territory and resources. Indonesia came under sustained pressure, with China stepping up fishing activity under Coast Guard escort off the Natuna Islands and pointedly drawing attention to the strike capability of its aircraft from the newly constructed South China Sea Island airstrips. Indonesia's erstwhile Minister for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Susi Pudjiastuti, had taken an uncompromising hard line the last time this happened, in 2016. Beijing may have deliberately provoked a crisis to see how her successor, Edhy Prabowo, would respond. Jakarta has mobilised its fishing fleet to protect resources in its EEZ, but whether this will suffice in the face of continued Chinese pressure remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, China protested vociferously about Malaysia filing its claim for an extended Continental Shelf with the UN last month, claiming it seriously infringed China's sovereignty and jurisdiction in the South China Sea. Vietnam has already experienced the effects of China's territorial assertions, with the Chinese oil survey vessel Haiyang Dizhi 8 operating in Vietnam's EEZ in the last quarter of 2019 in contravention of international law. Philippines remains conflicted about whether it should oppose China's blue water territorial grab or surrender sovereign rights in return for Belt and Road investments. The most recent sign of this ambivalence was the first ever visit of a Chinese Coast Guard ship to Manila on January 14-15, 2020. Whether these four maritime nations, all members of ASEAN, can unite to project a common front against China's expansionism, or will continue to remain divided, will have a significant bearing on the future of the South China Sea. As the new chair of ASEAN, Vietnam has an opportunity to push for a common ASEAN position. Meanwhile, the Littoral Combat Ship USS Montgomery carried out the first South China Sea Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) of the year near the Spratly Islands on January 25, 2020.

In the East China Sea, USS Shiloh, a Ticonderoga class guided missile cruiser, passed through the Taiwan Strait on January 16 in a show of commitment towards the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, barely a week after Taiwan's presidential election, provoking a strong protest from China which asked the US to respect the 'one-China' principle and its territorial integrity, while monitoring the US ship's movements.

The Indian Ocean remained largely piracy free during the past year, with the International Maritime Bureau reporting only five incidents of boarding (of which three were inside Indian ports) in 2019. The Malacca Straits, Java Sea and the Celebes Sea, however, appear to have become the new hotbeds of global piracy. In the Java Sea, a bulk carrier was boarded on January 22, while a fishing vessel was boarded in the Celebes on January 16, 2020.

## INDIAN OCEAN REGION

### South Asia

#### 1. *Official Statements and Press Releases*

##### [Pakistan Navy inducts Maritime Patrol Aircraft & Unmanned Aerial Systems, Enhances Operational Capability of its Air Arm](#)

January 04, 2020, ISPR

The Pakistan Navy inducted an ATR-72 Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) and Luna NG tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) on January 4. These inductions will augment Pakistan Navy's Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities in the maritime domain, especially in Creek areas and along the Coastal belt.

##### [Pakistan Navy flotilla visited Muscat, Oman as part of overseas deployment](#)

January 05, 2020, ISPR

Pakistan Navy flotilla comprising PN Ships Rah Naward, Gwadar and PMSA Dasht visited Muscat, Oman as part of their overseas deployment on January 5. During the port call, the senior officer met senior dignitaries and naval officials of Royal Omani Navy.

##### [Pakistan Navy ships visited Mombasa, Kenya, establishes free medical camp](#)

January 12, 2020, ISPR

PN Ships Moawin and Aslat visited Mombasa, Kenya on January 12, as part of Pakistan Navy's overseas deployment in the African region. During the port calls, the senior officer of the PN met senior dignitaries and naval officials of the Kenyan Navy. During their stay, the PN ships established a medical camp and also held an exercise with the Kenyan Navy.

### [Pakistan Navy Ships Moawin & Aslat visited Port Victoria, Seychelles](#)

January 18, 2020, ISPR

Pakistan Navy Ships Moawin and Aslat visited Port Victoria, Seychelles on January 18. During the visit, Mission Commander & Commanding Officers of the visiting ships called on important authorities of Seychelles, visited Foyer De Nazareth Orphanage, Victoria besides holding various social and professional engagements at the host country.

### [Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi Reaffirm Bilateral Relations](#)

January 14, 2020, Website of the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

During his visit to Sri Lanka, Foreign Minister of the Peoples' Republic of China Wang Yi called on Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The two discussed bilateral relations and Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed China's support for Sri Lanka's economic and territorial independence.

### [Pak-China joint Naval Exercise Sea Guardian-2020 culminates at Karachi](#)

January 14, 2020, ISPR

Pakistan Navy and PLA (Navy) ended the sixth bilateral exercise Sea Guardian -2020 on January 14 at Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Karachi. During the exercise, PN Navy and PLA (Navy) units comprising naval platforms / assets as well as Marine Corps detachments carried out advanced level joint drills and naval manoeuvres in North Arabian Sea.

### [China and Pakistan Complete PN – PLAN Bilateral Exercise Sea Guardian 2020](#)

January 15, 2020, Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China

China and Pakistan held a nine- day naval exercise in the Arabian Sea code-named Sea Guardian-2020. The exercise was their sixth naval drill together.



### [Pakistan conducts successful training launch Ghaznavi ballistic missile](#)

January 23, 2020, ISPR

Pakistan conducted a training launch of surface to surface ballistic missile Ghaznavi on January 23. The missile can deliver multiple types of warheads upto a range of 290 Km. The training launch was part of Field Training Exercise of Army Strategic Forces Command aimed at rehearsing operational readiness procedures during day and night.

### [India-Brazil Joint Statement during the State Visit of President of Brazil to India](#)

January 25, 2020, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

On a state visit to India, the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro made a joint statement with Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding the bilateral relationship between India and Brazil.

## ***2. Media Discourse and Analyses***

### [Realizing the Potential of Island Territories: A Perspective from Delhi](#)

December 17, 2019, Carnegie India

This article assesses the deepening maritime collaboration between Indo-Pacific countries and its implications for India and its strategic partners.

### [Act East and Act West: Two Different Prisms for India's Indo-Pacific Strategy](#)

January 04, 2020, Observer Research Foundation

This article analyses India's expanding concept of the Indo-Pacific to suggest a further breakdown of the idea into two strategies, namely 'Act East' and 'Act West.'

### [In a First, China, Pakistan Navies Deploy Submarines in Strategic Arabian Sea Drills](#)

January 08, 2020, The Economic Times

Navies of China and Pakistan, holding nine-day exercises in the Arabian Sea to enhance their strategic-partnership for the first- time deployed submarines, providing a rare exposure to the Chinese navy in the region.

### [China-Pakistan Naval Drills: More than Just Symbolism](#)

January 11, 2020, Observer Research Foundation

The navies of China and Pakistan began their sixth bilateral naval exercise, titled Sea Guardian-2020, which is of importance to India as it is taking place in the country's West Coast. This article analyses New Delhi's perspective and comments on the Beijing-Islamabad defence relationship.

### [India Deploys Aircraft Carrier INS Vikramaditya in Arabian Sea Amid China-Pakistan Naval Drill](#)

January 12, 2020, The Economic Times

India deployed its aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya in the Arabian Sea at a time China and Pakistan are holding a nine-day naval exercise in the region, a move seen as New Delhi sending a clear signal to its two rivals.

### [China Stands by Sri Lanka: Wang Yi](#)

January 14, 2020, The Hindu

Visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has pledged not to allow "any outside influences" to interfere with Sri Lanka's internal matters, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office said on Tuesday.

### [Chinese Navy, PN End Joint Exercise](#)

January 15, 2020, Dawn

The sixth edition of Exercise Sea Guardian 2020 between Pakistan Navy and China's People's Liberation Army (Navy) ended on January 14. During the exercise, Pakistan Navy and PLA (Navy) Flotilla comprising naval platforms and assets along with Marines Corps detachments carried out advance level joint drills and naval manoeuvres in North Arabian Sea.

### [Maldives on Same Page with India on Indian Ocean Stability: FM Abdullah](#)

January 15, 2020, The Economic Times

Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid, visiting India for the Raisina Dialogue, maintained that Maldives is an ally of India and on the same page with Delhi regarding peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.

### [Sri Lanka Seeks Seychelles' Support to Enter Indian Ocean Commission](#)

January 15, 2020, Colombo Gazette

Sri Lanka has sought the support of Seychelles in its application to become an observer member of the Indian Ocean Commission, the outgoing High Commissioner said.

### [Xi's Myanmar Visit and China's Regional Diplomacy](#)

January 16, 2020, Observer Research Foundation

This article assesses President Xi Jinping's visit to Myanmar in the larger context of China's regional diplomacy in Southeast Asia and South Asia with an emphasis on the Belt and Road Initiative.

### [Report on Alleged Chinese Corruption in Maldives Due by June: Minister](#)

January 16, 2020, Reuters

A report on alleged Chinese corruption in the Maldives will be completed by June, the Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid said on Thursday, as the current government investigates a surge of investments by China in recent years.

### [Gwadar Port Begins Handling of Afghanistan's Transit Cargo](#)

January 16, 2020, Gulf Today

Pakistan's southwestern Gwadar seaport has begun handling transit cargo headed to and from landlocked Afghanistan. The containers will be loaded on trucks for transport to Afghanistan through the Pakistani border town of Chaman.

### [Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale Defends Indo-Pacific Idea](#)

January 17, 2020, India Today

A day after India's strategic partners Russia and Iran rejected the "western" concept of the "Indo-Pacific", India's Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale came out to defend it.

