



AMERICA'S NEW "INTEGRATED DETERRENCE" STRATEGY FOR THE INDO-PACIFIC

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While delivering the 40th Fullerton lecture, organized by the International Institute of Strategic Studies, Singapore, on July 27, the U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin proposed a new initiative called "integrated deterrence" for the Indo-Pacific, ostensibly to counter China. Austin stated that the new mechanism involves the US working with allies and partners "to deter coercion and aggression across the spectrum of conflict, including in the so-called gray zone that falls below the threshold of an all-out war". According to Austin, the "integrated deterrence" will have "military and nonmilitary tools", "all tailored to a region's security landscape and in growing partnership with our friends." "Integrated deterrence is about using existing capabilities and building new ones, and deploying them all in new and networked ways," he added. He explained that "integrated deterrence" "includes all domains, including the new ones of space and cyberspace".

The 'military tool' that the Defense Secretary has alluded to are the capabilities the US and its allies intend to enhance on airpower and long range strike capabilities. US has been demanding for quite some time that the allies and partners should share the burden for their security, instead of relying on US power in the region.

Military Tool

The 'military tool' that the Defense Secretary has alluded to are the capabilities the US and its allies intend to enhance on airpower and long range strike capabilities. US has been demanding for quite some time that the allies and partners should share the burden for their security, instead of relying on US power in the region. Many of them see China as the major threat to their security.

Singapore is strengthening its Air Force and has decided to purchase 12 Lockheed Martin F-35B Joint Strike Fighters, it is replacing the F-16C/D fighter jet, and the F-35B delivery will start from 2030.¹ The reason for Singapore's selecting of F-35B is its short-take-off and landing (VTOL) capability that allows it to operate with little to no airstrip. Even though Singapore doesn't face any direct threat from China, it looks to enhance its deterrent capability, amid the worsening security scenario in the South China Sea.

'Non-Military Tools' are the diplomatic coalition mechanisms that the US intends to strengthen in the Indo-Pacific to contain China. Major 'Non-Military Tools' are the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), US-led Covid diplomacy initiative, and an alliance of 'techno-democracies'.

Japan, a major US ally and a regional deterrent power against China, is also enhancing its airpower to withstand Chinese belligerence by inducting 105 F 35 (63 F-35As, 42s F-35Bs) with the total cost of \$23 billion, and the delivery is expected to begin in 2024.² The VTOL F-35Bs would be operating with the Maritime Self-Defence Force's 'helicopter carrier' JS Kaga and will be based at Air Self-Defence Force's Nyutabaru Air Base in southern Miyazaki Prefecture.³ The airfield is about 1,030km northeast of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. China in 2012 unilaterally declared Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea and has occasionally been involved in scrambling with Japanese fighters.⁴

Another US partner Australia is also strengthening its airpower, amid the ongoing US-China tussle and China's militarisation of the South China Sea. As an original member of the US-led consortium of countries formed in 2002 for developing the F35 Joint Strike Fighter, Australia is expected to receive a total of 72 advanced F35A for \$17 billion. The first batch of two jets inducted into the Australian Air Force in December 2018.⁵ All 72 aircraft will be delivered by 2023, by the time Australia's existing F/A-18A/B 'Classic' Hornets, inducted in 1985, would retire from the service. Australia is also vying for long range B-21 stealth bomber, currently under development in the US and is expected to enter service later this decade.⁶ The F-35A has an effective combat radius of about 1,000 kilometres, which can be boosted to about 1,500 kilometres with aerial refuelling, while China's southern naval base Hainan is around 4500 kilometres away from Australia. Australia is expected to spend \$270 billion in the next decade for defence, which include upgrading its existing bases and inducting long-range strike capabilities.⁷

PDI and Long Range Strike Capabilities

In order to maintain a competitive edge over China in the theatre, the Pentagon has initiated Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI), with a total of \$27.7 billion from FY 2023 through FY 2027.⁸ A major focus of the PDI is developing long range strike capabilities, which include B-21 Long Range Strike Bomber, Long-Range Stand-Off (LRSO) Missile, and Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD).⁹