### [BrahMos with Su-30s to Boost Firepower to Combat Chinese Threat in Indian Ocean Region](#)

January 17, 2020, India Today

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is all set to enhance its strike capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region keeping an eye on the increasing Chinese presence to augment the Indian Navy's strength by inducting Sukhoi fighter jets armed with lethal BrahMos missile in the newly set up squadron based in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

### [Chinese President Xi Jinping Wraps Up Myanmar Visit with String of Infrastructure Deals, Including Strategic Indian Ocean Port](#)

January 18, 2020, South China Morning Post

Chinese President Xi Jinping wrapped up his visit to Myanmar on Saturday after signing multibillion-dollar infrastructure deals, including one for Kyaukphyu port in the Indian Ocean.

### [India, Sri Lanka Seek Closer Military Ties as China Clout Grows](#)

January 19, 2020, Times of India

Sri Lanka and India vowed to strengthen military ties and widen maritime links with neighbours after security talks, the president's office said Sunday, as China's economic clout increases in the region.

### [CDS Rawat Downplays Chinese Matrix in Indian Ocean, Gives Weight to Freedom of Navigation](#)

January 20, 2020, Times of India

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat on Monday downplayed the question of China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and said every nation looked at its security from a strategic perspective.

### [Defence Ministry Shortlists Firms for P-75I Project, Approves Rs 5,100 crore Worth of Procurement](#)

January 21, 2020, India TV

In a significant move, the Defence Acquisition Council shortlisted two Indian shipyards and five foreign defence majors for the Rs 50,000 crore project to build six conventional submarines in India for the Navy besides approving military procurement worth Rs 5,100 crore.

### [WEF 2020: Piyush Goyal Talks Indian Ocean and Trade Deficit](#)

January 21, 2020, Business Today

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal Tuesday said that India is struggling with a massive trade deficit, particularly with China and other countries in the region. He also emphasised the need for enhanced cooperation among several countries in order to achieve growth in the Indian Ocean region.

### [Where India Fits in Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy](#)

January 21, 2020, Japan Times

This Op-Ed assesses the deepening Japan-India defence cooperation to determine India's role in Japan's approach towards the Indo-Pacific. It also suggests an increase in the countries' individual, bilateral and trilateral engagements to maintain a rules-based order in the region.

### [K4 Test and New Fighter Base Boost India's Act East Policy](#)

January 24, 2020, The Hindu

India's decision to test the K4 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) and to establish a new base of Sukhoi-30 fighter jets not far from the Bay of Bengal coast is adding new teeth to its Act East Policy.

### [Sri Lanka Occupies Important 'Real Estate' in Indo-Pacific region: Alice Wells](#)

January 26, 2020, Colombo Page

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells on Friday said the United State and Sri Lanka have compelling shared interests that include promoting investment and economic growth as part of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

### [India's Evolving Nuclear Posture: Implications for Pakistan](#)

January 27, 2020, Modern Diplomacy

This article discusses the leading role India plays in the South Asian arms race, and the implications that India's strengthened nuclear arsenal would have on its neighbour Pakistan.

### [India Closely Monitors PLA Navy Supported Chinese Fishing Fleet in Indian Ocean](#)

January 28, 2020, Times of India

Indian Navy aircraft spotted the movement of Chinese distant- water fishing fleet supported by the People's Liberation Army Navy ships in the Western Indian Ocean and tracked their movement.

### [Operation Vanilla: India Sends Naval Ship to Provide Aid to Disaster-Hit Madagascar](#)

January 28, 2020, The New Indian Express

Indian Navy on Tuesday launched Operation Vanilla in a bid to support the people of island nation Madagascar in the face of a natural disaster.

### [India may invite Australia for Malabar naval exercise with US and Japan](#)

January 29, 2020, The Times of India

India is considering inviting Australia to take part in its trilateral Malabar naval exercise with the US and Japan this year. If this happens, it will mark the "Quad" countries coming together for the high-voltage exercise after a gap of 13 years.

### [Big Leap for India's Nuclear Forces? New Delhi to Develop 5,000km-Range K-5 Missile Following Successful Test of Sub-Launched K-4](#)

January 29, 2020, RT

With a successful testing of its K-4 nuclear-capable, submarine-launched ballistic missile under its belt, India is seeking to develop the K-5, a long-range ballistic weapon that could reach well beyond its Asian neighbourhood.

### [India's Northeast is the Gateway to Greater Indo-Pacific Engagement](#)

January 31, 2020, East Asia Forum

This article suggests that India's Northeast is key to the convergence of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision and India's Act East policy, making it an important frontier in India's Indo-Pacific engagement.

## West Asia

### *3. Official Statements and Press Releases*

#### [Iranian Foreign Minister's Statement on Gen. Soleimani's Assassination](#)

January 03, 2020, Iranian Foreign Ministry

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a statement on January 03 expressed disgust at and strongly condemned the American forces' terrorist and criminal move to martyr the honoured commander of the army of Islam, IRGC Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani.

#### [Remarks by President Trump on the Killing of Qasem Soleimani](#)

January 03, 2020, The White House

At the direction of President Trump, the United States military successfully executed a flawless precision strike that killed the number-one terrorist anywhere in the world, Qassem Soleimani.

### *4. Media Discourse and Analyses*

#### [Qatar Makes Huge Leap in North Field Expansion, LNG Production Boost](#)

December 30, 2019, Gulf Times

Qatar's recent decision to scale up its liquefied natural gas (LNG) production capacity to 126mn tonnes per year by 2027 is among the major strides the country's energy sector made in 2019.

#### [U.S. Strike Kills One of Iran's Most Powerful Military Leaders](#)

January 02, 2020, Foreign Policy

General Qassem Soleimani's death could mark the most dramatic escalation of the Middle East conflict since the Iraq War.

### [Iran Could Derail Trump's Indo-Pacific Strategy](#)

January 03, 2020, Hindustan Times

The Trump administration is still to provide strategic heft to its FOIP (Free and Open Indo-Pacific) policy. Indeed, like Tokyo, Washington no longer refers to its FOIP vision as a "strategy". After Soleimani's killing, there is a real risk that Trump's FOIP vision, like Obama's pivot to Asia, could fail to gain traction.

### [Arab-African Alliance Announced in Saudi Arabia](#)

January 07, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Saudi Arabia yesterday announced the establishment of the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud announced the signing of the charter of the council in a press conference held in the capital Riyadh.

### [India, Oman Hold Joint Naval Exercise](#)

January 08, 2020, Times of Oman

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), represented by several RNO vessels, and military vessels of the Indian Navy, are conducting a joint naval drill (Sea Breeze), with the assistance of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) jets in the Indian state of Goa.

### [India's View on Soleimani, Iran, and the United States](#)

January 09, 2020, Carnegie India

This commentary suggests that for India, better diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran would let New Delhi deal more smoothly with both countries. A decline in the relationship adversely affects Indian interests.

### [Indian Navy Ready to Bring Back Indians from Iran](#)

January 09, 2020, Deccan Chronicle

The Indian Navy already has one warship in the Gulf of Oman to come to the aid of any Indian merchant ship in the area.

### [Indian Navy Deploys Warship in Gulf Following Spiralling Tension Between US & Iran](#)

January 10, 2020, The Economic Times

The Indian Navy deployed warships in the Gulf region to ensure security of India's sea-borne trade and effectively respond to any emergent situation in the wake of fast escalating tensions between the US and Iran.

### [Japan's Abe Warns Conflict with Iran Impacts Entire World](#)

January 13, 2020, Al Jazeera

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, on a visit to the Middle East hoping to calm tensions sparked by the killing of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, has warned that military confrontation with Iran will harm peace and stability across the world.

### [Saudi Crown Prince 'Fully Supports' Japan MSDF Mission in Middle East](#)

January 13, 2020, The Japan Times

Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman expressed full support for Japan's dispatch of a Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer and patrol aircraft to the Middle East, during a meeting with visiting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

### [Iran Won't Target Strait of Hormuz over Soleimani Killing: Analysts](#)

January 13, 2020, Reuters

Iran is unlikely to block the Strait of Hormuz, the world's busiest oil-shipping channel, in reprisal for the killing of Qassem Soleimani for fear of aggravating its Gulf allies and China.

### [Russia Urges Persian Gulf Nations to Consider a Joint Security Mechanism](#)

January 15, 2020, Euractiv

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Moscow has been urging Gulf countries to consider a common security mechanism for the region and it was time the world got rid of unilateral measures such as sanctions.

### [Egypt Launches Largest Military Base in Middle East](#)

January 16, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi yesterday inaugurated Bani Mazar military base, the largest in the region of the Red Sea, official media has reported.

### [Iran's Bid to Integrate With Global Economy Is Coming to an End](#)

January 20, 2020, Yahoo Finance

Iran's six-year push to integrate with the Western-dominated global economy appears to be coming to an end. On Friday, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said Europe has joined the U.S. in trying to "bring Iran to its knees."



### [Saudi Arabia, UAE Slam 'Houthi' Missile Attack in Yemen's Marib](#)

January 20, 2020, Al Jazeera

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, key players in a military coalition battling the Houthi rebels in war-torn Yemen, have condemned a missile attack that killed more than 100 Yemeni soldiers.

### [South Korea Naval Unit to Expand Operations to Strait of Hormuz](#)

January 21, 2020, Voice of America

A South Korean anti-piracy unit has temporarily expanded its mission to the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global oil route at the centre of soaring tensions between Iran and the United States.

### [European Naval Mission to Secure Strait of Hormuz](#)

January 21, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Eight European Union member states have decided to set up a naval surveillance mission in the Strait of Hormuz, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell announced after a meeting of the bloc's foreign ministers.

### [The Need for a Cohesive Indo-Pacific Framework](#)

January 21, 2020, The Hindu Business Line

Divergence in US-India views on the troubled West Indian Ocean littorals such as Pakistan and Iran must be ironed out.

### [Egypt-Saudi Maritime Training Begins in Red Sea](#)

January 22, 2020, Egypt Independent

The joint Egyptian-Saudi maritime training exercise "Morgan-16" started at the Red Sea.

### [Asian States May Need to Protect Mideast Oil Supply](#)

January 27, 2020, Asia Times

Asian states are increasingly reliant on Middle East energy supplies to fuel their economies; and second, that the US is, at least rhetorically, decreasingly interested in protecting those supplies. These two factors reflect the fact that a significant change is under way for the regional, and perhaps global, order.

## East Africa

### *5. Official Statements and Press Releases*

#### [Joint Communiqué of the 10th Session of the Joint Ministerial Commission between the Republic of India and the Republic of South Africa](#)

January 17, 2020, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Republic of South Africa

During the 10th Session of the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) between India and South Africa, bilateral and regional issues were discussed and consequently, a joint communique was signed.

#### [Visit of Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa to India](#)

January 20, 2020, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Dr Naledi Pandor visited India and co-chaired the 10th India-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) in New Delhi with India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar on 17th January 2020.

### *6. Media Discourse and Analyses*

#### [Kenya, Somalia Keep Eyes on Court Over Ocean Block Dispute](#)

January 05, 2020, The East African

Somalia's diplomatic relations with Kenya will in 2020 be tested depending on the outcome of the maritime boundary case which is due to be determined in June.

#### [Russia's VTB Sues Mozambique Over Loan in \\$2 bn Debt Scandal](#)

January 07, 2020, Reuters

Russian bank VTB is suing a Mozambique state-owned company over \$535 million it extended as part a series of loans now at the centre of a \$2 billion debt scandal.

#### [As Turkey Shows Interest, Somalia Says Oil Tenders Open to All](#)

January 21, 2020, Bloomberg

Somalia vowed the war-torn country's offering of offshore exploration tenders will be open to all, a day after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey is keen on a call to participate.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

### *7. Official Statements and Press Releases*

#### [VN Vows to Join Hands in Identifying Future Directions for ASEAN](#)

January 06, 2020, MOFA

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc made the above statement at the launching ceremony of Vietnam's 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship in Ha Noi on Monday. The Government chief said peace, stability, solidarity, unity, prosperity and sustainability shall remain the purpose, the identity and the overarching goal of the ASEAN Community.

#### [Vietnam to Take the Initiative in Preparing for ASEAN Chairmanship 2020 and Non-Permanent Member of the UNSC for the 2020-2021 Tenure](#)

January 06, 2020, MOD

The steering committee and sub-committees on ASEAN Year 2020 under the Ministry of National Defence held a meeting on January 2 to review their preparations for defense-military events within the framework of ASEAN Year 2020. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of National Defence General Ngo Xuan Lich with Deputy Defence Minister Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh and Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Ngo Minh Tien in attendance.

#### [RBAF Commander Receives An Introductory Call From Defence Adviser Of India Accredited To Brunei Darussalam](#)

January 07, 2020, MOD

Major General Pengiran Dato Paduka Seri Aminan bin Pengiran Haji Mahmud, Commander Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) received an introductory call from Colonel Sanjeev Vijaykumar Sarma, Defence Adviser of India to Malaysia, concurrently accredited to Brunei Darussalam. Also in attendance at the call was the Chief of Staff RBAF. During the call, the Commander of RBAF expressed pleasure in meeting Colonel Sanjeev Vijaykumar Sarma and officially congratulated him on his new appointment. Both sides expressed their commitment to enhance the bilateral military-to-military cooperation.

### [Singapore's Permanent Secretary \(Defence\) Makes Introductory Visit To Brunei Darussalam](#)

January 09,2020, MOD

The Republic of Singapore's Permanent Secretary (Defence), Mr. Chan Heng Kee called on Yang BerhormatPehinDatuLailaraja Major General (Retired) Dato Paduka Seri Haji Awang Halbi bin Haji Mohd. Yussof, Second Minister of Defence this morning. Both sides reaffirmed the close bilateral relationship between Brunei Darussalam and Republic of Singapore and expressed satisfaction at the various avenues of defence cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

### [Defence Official Meets ASEAN Delegates in Da Nang](#)

January 10, 2020,MOD

A meeting of the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting Plus Working Group (ADSOM +WG) was held on January 10 in Da Nang city, Deputy DefenceMinister Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh attended the event.

### [Visit by Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan to Nha Trang, Vietnam, for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat - 15 to 17 Jan 2020](#)

January 14,2020,MOFA

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan will attend the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat from 15 to 17 January 2020 in Nha Trang, Vietnam. This is the first in a series of meetings that Vietnam will be hosting as Chair of ASEAN in 2020, under the theme of building a "Cohesive and Responsive" ASEAN. The Foreign Ministers will discuss ASEAN's priorities for the year, take stock of ASEAN's Community-building efforts and cooperation with ASEAN's partners, and exchange views on regional and international issues.

### [Acting US Navy Secretary in Singapore for Working Visit](#)

January 15, 2020,MOD

Acting Secretary of the United States Navy Thomas B. Modly, was in Singapore for a working visit, and called on Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen at the Ministry of Defence. During their meeting, Dr Ng and Acting Secretary Modly reaffirmed the excellent and long-standing bilateral defence relationship between Singapore and the US, and the close partnership between the Republic of Singapore Navy and the USNavy.

### [Singapore Hosts the 14th Malacca Straits Patrol Joint Coordinating Committee Meeting](#)

January 15, 2020, MOD

The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) is hosting the 14th Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) Meeting from 15 to 16 Jan 2020, attended by representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

### [ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat-Nha Trang, Vietnam-15-17 January 2020](#)

January 17, 2020, MOFA

YB Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah, Minister of Foreign Affairs, led the Malaysian delegation to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Nha Trang, Vietnam, on 15-17 January 2020. He was accompanied by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As Chair of ASEAN for 2020, under the theme "Cohesive and Responsive", Vietnam set forth five priorities encompassing political-security, economic and socio-cultural elements, as well as the strengthening of ASEAN's institutional capacity and its effectiveness.

### [The Outcomes of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat \(AMM Retreat\), in Nha Trang, Viet Nam](#)

January 18, 2020, MOFA

His Excellency PRAK Sokhonn, Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, led a Cambodian delegation to attend the ASEAN Foreign Minister's Retreat (AMM Retreat) held on 16-17 January 2020 in Nha Trang, Viet Nam.

### [Message upon Viet Nam's Assumption of ASEAN Chairmanship 2020 and UNSC Non-permanent Membership 2020-2021](#)

January 20, 2020, MOFA

Our determination to successfully fulfil both responsibilities—ASEAN Chairmanship 2020 and UNSC non-permanent membership for 2020-2021—highlights the consistency in our pursuit of the foreign policy line of independence and self-reliance for peace, cooperation and development, diversification and multilateralization of external relations, and proactive and vigorous international integration as set by the 12th Party Congress.

### [7th Thailand - Vietnam Political Consultation Group Meeting](#)

January 20, 2020, MOFA

On 20 January 2020, H.E. Mrs. Busaya Mathelin, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, co-chaired the 7th Thailand - Vietnam Political Consultation Group (PCG) Meeting with H.E. Mr. Nguyen Quoc Dung, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, at Government Guest House in Hanoi.

### [The 7th Thailand - Vietnam Political Consultation Group Meeting](#)

January 21, 2020, MOFA

H.E. Mrs. BusayaMathelin, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, co-chaired the 7th Thailand - Vietnam Political Consultation Group (PCG) Meeting with H.E Mr. Nguyen Quoc Dung, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, at Government Guest House in Hanoi.

### [Keynote Address by Senior Minister of State for Defence Heng Chee How at the Shangri-La Dialogue Sherpa Meeting](#)

January 25, 2020, MOFA

Over the last six decades, the rules-based international order as we know it today has provided the conditions for societies to interact, to exchange knowledge, to flourish and develop at a pace unseen before in human history. These conditions did not spring up by accident nor did they just occur in the course of nature. The United States and its allies who prevailed in World War II were the primary architects of the current international system, which in many ways have proved successful beyond expectations. What is this international system, that at times we may perhaps have taken for granted, and why do we call this an "order"?

## ***8. Media Discourse and Analyses***

### [How China Sees the Indo-Pacific: What Next After AOIP?](#)

December 30, 2019, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

This commentary evaluates Beijing's reaction to the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and its implications for the China-ASEAN relationship in the future.

### [What RCEP Means for the Indo-Pacific](#)

January 01, 2020, The Diplomat

With the world beset by trade and economic conflict, falling gross domestic product (GDP) and trade growth rates, as well as rising protectionism and populism, the conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations is all the more a landmark achievement for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

### [ASEAN Outlook to Solve South China Sea Dispute?](#)

January 01, 2020, The ASEAN Post

During the plenary session of the 34th ASEAN Summit in June, all member states agreed to adopt the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. It could not be

denied that one of the most important ongoing issues in the region is still the South China Sea dispute, so will the Outlook help to solve the ongoing dispute?

### [Asia Minute: Piracy Surges in Southeast Asia](#)

January 01, 2020, Hawaii Public Radio

The group that tracks piracy incidents include 20 countries, and has the unwieldy name of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combatting Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia. ReCAAP says piracy incidents more than tripled in 2019 – from 8 to 30 – a four-year high.