Under the PDI, the US seeks to enhance its Joint Force lethality, with long-range strike capability and capacity. To make the joint forces operation more effective, Pentagon has planned to develop and field multi-service, multi-domain offensive Long Range Fires, including advanced ground-based long-range precision strike systems.¹⁰ In its report submitted to the US Congress in April 2021 for the fiscal years 2022-2026, US Indo-Pacific Command called for the requirement of “highly survivable, precision-strike networks along the First Island Chain, and increased quantities of allied ground-based weapons.” The report suggested that “these networks require support from naval, air, electronic warfare, space, cyber, and over-the-horizon radar capabilities.”¹¹ It also stated that these networks are operationally decentralized and geographically dispersed along the archipelagos of the Western Pacific to deter and defend, by reversing any anti-access and aerial-denial (A2/AD) capabilities intended to limit US’ freedom of action or access to vital waterways and airspace. Accordingly, each Service is developing capabilities consistent with their operating concepts in order to provide employment of offensive weapons, including the Navy’s Maritime Strike Tomahawk, the Air Force’s Joint Air-Surface Standoff Missile with Extended Range (JASSM-ER), the Army’s Cross Domain Army Tactical Missile System (CD-ATACMS), and the Marine Corps’ Naval Strike Missile for High Mobility Artillery System (HIMARS).¹² Besides, US Army has collaborated with Lockheed Martin and others for developing a ground-launched hypersonic weapon battery, with a glide body for the missile, which will be ready for trial by September.¹³ The US Army has already conducted the first test of the Common-Hypersonic Glide Body, or C-HGB, in March 2020 from the Pacific Missile Range Facility in Kauai, Hawaii, and hit its target within 6 inches.¹⁴ The US strategy is to protect its bases and stations located in the western Pacific, while pre-emptively destroying China’s command and control systems as well as the military installations located in the coastal areas which could cripple China’s ability to retaliate against the US.

Currently, China is dependent on foreign vendors from two to eighty percent for semiconductor chips in various electronics industries, and major sources of import are the US, South Korea, and Japan. For instance, in 5G and other leading sectors, critical electronic chips are coming from the US. While the US trade restrictions have hurt China’s leading tech-companies such as Huawei, Washington wants others to follow suit.

‘Non-Military Tool’

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but has now graduated to the level of a summit meeting and the first 'Quad summit' is expected in September in Washington.¹⁵ Under the Quad, navies of the member countries are collaborating and the latest joint exercise 'Malabar 21' is being held off Guam from August 21-29.¹⁶

Covid Diplomacy is focused more towards Southeast Asia, where China has made great inroads through its vaccine diplomacy and economic assistance. With the 'China+1' strategy aimed to overcome US trade restrictions on Chinese companies, China has shifted some of its export oriented manufacturing units to Southeast Asia to maintain its US and European market intact.¹⁷ With this, Southeast Asian economies are being escaped from the Covid-19 induced economic pain and became a key production hub of the global supply chain. To counter the ASEAN region from being Chinese vassal states, the Biden administration is reaching out to the region and promoting cooperation on the coronavirus pandemic. The US has already donated vaccines worth 40 million doses to countries of the region such as Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, and Vietnam. The region would be getting more from the US as it has committed to delivering 500 million more doses worldwide over the next year.¹⁸

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Techno-Democracies is a group of democratic countries that are the leaders of semiconductor chip manufacturers such as the US, Japan, and South Korea. The US wants them to come together to counter the rapid rise of China as a technology superpower.¹⁹ The Biden administration believes combined efforts would thwart Beijing's ambition of becoming a global leader in technology by 2035.²⁰ China has made great strides in semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and different advances in modern technologies. China's recent policy initiatives are aimed at dominating the world in new sectors such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, batteries, electric vehicles, and so on.²¹ In its 14th Five Year Plan (2021–25), China sets an ambitious target to become a world-leading innovator by 2035, making it self-reliance and self-improvement in science and technology, and for that Beijing plans to spend at least 7 per cent every year of its plan outlay for research and development (R&D) between 2021 and 2025.²² Similarly, amid the US-China decoupling, it adopted a 'dual circulation' strategy to reduce its dependence on imports of critical components and to convert China into a major exporter of electronic chips.²³ Currently, China is dependent on foreign vendors from two to eighty percent for semiconductor chips in various electronics industries, and major sources of import are the US, South Korea, and Japan. For instance, in 5G and other leading sectors, critical electronic chips are coming from the US. While the US trade restrictions have hurt China's leading tech-companies such as Huawei, Washington wants others to follow suit.