### [Indonesia Rejects China's Claims Over South China Sea](#)

January 01, 2020, Reuters

Indonesia said it rejected China's claims over a disputed part of the South China Sea as "having no legal basis", after two days earlier protesting to Beijing over the presence of a Chinese coastguard vessel in its territorial waters.

### [Indonesia Lodges Strong Protest Against China for Trespassing, Poaching in Natunas](#)

January 01, 2020, The Jakarta Post

The Foreign Ministry has summoned Chinese Ambassador to Indonesia Xiao Qian to lodge a diplomatic protest over China's violation of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) near the Natuna Islands, which are located adjacent to the southernmost tip of the highly disputed South China Sea.

### [Malaysia-China Security Ties in the Spotlight with First Littoral Mission Ship Delivery](#)

January 02, 2020, The Diplomat

The handover of the first capital defense asset acquired from China by Malaysia highlighted the ongoing status of a landmark security agreement between the two countries.

### [South China Sea Fury: How Philippines Fumed at China's 'Cowards' after Sinking](#)

January 02, 2020, Express.co.Uk

The Philippines accused a Chinese vessel of ramming one of its boats causing it to sink, leaving the lives of the 22 on board the boat threatened. The fishermen who had been left stranded and endangered by the incident were saved by a Vietnamese fishing vessel at the sight of the crash in Recto bank near the Spratly Islands. Filipino Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said in the aftermath of the clash in June: "We condemn in the strongest terms the cowardly action of the Chinese fishing vessel and its crew for abandoning the Filipino crew."

### [Malaysia Stands by Claim to Increase South China Sea Territory](#)

January 03, 2020, RFA

Malaysia stands by its request to extend its boundary farther into the South China Sea, Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah told reporters Friday, acknowledging Chinese opposition to the move and the potential for the case to lead to arbitration before the United Nations.

### [South China Sea: Malaysia Risks Infuriating Beijing as it Presses Ahead with UN Complaint](#)

January 04, 2020, Express. Co.UK

China was enraged when Kuala Lumpur filed a submission with the UN seeking to establish the limits of Malaysia's continental shelf in the northern part of the sea. Beijing claims most of the energy-rich South China Sea but neighbouring Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims.

### [Indonesia Steps Up Sea Patrols to Monitor China Fishing Boats](#)

January 04, 2020, Bloomberg

Indonesia's military has stepped up naval and aerial patrols of the Natuna Sea area because of a rising number of Chinese fishing vessels in the region. The Southeast Asian nation has deployed three ships and two aircraft in the gas-rich North Natuna Sea, and two additional vessels are on the way to join the group, YudoMargono, commander of the Joint Regional Defense Command, said in statement.

### [The South China Sea: Preventing the Tyranny of the Commons](#)

January 04, 2020, The Diplomat

Territorial disputes have exacerbated an ongoing fishery crisis. The only solution is achieving regional fishery management.

### [Chinese Contractor Completes Key Section of Mega Cross-Sea Bridge in Brunei](#)

January 04, 2020, Xinhua Net

A Chinese company has completed a key section of a mega sea-crossing in Brunei that links the capital Bandar Seri Begawan and Temburong district.

### [ASEAN Members Get Tough with China on South China Sea](#)

January 06, 2020, New Straits Times

The future direction of code of conduct (COC) negotiations between ASEAN members and China is at stake after recent developments saw Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines hardening their stand on the South China Sea issue.



### [Potent New Challenge to Beijing's Nine-Dash Line](#)

January 06, 2020, Asia Sentinel

As Vietnam takes over the chairmanship of ASEAN from January 1, it has received a welcome, surprise present from Malaysia, one that should strengthen solidarity among the maritime-focused members of the organisation in challenging China's imperialist claims to almost the whole South China Sea, stretching almost to the coasts of Borneo, Luzon and Palawan.

### [Japan, Vietnam Share Concerns on S.China Sea](#)

January 06, 2020, NHK World

The foreign ministers of Japan and Vietnam have shared their concerns about China's increasing activity in the disputed South China Sea and agreed to cooperate closely on maritime security.

### [Maritime Agency Detains Singapore-Registered Oil Tanker off Penang](#)

January 06, 2020, FMT

Maritime authorities here detained a Singapore-registered oil tanker 26 nautical miles north of Penang island yesterday after it was found to have been anchored in Malaysian waters without permission.

### [Royal Malaysian Navy Commissions First Keris-class Littoral Mission Ship](#)

January 06, 2020, Jane's Defence Weekly

The Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) has commissioned its first warship made in China. KD Keris (with 111 pennant number), the service's first of four Littoral Mission Ships (LMSs), entered service in a ceremony held on 6 January at the facilities of Wuchang Shipbuilding at Qidong, near Shanghai, according to an RMN statement issued the same day.

### [Displaced Population in Myanmar's Rakhine State Reaches 100,000](#)

January 06, 2020, Radio Free Asia

The number of civilians displaced during the past year amid an uptick in armed conflict in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state has reached more than 100,000, a regional relief organization said Monday, as authorities continue to limit area access to groups providing aid.

### [Indonesia Will Not Negotiate Its Sovereignty in South China Sea](#)

January 07, 2020, Bloomberg

Jokowi has said the increased presence of Chinese ships in the disputed waters since December was a violation of international law.

### [Four Rohingya Children Killed in Blast in Myanmar's Rakhine state](#)

January 07, 2020, Reuters

Four Rohingya Muslim children were killed by a landmine explosion in Myanmar's western Rakhine state on Tuesday, which the military and ethnic insurgents blamed on each other.

### [Vietnam-Cambodia Joint Naval Patrols in the Headlines with Review Meeting](#)

January 07, 2020, The Diplomat

Late last month, Vietnam and Cambodia held a review meeting to evaluate the state of joint naval patrols that they had been conducting. The engagement highlighted one facet of the broader bilateral defence relationship between the two neighbouring Southeast Asian states that they continue to develop over time as they manage other related opportunities and challenges.

### [Indonesia Deploys Fighter Jets in Stand-Off with China](#)

January 07, 2020, Reuters

Indonesia's air force deployed four fighter jets to the South China Sea on Tuesday in a stand-off with Beijing after Jakarta protested over a Chinese violation of its exclusive economic zone.

### [How are China's Neighbours Combating the PLA Navy?](#)

January 07, 2020, The Economic Times

No fewer than 23 modern surface warships were launched by China in 2019, this total including nine destroyers (two Type 055s and seven Type 052Ds), twelve Type 056 corvettes, one Type 075 landing helicopter dock and one Type 071 landing platform dock. Notable was the absence of any Type 054A frigate construction with production having temporarily halted.

### [Asia Reassurance Initiative Act: Framework for a US Indo-Pacific Strategy?](#)

January 07, 2020, The Diplomat

First, ARIA complements the U.S. National Security Strategy (2017), National Defense Strategy of the United States (2018), and U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (2019). It also sets new U.S. priorities and initiatives in the Indo-Pacific, particularly the promotion of democracy, civil society, human rights, rule of law, transparency, accountability, and cooperation to combat cyber security threats.

### [Insight: Indonesia Needs New Strategy to Deal With China](#)

January 08, 2020, The Jakarta Post

The latest encroachment on Indonesian waters by Chinese fishing vessels and the Chinese coast guard several days ago highlights a fundamental reality: China could ignore Indonesia's interests and concerns because it can. Jakarta,

after all, has been singing the same tune every time there is a maritime incident involving China, combining strong diplomatic protests with some form of military posturing. Last week, the Foreign Ministry summoned the Chinese ambassador and conveyed a strong protest note. Officials then publicly reasserted the illegality of the “nine-dash line” and “historic fishing rights”.

### [Indonesia Sends Reinforcements to Natuna](#)

January 08, 2020, The Jakarta Post

Indonesia is sending reinforcements to the southern fringes of the South China Sea as a Chinese fishing fleet stubbornly remains in Indonesia’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ), with two more ships currently on the way.

### [China Courts Malaysia in Bid to Control Strait of Malacca](#)

January 08, 2020, The Trumpet

Malaysia commissioned its first Chinese-built Keris-class ship on January 6, in the latest sign of China’s tightening grip on a nation that boosts Beijing’s control over one of the world’s most important maritime choke points: the Strait of Malacca.

### [Indonesia President Visits Islands Also Claimed by China](#)

January 08, 2020, Stars and Stripes

Indonesian President Joko Widodo on Wednesday reaffirmed his country’s sovereignty during a visit to a group of islands at the edge of the South China Sea that China claims as its traditional fishing area.

### [Can Indonesia Lead? Maritime Tensions With China Escalate](#)

January 09, 2020, The Interpreter

China Coast Guard vessels were pursued out of Indonesian waters by Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) corvettes, but reports have indicated the Chinese vessels are still proximate to Indonesian waters and in no hurry to depart.

### [Indonesian Military Says Chinese Vessels Left Disputed Waters](#)

January 09, 2020, The New York Times

Indonesia’s military said on Thursday that Chinese coast guard vessels and fishing boats had left disputed waters in the western reaches of the South China Sea following a visit by President Joko Widodo to assert his nation’s sovereignty. During recent weeks, Jakarta summoned China’s ambassador after the coast guard and fishing boats entered waters around the northern Natuna islands, where Indonesia has established an exclusive economic zone

### [India and the Philippines: A New Chapter in Defense Ties?](#)

January 09, 2020, The Diplomat

While strategic interactions have traditionally been quite shallow, there are some indications of a more promising future for relations.

### [What Lies Ahead for Vietnam's United Nations Security Council Stint?](#)

January 09, 2020, The Diplomat

This month, Vietnam officially began its term as president of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as part of its stint as a nonpermanent UNSC member for the 2020-2021 term. While this represents a significant development for Vietnam's foreign policy, it also poses a mix of opportunities and challenges that Vietnamese policymakers will have to navigate.

### [South China Sea: Malaysia, Indonesia, And Vietnam Beat China At Its Own Game](#)

January 10, 2020, Forbes

Malaysia has joined Indonesia and Vietnam to beat China at its own game in the South China Sea in the use of lawfare to settle disputes.

### [South China Sea: Beijing Set to Unleash huge \\$100m Spying Vessel as Conflict Fears Rise](#)

January 10, 2020, Express.co.Uk

South China Sea tensions increased after Beijing announced it was ready to build its biggest ever civilian patrol vessel to move around the disputed waters.

### [Is China's Claim Over Indonesia's Sovereign Rights in Natuna Sea Legal?](#)

January 10, 2020, The Economic Times

President Jokowi visited Natuna on 8 January 2020. This is not a regular visit and not without a serious purpose. The recent escalation of activities of foreign vessels particularly originating from China in Natuna Seas is the main reason for the President's presence. It particularly aims to show that the Government of Indonesia pays significant attention to protecting Indonesia's sovereign rights in the Natuna Sea.

### [Fate of Rohingya Boat People Remains Unknown as They Are Returned to Myanmar's Rakhine State](#)

January 10, 2020, RFA

Scores of Rohingya Muslims detained in December by the Myanmar Navy aboard a boat in the Andaman Sea as they attempted to leave the country have been transferred to western Myanmar's Rakhine state, a coastal forces commander and state immigration minister said.

### [Navy to Receive 12 Surveillance Drones from US This Year](#)

January 10, 2020, FMT

The Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) is expected to receive 12 surveillance drones from the United States this year.

### [Vietnam Chairs First Meeting of ASEAN Committee in New York](#)

January 11, 2020, Vietnam Plus

The first meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee was held in New York on January 10, focusing discussion on activities and priorities of ASEAN member states this year.

### [UN leaders, Countries Highly Value Vietnam's International Stature](#)

January 11, 2020, Nhan Dan

Leaders of the United Nations and officials of some countries highly valued Vietnam's international stature while meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh in New York on January 9-10.

### [As Indonesia Stands Up to China, Who Will Follow in Southeast Asia?](#)

January 11, 2020, SCMP

Richard Heydarian writes that major Southeast Asian nations are beginning to resist China's territorial claims. Until recently neighbouring countries have tried to avoid direct confrontation with Beijing. Fed up with what they perceive as China's revanchist designs, a growing number of neighbouring countries have risked disrupting fruitful economic relations with Beijing amid rising nationalism and anti-China sentiment at home.

### [Jakarta Should Not Dismiss Beijing's 'Historic Rights' Claim](#)

January 11, 2020, The Jakarta Post

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's government has been a responsible custodian of Sino-Indonesian relations. Beijing too shares a heavy obligation to be markedly more transparent with its maritime claims. Bilateral relations are too important to be deflected by the politically charged but materially modest encroachments in the waters adjoining Natuna regency. The sooner the matter is consensually resolved, the better it will be for all.

### [Why Fishing Boats are on the Territorial Front Lines of the South China Sea](#)

January 12, 2020, SCMP

A stand-off between China and Indonesia near the Natuna Islands highlights the growing role civilian fishing fleets play in national claims. The deployments are dimming hopes for a code of conduct in the troubled waters, observers say.

### [Commentary: The Road to Getting the F-35s Up and Ready for Singapore](#)

January 12, 2020, CNA

As history has shown us, it is one thing for militaries to buy advanced, high-tech weaponry that look good at national parades, it is another to be able to use it effectively and decisively when push comes to shove.

### [Singapore Gets the Green Light to Buy F-35s](#)

January 12, 2020, Defense News

The U.S. government on Thursday formally approved Singapore to become the next customer of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, paving the way for a future sale.

### [Number of Foreign Fishing Vessels in Natuna Increases after Jokowi's Visit](#)

January 12, 2020, Indonesia Expat

Following the visit of Indonesian President Joko Widodo, as well as the appearance of TNI troops on Natuna Island, the presence of foreign fishing vessels in the territorial waters has not reduced but instead, has increased. This is evident from the air monitoring conducted by the TNI using a Boeing 737 AI-7301 maritime reconnaissance aircraft. It was found that around 30 foreign fishing vessels were still occupying the northern part of the Natuna Sea.

### [Chinese Vessels Retreat to Border of Indonesia's EEZ in North Natuna Sea](#)

January 12, 2020, The Jakarta Post

Around 30 Chinese fishing vessels have retreated to the border of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the North Natuna Sea, amid simmering tensions over China's controversial naval manoeuvres in the maritime region.

### [ASEAN Chairmanship 2020: For a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN.](#)

January 13, 2020, Nhan Dan

Advancing ASEAN's contribution to maintaining regional peace, security and stability has been identified as one of five key priorities for Vietnam's ASEAN Chairmanship 2020, wrote Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh in an article.

### [Myanmar Sends Nearly 200 Rohingya Captured at Sea to Rakhine Camps](#)

January 13, 2020, CNA

Nearly 200 Rohingya Muslims arrested at sea last month by Myanmar's navy after a voyage of hundreds of kilometres have been sent back to Rakhine state, officials said.

### [Consultancy Intueri Assesses the South China Sea Dispute](#)

January 13, 2020, Consultancy Asia

The South China Sea dispute made little progress in 2019, with a number of stand-offs hardening stances heading into the new year. Bringing an outside perspective from a non-claimant nation, Indian strategy consultancy Intueri has analysed the current state of affairs.

### [To Deter Chinese Sea Claims, Indonesia Puts its Fishers on the Front Line](#)

January 14, 2020, Mongabay

Indonesia is ramping up its fisheries in the waters around its northern Natuna Islands, following an incursion into the area by fishing boats and a coast guard vessel from China.

### [Territorial Tussle Over South China Sea](#)

January 14, 2020, The Jakarta Post

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelagic nation. Encompassing much of the Malay archipelago, Indonesia has its share of maritime claims on the South China Sea within the area of the Natuna Islands. Indonesia has yet to resolve issues involving maritime boundary disputes with some of its neighbours, including Vietnam, Malaysia and China.

### [South China Sea: Putin Moves to Support the Philippines and Vietnam Against Beijing's Plan](#)

January 14, 2020, Express.co.uk

The development will frustrate China's attempts to secure ownership of the lucrative zone within its nine dash line.

### [RCEP May Ease Tensions in South China Sea - Maritime Institute of Malaysia](#)

January 14, 2020, Malaysia Kini

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) that is aimed to be signed this year could be the tool to ease tensions in the South China Sea, a senior researcher told a seminar.

### [Rocks, Reefs, and Nuclear War](#)

January14,2020, AMTI

U.S. strategy has been notably less successful in preventing China from robbing Southeast Asian partners, including U.S. ally the Philippines, of their resources and rights in the South China Sea. But the United States has at least slowed China's advance while avoiding war.

### [Philippines asks China Coast Guard to Stop Harassing Fishermen in West Philippine Sea](#)

January 14, 2020, Phil Star Global

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) will push for a mechanism that will protect the safety of Filipino fishermen in the West Philippine Sea as they hold bilateral talks with their Chinese counterparts.

### [South China Sea Dispute: Chinese Incursion Puts Philippines on the Spot](#)

January 15, 2020, The Times

China has dispatched armed coastguard vessels to accompany fishing trawlers into disputed waters around a strategic island chain claimed by Indonesia, which has responded by sending warships to the area.

### [Myanmar's Rakhine State Teetering Towards War](#)

January 15, 2020, Bangkok Post

Rakhine state is descending into growing turmoil. Globally long associated primarily with the brutal oppression of the Rohingya, the much wider dimensions of Rakhine's troubles are now visible, including their international implications.

### [Military Leaders From Four Littoral States Meet to Tackle Spike in Robberies in Singapore Strait](#)

January 15, 2020, The Straits Times

Senior military leaders from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia will meet to discuss ways to combat the recent spike in sea robberies in the Singapore Strait.

### [Piracy Spike in Singapore Strait Prompts Calls for Tighter Security](#)

January 15, 2020, Reuters

Coastal nations around the Singapore Strait must step up surveillance and patrols of the strategic waterway after a sharp rise in piracy incidents last year, maritime watchdog ReCAAP said.

### [The Natuna Sea Incident: How Indonesia Is Managing Its Bilateral Relationship With China](#)

January 15, 2020, The Diplomat

Indonesia's pragmatic, even-handed approach to the recent Natuna Sea incident shows how China's rise can be managed.

### [How Indonesia Stared Down China in South China Sea](#)

January 15, 2020, Asia Times

Although known to be fiercely nationalistic, Indonesia's diminutive Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi hardly looks the part of a "bad cop." But that was the role



she was apparently called on to play in Indonesia's recent stand-off with China in sovereign waters north of the Natuna Islands.

### [South China Sea Warning: Japan Demands Stronger Action Against Beijing in Disputed Waters](#)

January 15, 2020, Express.co.Uk

Japanese MP, Akihisa Nagashima, told more than 200 representatives at the 28th Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Canberra, the world should not "sit on the sidelines" against Beijing's emerging influence in the region. China claims vast areas of the energy-rich waters and has established military outposts on artificial islands.