India and the Integrated Deterrence

Even though India doesn't use any offensive systems of the US as most of the systems that India bought from the US are for logistic support for defence forces or for the purpose of humanitarian assistance, India is an important partner in the 'integrated deterrence' strategy of the US. India has been given the status of 'lynchpin' in the US' Indo

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Pacific- strategy and is a non-NATO security partner. Indeed, there has been a bipartisan consensus in Washington on strengthening strategic partnership with India to make the US' Indo-Pacific strategy more effective. India is not only the largest military power after China in the region but also the only country other than China having an aircraft carrier. India is also having close defence cooperation with the Quad members as well as with other US partners in the region such as Singapore, Vietnam, the Philippines, and South Korea. Vietnam and the Philippines have evinced interest to buy Brahmos missile from India to defend their territory from the Chinese threat. India has been providing technical assistance to the Air Force personnel of some of these countries, which will continue to grow in the future. Importantly, with the technical assistance of the US, India, Japan and Australia can consider developing joint systems that could be sold to regional countries, make the cooperation deeper and the deterrence stronger.

Conclusion

Integrated Deterrence is a new effort of the US to contain China. The US seeks to build strong deterrence against China with the support of its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. On the one hand, the US needs to protect its assets in the region and reassure its allies and partners. On the other hand, it wants to ensure that the Chinese threat should not reach American soil. A major concern of the US, however, is China's advancements in new technologies which could be utilised for reaching parity with the US military. Most of the Chinese companies involved in innovative technology sectors are connected with the state and the military, working with large funding from the government. Preventing them access to critical technology from foreign vendors is seen as a way to counter China's ambition of a 21st century military-cum-technology superpower. So, “integrated deterrence” is a multifunctional and multinational effort to maintain US leadership in the Indo-Pacific region and to prevent China's ambition of becoming a superpower by the middle of the 21st Century. Other major observations of the study are as follows :

- The US in recent times has been bringing more airpower into the Indo-Pacific than the naval assets of the erstwhile 'pivot'.
- Long range strike capabilities are going to be the mainstay of US deterrence against China in the western Pacific.

- The US strategy is to deny China from getting dominance inside the ‘first island chain’ in a conflict, while dominating all domains outside the first island chain.
- Washington expects that with the combined capabilities of its allies and partners, it can maintain a competitive edge over China.

Notes:

¹ Mike Yeo, “How the F-35 could be a game-changer for Singapore,” *Defence News*, February 10, 2020. <https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/singapore-airshow/2020/02/11/how-the-f-35-could-be-a-game-changer-for-singapore/>. Accessed on August 2, 2021.

² “Japan to deploy F-35B stealth fighters from 2024 to step up defence of East China Sea islands”, *South China Morning Post*, April 6, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3128378/japan-deploy-f-35b-stealth-fighters-2024-step-defence-east-china>. Accessed on August 4, 2021.

³ Ibid

⁴ “Japan’s total number of fighter jet scrambles reaches 30,000”, *The Japan Times*, Jul 21, 2021. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/07/21/national/fighter-jet-scrambles/>. Accessed on August 2, 2021.

⁵ Peter Layton, “Australia’s F-35s: Lessons from a problematic purchase,” *The Interpreter*, November 11, 2019. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australia-s-f-35s-lessons-from-problematic-purchase>. Accessed on July 25, 2021.

⁶ Marcus Hellyer, “B-21 bomber could be Australia’s best long-range strike option”, *The Strategist*, May 24, 2021. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/b-21-bomber-could-be-australias-best-long-range-strike-option/>. Accessed on July 30, 2021.