### [Are China's South China Sea Artificial Islands Militarily Significant and Useful?](#)

January 15, 2020, The Diplomat

China's artificial islands are a symbol of its revisionism in the South China Sea, but they're also militarily significant.

### [U.S. Military Attaché Visits Controversial Ream Naval Base](#)

January 15, 2020, Cambodia Daily

A United States military envoy in Cambodia visited Ream Naval Base in Preah Sihanouk province on Monday, a base that is surrounded in controversy for plans to allegedly install Chinese military and naval assets.

### [Philippines, China Hold Joint Maritime Drills in Manila](#)

January 15, 2020, Anadolu Agency

China and the Philippines conducted joint military exercises on "search and rescue and combating fire at sea" in the waters of Philippine's capital Manila, according to the Philippine Coast Guard.

### [China Coast Guard Marks First Visit to Philippines](#)

January 15, 2020, Nikkei Asian Review

A China Coast Guard vessel paid a friendly visit to the Philippines for the first time on Tuesday, as Beijing aggressively courts the Southeast Asian nation and downplays its maritime disputes in the region.

### [Chinese Delegates Cut South China Sea References From Resolution](#)

January 15, 2020, SMH

Chinese delegates at an international summit in Canberra have successfully removed references to the disputed South China Sea in a resolution promoting freedom of navigation in the region.

### [Legacies, Lessons And Lobsters: Indonesia's Maritime Policy In A Post-Susi World](#)

January 15, 2020, CSIS

One of the big changes in the second term of Indonesia's President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo was the departure in October 2019 of the popular minister for maritime affairs and fisheries, Susi Pudjiastuti.

### [Belt and Rail: New Vietnam-China Train Aims to Put Relations on Track](#)

January 15, 2020, The Interpreter

The Vietnamese government has proposed a rail project from Hai Phong through Hanoi to Lao Cai, on the border with China, for both freight and passenger trains, signifying new bilateral dynamics in their relationship.

### [Why Is China Pressing Indonesia Again Over Its Maritime Claims?](#)

January 16, 2020, RAND

China sparked a major maritime confrontation with Indonesia near the South China Sea last month when dozens of Chinese fishing vessels, along with a coast guard escort, entered waters off the Natuna Islands, which are within Jakarta's exclusive economic zone but are also claimed by China. Indonesian authorities responded swiftly, summoning China's ambassador on Dec. 30 to lodge a protest and subsequently dispatching warships and F-16 fighter jets to patrol the region.

### [Sea Robbery Incidents in Singapore Strait Hit 4-Year High](#)

January 16, 2020, CNA

Ships in the Singapore Strait were boarded by suspected robbers in 31 incidents in 2019 - a four-year high, according to a maritime information sharing centre on Wednesday (Jan 15). There were only 17 incidents from 2016 to 2018, although this peaked at 99 in 2015.

### [MMEA Operation Nets 124 Fishing Boats](#)

January 16, 2020, FMT News

One hundred and twenty-four vessels involving assets worth RM154 million have been seized during "Op Naga Barat", aimed at enforcing the nation's maritime laws and preventing foreign fishing boats from intruding into Malaysian waters.

### [Vietnam Prioritises Ways to Modernise its Navy](#)

January 17, 2020, Shephard Media

Vietnam is continually seeking to modernise its modestly equipped navy, and new amphibious warfare vessels and frigates are on the cards for the Vietnam People's Navy (VPN), as well as larger vessels for the Vietnam Coast Guard.

### [RMN's First Littoral Mission Ship Arrives in Malaysia](#)

January 17, 2020, Jane's Defence Weekly

The Royal Malaysian Navy's (RMN's) first warship made in China was officially welcomed at the Sepanggar naval base at Kota Kinabalu on 17 January.

### [Rohingya and Rakhine State Issues Still Foremost in ASEAN Discussions](#)

January 17, 2020, Malaysia Kini

Malaysia maintains its position that the perpetrators of the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar must be brought to justice and repatriation that is voluntary and dignified should take place as quickly as possible, said Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah.

### [Cambodia Imports Liquefied Natural Gas from China](#)

January 17, 2020, China.cn.org

Cambodian Natural Gas Co Ltd and Chinese firm CNOOC Gas & Power Group Co Ltd teamed up in importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) to distribute within Cambodia's market for the first time, an English-language daily newspaper reported on Thursday. A local company's officer said the cooperation is to import the LNG to supply demand in the local market, as the company focuses on hotels and restaurants in the first-step plan.

### [South China Sea Crisis: Warship Deployed as Tensions Erupt Between US and China](#)

January 17, 2020, Express.co.uk

China has reacted with anger after the US Navy sent a warship through the Taiwan Strait as tensions in the South China Sea continue to rise.

### [Beijing Sets Sights on mighty Mekong as Passage to South China Sea](#)

January 17, 2020, The Japan Times

Ninety-seven kilometres of rocks in Thai waters stand between Beijing and dominance over the Mekong, a mighty river that feeds millions as it threads south from the Tibetan Plateau through five countries before emptying into the South China Sea.

### [ASEAN Reaffirms International Law as Basis for Sovereignty in South China Sea](#)

January 18, 2020, The Jakarta Post

ASEAN's top diplomats have reaffirmed the need to respect international law amid concerns over tensions in the South China Sea, where Chinese vessels have repeatedly violated other countries' sovereign rights.

### [South China Sea: Indonesia's Natuna Sea Dilemma With China](#)

January 18, 2020, The Diplomat

Can Jakarta cope with Chinese coercion in the South China Sea?

### [This Is How China's Will Fight And Win A War In The South China Sea](#)

January 18, 2020, The National Interest

Globally, countries that hoped that they would never have to choose sides in a war between the U.S. and China found it was finally time to do so.

### [Chinese President Xi Jinping Wraps up Myanmar Visit with String of Infrastructure Deals, Including Strategic Indian Ocean Port](#)

January 18,2020, SCMP

Chinese President Xi Jinping wrapped up his visit to Myanmar on Saturday after signing multibillion-dollar infrastructure deals, including one for a strategically important port in the Indian Ocean. This investment and what both sides hailed as "new era" in relations offered a timely boost for Myanmar, which is facing increasing isolation from the West over its treatment of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

### [KD Keris Boosts Navy's East Armada Fleet](#)

January 18, 2020, Borneo Post Online

KD Keris, a littoral mission ship, is now based at the Royal Malaysian Navy East Armada base, making the total ships in operation at Sabah and Sarawak waters to 17 this year.

### [Is Singapore's New Naval Addition A Threat to China?](#)

January 19, 2020, The National Interest

On February 18, 2018, officials gathered to celebrate the launch of a new state-of-the-art submarine at a shipyard in Kiel, Germany. But unlike similar Type 212 submarines previously built there, the seventy-meter long diesel-submarine isn't destined to shadow Russian submarines in the cold waters of the Baltic Sea.

### [Recent Developments Surrounding the South China Sea](#)

January 19, 2020, Sacbee

A look at recent developments in the South China Sea, where China is pitted against smaller neighbours in multiple territorial disputes over islands, coral reefs and lagoons. The waters are a major shipping route for global commerce and are rich in fish and possible oil and gas reserves.

### [Insight: South China Sea: Indonesia Needs New Strategy](#)

January 20, 2020, The Jakarta Post

Indonesia can no longer brush aside the fact that it has become and will continue to be part of the problem. Chinese fishing boats and coast guard vessels will not stop intruding into Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), regardless of Indonesia's diplomatic and naval manoeuvre.

### [Indonesia Seeks Rafale Jets, Submarines, Warships In Defence Cooperation Deal With France](#)

January 20, 2020, Defense World.Net

Indonesia has advanced talks with France for the acquisition of Rafale aircraft, Scorpene submarines and Gowind corvettes which would figure in a potential defence cooperation deal between the two countries to be signed later this year.

### [In the Competition for Southeast Asia Influence, Japan is the Sleeper](#)

January 22, 2020, The Japan Times

A region once dismissed as a backwater of countries struggling to escape the legacy of colonialism, better known for its distractions than its dynamism, is now seen through a very different lens. It is the geographic nexus of the Indian and Pacific oceans, the literal heart of any Indo-Pacific concept.

### [What to Expect from a Closer Indonesia-France Defence Relationship](#)

January 22, 2020, Future Directions International

Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto visited France on 13 January to mark seventy years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. During his visit, Prabowo met French Defence Minister Florence Parly and discussed the prospects for strengthening defence ties. From that discussion, both parties agreed to negotiate a Defence Co-operation Agreement (DCA), which is expected to be signed later this year and will form the framework for future defence co-operation.

### [Indonesia's First Indigenously Assembled Submarine Concludes Trials](#)

January 23, 2020, Naval Technology

Indonesian state-owned shipbuilder PT PAL (Persero) has announced the successful conclusion of diving trials of the country's first indigenously assembled submarine, Alugoro 405.

### [India's Role in the Great-Power Struggle Over the Indo-Pacific Region](#)

January 23, 2020, The National Interest

India's foreign policy is being shaped into a new contour, right from Act East to Neighbourhood First, there is a new outlook for the traditionally globally reticent aspiring superpower India.

### [South China Sea Fury: How UK Could Scupper China's Plans After Brexit](#)

January 23, 2020, Express. Co.Uk

South China Sea tensions have seen the US and China clash in their efforts to gain control of lucrative shipping lanes and resource rich waters. However, with the UK leaving the EU and aiming to leave its own mark on the international stage, the region could become key for Britain's post Brexit success.