⁷ “Australia to spend \$270b building larger military to prepare for ‘poorer, more dangerous’ world and rise of China” ABC News, July 1, 2020. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-30/australia-unveils-10-year-defence-strategy/12408232>. Accessed on August 8, 2021.

⁸ ‘William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021’(NDAA FY 2021), December 15, 2020. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr6395/text>. Accessed on August 13, 2021.

⁹ US Department of Defense, “President’s Fiscal Year 2022 Defense Budget”, May 28, 2021. <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2638711/the-department-of-defense-releases-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2022-defense-budg/>. Accessed on July 28, 2021.

¹⁰ US Department of Defense, “President’s Fiscal Year 2022 Defense Budget”, May 28, 2021. <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2638711/the-department-of-defense-releases-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2022-defense-budg/>. Accessed on August 12, 2021.

¹¹ “U . S. Indo- Pacific Command’ s (USINDOPACOM) Investment Plan for Implementing the National Defense Strategy Fiscal Years 2022-2026”. <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/6864-national-defense-strategy-summ/8851517f5e10106bc3b1/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>. Accessed on August 16, 2021.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jen Judson, “US Army begins equipping first unit with hypersonic capability”, *Defence News*, February 9, 2021. <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2021/02/09/us-army-begins-equipping-first-unit-with-hypersonic-capability/>. Accessed on August 2, 2021.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “U.S. eyes September for first in-person ‘Quad’ summit”, *The Japan Times*, July 18, 2021. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/07/18/national/politics-diplomacy/quad-in-person-meeting-september/>. Accessed on August 8, 2021.

¹⁶ “Quad special forces to wargame off Guam in Indo-Pacific”, *Hindustan Times*, August 3, 2021. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/quad-special-forces-to-wargame-off-guam-in-indopacific-101627986615822.html>. Accessed on August 10, 2021.

¹⁷ Frederic Neumann, “As production shifts from China to ASEAN, Asia’s supply chains remain stronger than ever”, *South China Morning Post*, June 7, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3135941/production-shifts-china-asean-asias-supply-chains-remain-stronger>. Accessed on August 11, 2021.

¹⁸ Mike Yeo, “Pentagon chief calls for new regional order in Indo-Pacific”, *Defence News*, July 27, 2021. <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2021/07/27/pentagon-chief-calls-for-new-regional-order-in-indo-pacific/>. Accessed on August 4, 2021.

¹⁹ Tian He, “Biden looks to techno-alliances to chip in on semiconductors”, *East Asia Forum*, July 28, 2021. https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/07/28/biden-looks-to-techno-alliances-to-chip-in-on-semiconductors/?utm_source=subscribe2&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=postnotify&utm_id=372512&utm_title=Biden%20looks%20to%20techno-alliances%20to%20chip%20in%20on%20semiconductors. Accessed on July 30, 2021.

²⁰ Bob Davis, “U.S. Enlists Allies to Counter China’s Technology Push”, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 2021. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-enlists-allies-to-counter-chinas-technology-push-11614524400>. Accessed on August 1, 2021.

²¹ Mark Leonard, “The New China Shock”, *Project Syndicate*, March 31, 2021. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-new-china-shock-by-mark-leonard-2021-03>. Accessed on August 2, 2021.

²² Yutao Sun, “China’s plan to become a world-leading technology force”, *East Asia Forum*, May 8, 2021. https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/05/08/chinas-plan-to-become-a-world-leading-technology-force/?utm_source=subscribe2&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=postnotify&utm_id=350800&utm_title=China%26rsquo%3Bs%20plan%20to%20become%20a%20world-leading%20technology%20force. Accessed on August 20, 2021.

²³ Yukon Huang, “Two sessions’ 2021: how China can fine-tune its dual circulation strategy to boost economic growth”, *South China Morning Post*, March 4, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3123741/two-sessions-2021-how-china-can-fine-tune-its-dual-circulation>. Accessed on August 7, 2021.



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