### [China-Indonesia South China Sea Incident Likely a Blip In a Long-Term Trend of Mutual Adjustment](#)

January 24, 2020, ASEAN Today

The more erratic its behaviour in the South China Sea, and the more it pushes its discredited nine-dash line claim, the more it frightens rival claimants and confirms the US narrative that it seeks to change the international order. To tamp down rising tensions, China needs to do the hard thinking and the difficult domestic and international diplomacy that goes into explaining its claims and behaviour.

### [ASEAN Outlook On Indo-Pacific: Seizing The Narrative? – Analysis](#)

January 24, 2020, Eurasia Review

The issuance of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) was one of the most important developments for ASEAN in 2019. However, it has been criticised for being yet another ineffectual ASEAN document. These criticisms, however, misunderstand the basis on which ASEAN operates.

### [Navy Chief Introductory Visit Highlights Thailand-Singapore Defense Relations](#)

January 24, 2020, The Diplomat

The interaction highlighted the security aspect of the relationship between the two Southeast Asian states and what lies ahead in 2020.

### [How Long Can Singapore Walk the tightrope Between the US and China?](#)

January 24, 2020, The Strategist

Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in May 2019, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong called on China and the United States to reach a strategic

accommodation amid their festering dispute over trade, technology and other issues.

### [Japan and Malaysia Team Up in Maritime Drill](#)

January 24, 2020, NHK World

Coast guard units from Japan and Malaysia have teamed up for the first time in a maritime exercise to tackle oil spills and piracy at sea.

### [The Top UN Court Ordered Myanmar to Protect the Rohingya. An Expert Explains What it Means.](#)

January 24, 2020, VOX

About 900,000 Rohingya have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh since August 2017, the result of a campaign of violence by the country's security forces against the Muslim minority group.

### [The Myanmar-China Pact is a Setback for India](#)

January 24, 2020, Asia Times

The state visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Myanmar on January 17-18, the first of its kind in 19 years, was a transformative event in regional politics from the perspective of China-Myanmar bilateral relations as well as regional security, something that should be of major concern for India.

### [Myanmar Defends Measures to Protect Rohingya](#)

January 24, 2020, Bangkok Post

Myanmar has already put in place measures to protect Rohingya Muslims, a spokesman for the ruling party said on Friday, shrugging off an order from the International Court of Justice to stop "genocidal" acts against the ethnic minority.

### [Duterte Wary of US Role in South China Sea Dispute](#)

January 25, 2020, Inquirer.Net

President Duterte is not just afraid that a war in the South China Sea would crush the country—he's also wary that American troops would take advantage and the conflict would spiral out of control.

### [USS Montgomery Conducts First 2020 FONOP in South China Sea](#)

January 28, 2020, USNI News

Littoral Combat Ship USS Montgomery (LCS-8) conducted the first freedom of navigation operation of the year through waters near the Spratly Islands, according to this report from the United States Naval Institute.

### [Beijing Accuses US of 'Deliberate Provocations' in South China Sea as Warship Passes Spratly Islands](#)

January 28, 2020, SCMP

PLA Southern Theatre Command spokesman said USS Montgomery harboured 'evil intentions' on its Lunar New Year voyage into contested waters. The US 7th Fleet says the warship challenged restrictions imposed by China, Vietnam and Taiwan.

### [U.S. Navy Sails Warship Near Disputed Islands In South China Sea for First Time In 2020](#)

January 28, 2020, Japan Times

The U.S. Navy said Tuesday that it had sailed a warship near the contested Spratly Islands in the South China Sea – home to fortified islands built by China – on Saturday, in what was believed to be its first freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) of 2020.

### [What's Next for Vietnam's Maritime Militia?](#)

January 28, 2020, The Diplomat

Vietnam's development of so-called maritime militias continues to surface in the headlines within its wider range of capabilities.

### [Forging Consensus in the South China Sea](#)

January 28, 2020, The Interpreter

A less contested and somewhat united Southeast Asian front would be more diplomatically difficult for Beijing to divide and conquer.

### [Vietnam, Under Increasing Pressure From China, Mulls a Shift Into America's Orbit](#)

January 30, 2020, WPR

In a major new defence white paper, its first in 10 years, Vietnam has begun signalling that it could abandon its long-standing foreign policy strategy of hedging between major powers like China and the United States and move more definitively into Washington's orbit.



## EAST ASIA

### *9. Official Statements and Press Releases*

#### [USS America, JS Kunisaki Operate in East China Sea](#)

January 14, 2020, US Indo-Pacific Command

The amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force amphibious transport dock ship JS Kunisaki (LST 4003) operated together in the East China Sea on January 13. During the exercise, the two ships conducted communication and manoeuvring drills, personnel exchanges, and a flight operations demonstration.

#### [ROK-U.S.-Japan Foreign Ministerial Meeting](#)

January 15, 2020, South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs

South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang, Kyung-wha had a meeting with United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Toshimitsu Motegi on January 14, and exchanged views on ways for the three countries to work together on the North Korean nuclear issue, as well as the developments in Northeast Asia and the current situation in the Middle East.

#### [Joint Statement on The Sixtieth Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America](#)

January 17, 2020, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

On the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan and the United States' signing of a Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, a joint statement was issued, which highlighted the role that this alliance has played in ensuring the peace and security of the countries, while realising a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific through regional security cooperation.

#### [Foreign Policy Speech by Foreign Minister Motegi to the 201st Session of the Diet](#)

January 20, 2020, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Addressing the 201<sup>st</sup> session of the Diet, Foreign Minister Motegi attempted to outline Japan's foreign policy. He stressed upon the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" vision, which he said is spreading from the United States to Australia

and India, as well as ASEAN and Europe. He also emphasised the roles that Japan and China play in the security architecture of Asia and the world.

[Policy Speech by the Prime Minister to the 201st Session of the Diet](#)

January 20, 2020, Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet

On January 20, 2020, the Prime Minister delivered a policy speech to the 201st Session of the Diet during the plenary sessions of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, where he discussed a 'new era' for Japan's diplomacy.

[U.S. Marines, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force begin Exercise Forest Light Western Army](#)

January 21, 2020, US Indo-Pacific Command

More than 145 Okinawa-based U.S. Marines with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit joined around 500 Japan Ground Self-Defense Force service members for bilateral training exercise Forest Light Western Army Jan. 18 – 31, 2020, in Kyushu, Japan. The exercise comprised field training events to include basic infantry skills training, vertical assaults integrated with MV-22B Osprey flight operations, and combined-arms operations.

[US, Japan Launch Exercise Northern Viper](#)

January 27, 2020, US Indo-Pacific Command

Japan and U.S. armed forces will conduct training exercise Northern Viper at Hokudaien and Yausubetsu Training Areas in Japan from January 26 to February 08, 2020. The forces will conduct a bilateral, combined arms exercise and live-fire training in conjunction with ground and aviation units.

## ***10. Media Discourse and Analyses***

[In East China Sea, Beijing plays long game](#)

December 26, 2019, Asia Times

The article discusses China's long-term strategy to establish and maintain dominance in the East China Sea.

[印太2030：多算胜·少算不胜·而况于无算乎？](#) (Indo-Pacific in 2030: Prospects and Challenges)

December 30, 2019, Huanqiu Shibao

By 2030, the Supra-region may become the centre of the world's power struggle, both as a place for global powers to gather together and as a stage for struggles among nations.

[Total Competition: China's Challenge in the South China Sea](#)

January 2020, Centre for a New American Security

The report delves into China's Total Competition Strategy, and its Political warfare campaign in the South China Sea.

[East Asia's Alliances Are Falling Apart](#)

January 03, 2020, Foreign Policy

The article discusses the state of diplomatic alliances in Northeast Asia, and the effects of the diplomatic tensions between Japan and South Korea. The timing and pace of tensions between Japan and South Korea involves multiple disputes concerning past agreements, trade, and security.

[印度版“印太”冲击美战略意图](#) (Indian version of the Indo-Pacific stalls the US Strategic Intent)

January 04, 2020, Huanqiu Shibao

At the "Indian Ocean Dialogue" forum last month, Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar pointed out that the "Indo-Pacific" is an open, free and inclusive platform for cooperation, and its geographical scope includes the Western Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. This explanation is obviously not in sync with the US version of the "Indo-Pacific Strategy".

[Foreign Minister's First ASEAN Voyage Spotlights Japan-Southeast Asia Relations in the Indo-Pacific](#)

January 07, 2020, The Diplomat

Japan's Foreign Minister embarked on his first visit to Southeast Asia since he took office in 2019. His four-country tour sought to highlight the importance of Southeast Asia's role both in Japan's own foreign policy as well as its vision for the Indo-Pacific.

### [Tsai Landslide Risks China Cranking Up Pressure on Taiwan](#)

January 12, 2020, Nikkei Asian Review

Tsai Ing-wen's sweeping victory in Taiwan's presidential elections sends a strong message to Beijing that a majority of Taiwanese no longer buy the "1992 consensus" -- an ambiguous understanding held by both Beijing and the opposition Kuomintang.

### [China's Navy Commissions Biggest And 'Most Powerful' Surface Warship](#)

January 12, 2020, Japan Times

China's navy commissioned its biggest and most advanced surface warship yet, the guided-missile destroyer Nanchang, in the port city of Qingdao. The commissioning of its first 10,000-ton-class Type 055 destroyer, which is expected to accompany aircraft carriers in battle groups, is a step forward as Beijing seeks to operate farther from its shores and punch farther into the western Pacific.

### [Be Wary of US Move to Stir Up Trouble in South China Sea](#)

January 14, 2020, Global Times

The beginning of 2020 has seen turbulence in the South China Sea. US Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said that by 2021 "the Army will position a multi-domain task force in the Indo-Pacific" and will "deploy a second one" in 2022. In the face of China as "America's strategic threat," the "disposition of the capability" could be the "Senkakus" - China's Diaoyu Islands - or "somewhere in the South China Sea."

### [Toward an Indo-Pacific Concert of Democracies](#)

January 14, 2020, The Japan Times

if democratic powers leverage their bilateral and trilateral partnerships to generate progress toward such a concert of democracies, the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific may be achievable in the years ahead.

### [US, Japan Hold Naval Exercise in East China Sea](#)

January 15, 2020, The Diplomat

Japan and the United States conducted a day-long naval exercise in the East China Sea on January 13. The exercise involved the US Navy's amphibious assault ship USS America, designated Landing Helicopter Assault (LHA) 6, and the Japan Maritime Self Defence Force Oosumi-class amphibious transport dock ship JS Kunisaki.

### [Can India and Indonesia Team Up to Counter China in the Indo-Pacific?](#)

January 17, 2020, South China Morning Post

A partnership between India and Indonesia can result in a strong, united front. Owing to their locations, economic and population sizes, both are natural, emerging leaders in the Indo-Pacific. As non-US allies and traditionally non-aligned states, they have greater legitimacy at the helm than other contenders such as the US, China or Japan.

### [China says Followed, Monitored U.S. Warship in Taiwan Strait](#)

January 17, 2020, Reuters

Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said on Friday said that China's military closely followed and monitored a U.S. warship that sailed through the Taiwan Strait, foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

### [Japan's Security Choices in an Uncertain East Asia](#)

January 17, 2020, The Diplomat

What kind of Japan will the region have to deal with in the coming decades?

### [In Policy Speech, Abe Vows to Establish 'New Era of Japanese Diplomacy'](#)

January 20, 2020, The Japan Times

In a speech before the Diet on January 20, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared 2020 a "crucial year to establish a new era of Japanese diplomacy", and promised to tackle international issues head on.

### [The State of the Japan-U.S. Alliance at 60](#)

January 20, 2020, The Japan Times

The article is a commentary on US-Japan relations in the wake of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Japan-U.S. Mutual Security Treaty.

### [South China Sea: Japan Vows to Broach 'Outstanding Issues' with China Ahead of Xi's Visit](#)

January 20, 2020, Express. Co.Uk

Foreign minister Toshimitsu Motegi made the promise during a speech laying out the Japanese government's foreign policy at the start of this year's regular Diet session. Mr Motegi said both countries "share a great responsibility to ensure the peace and prosperity of Asia and the world". He added Tokyo and Beijing should hold regular high-level dialogue and step up exchanges and cooperation in various fields.

### [South Korea to Deploy Anti-Piracy Unit to Strait of Hormuz](#)

January 21, 2020, Al Jazeera

South Korea's military has said it plans to expand the deployment of an anti-piracy unit now operating off the coast of Africa to the area around the Strait of Hormuz after the United States pressed for help to guard oil tankers.

### [Japan and the Indo-Pacific: From Strategy to Vision](#)

January 22, 2020, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

The article analyses the shift from Japan's 'free and open Indo-Pacific' from a strategy to a vision, and explores the three domains under which the principles of this vision have been summarised.

### [Japan Monitoring Seoul's 'Response' amid Middle East Deployment](#)

January 22, 2020, UPI

Japan said it would cooperate with "nations with shared objectives" and that it is carefully monitoring statements from the South Korean government after both countries deployed troops to maritime areas of the Middle East.

### [In an Uncertain East Asia, Japan's Security Choices Face Balancing Act Between U.S. and Neighbours](#)

January 22, 2020, Japan Times

As power distribution in the regional order changes with intensifying Sino-U.S. strategic competition, Japan remains at the front line of East Asian security, and is compelled to revisit its strategic options as it navigates the most severe security environment in its post-war history.

### [China Has Honiara Onside But Hasn't Yet Won Over Solomon Islands](#)

January 23, 2020, The Lowy Institute

In September, the Solomon Islands' government severed its 36-year diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and switched to the People's Republic of China (China). In the months since, dissenting voices have kept bubbling up. On November 26, the Solomon Islands Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee submitted a report damning the switch, calling for the government to instead deepen ties with Taiwan.

## [U.S. Diplomat Says Japan Is 'Not A Dependent,' Urges Greater Security Contribution](#)

January 25, 2020, Japan Times

A senior U.S. State Department official said that Japan is among the countries that should contribute greater funding to its security alliance with Washington, saying Tokyo is “not a dependent” but an “ally.”

## [Japan's North Korea Challenge in 2020](#)

January 25, 2020, East Asia Forum

Earlier this year, North Korea announced a shift toward a more hard-line foreign policy approach, declaring that it was no longer bound by the moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests it has maintained for two years. Japan could deal with this problem by closely coordinating its policies with its ally, the United States and its neighbour, South Korea. But this cooperation is facing obstacles, with more challenges possibly on the way.

## [Korean Peninsula Peace Prospects Unravelling in 2020](#)

January 25, 2020, East Asia Forum

A confluence of factors suggested that the dangerous confrontation between the two Koreas, and between North Korea and the United States, may ease significantly. Factors include a progressive government in South Korea reaching out to the North, a young leader in North Korea focussed on strengthening his country's economy and a disruptive US president motivated to discuss directly with the North Korean leader.

## SOUTH WESTERN PACIFIC

### *11. Official Statements and Press Releases*

#### [Australia-Japan Ministerial Economic Dialogue](#)

January 10, 2020, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The Australia-Japan Ministerial Economic Dialogue saw Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, and the Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry coming together to discuss their Strategic Partnership, and its impact on the future prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region.

#### [Australian Navy Opens New Warfighting Agency](#)

January 21, 2020, Australian Government Department of Defence

The Royal Australian Navy has opened a centralised warfighting agency, designed to enhance Navy's lethality in times of conflict. The Maritime Warfare Centre merges the Royal Australian Navy Test and Evaluation Authority (RANTEA) and Australian Maritime Warfare Centre (AMWC) into a centralised body to support current and future capabilities to fight at sea.

#### [Commander Task Force-72 Participates in Sea Dragon Exercise](#)

January 22, 2020, US Indo-Pacific Command

The U.S. Navy and its maritime partners kicked off operations for the multilateral exercise Sea Dragon 2020 on Jan 20. Maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft from Combined Task Force 72 will train with units from the U.S., Royal Australian Air Force, the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, the Republic of Korea Navy and the Royal New Zealand Navy.

#### [USS Texas Visits Western Australia during Regional Patrol](#)

January 30, 2020, US Indo-Pacific Command

The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Texas (SSN 775) arrived at HMAS Stirling, on Australia's Indian Ocean coast on January 30 for a scheduled port visit. Texas is visiting HMAS Stirling as part of their routine patrol in the Indo-Pacific to demonstrate the U.S. Navy's ongoing commitment to theatre security cooperation and friendship with partner navies.



## *12. Media Discourse and Analyses*

### [Is Australia's Indo-Pacific Strategy An Illusion?](#)

January 01, 2020, Chatham House

The article analyses Australia's 'dependent ally' tradition and 'middle power' approach with respect to its Indo-Pacific Policy, given that Australia has been among the most prominent advocates of the Indo-Pacific concept.

### [Solomon Islands: A Pacific Linchpin Is Pulled](#)

January 03, 2020, The Diplomat

The article analyses the implications of nations in the Pacific such as the Solomon Islands and Kiribati ending their diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and switching allegiance in favour of China.

### [China Trade Questions Confound Australia's Indo-Pacific Shift](#)

January 05, 2020, East Asia Forum

The article discusses Australia's role in the Indo-Pacific, while also highlighting its significantly larger trade volume with China than with any other country in the Indo Pacific. It seeks to highlight future trends in the way that Australia's policy may evolve with respect to the region.

### [Australia's New Strategic Geography](#)

January 13, 2020, The Lowy Institute

The article discusses changes in Australia's strategic geography owing to technological advancements, which has rendered its treasured "sea-air gap" obsolete.

### [Climate Change Brings Geopolitical Complications for Australia](#)

January 16, 2020, The Diplomat

This article discusses the consequences that climate change might have on the geopolitical future of Australia, as well as certain implications of the phenomenon in the Indo-Pacific.

### [Pacific Development Outlook for 2020](#)

January 21, 2020, The Lowy Institute

The article discusses the development prospects for Pacific states in 2020, which are likely to be influenced by a number of factors such as national elections in five countries, and independence referendums in Chuuk in Micronesia as well as New Caledonia.

### [Singapore and New Zealand begin New Decade with Enhanced Partnership](#)

January 22, 2020, Future Directions International

Confirming that there is still an appetite for free trade agreements in the wider Indo-Pacific region, the New Zealand-Singapore Enhanced Partnership entered into force on January 01, 2020.

### [Race To Exploit The World's Seabed Set To Wreak Havoc On Marine Life](#)

January 25, 2020, The Guardian

New research warns that 'blue acceleration' – a global goldrush to claim the ocean floor – is already impacting on the environment. The process of seabed grabbing has been adopted by small island states seeking to become large ocean states by doing so. Examples of the conflicts that could ensue because of the blue acceleration include the disruption of key fish stocks by drilling for gas or oil offshore; pipelines that prevent trawl fishing; and offshore wind farms that disturb tourism.



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