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A Monthly Newsletter on Security and Strategic Issues on Indo-Pacific Region from Centre for Air Power Studies

From the Editor's Desk

This month witnessed several important visits and summits relating to the Indo-Pacific region and global arena. The NATO Vilnius Summit held on July 11-12 focused on the war in Ukraine and marked growing European concern about China's stated ambitions and coercive policies. It noted that developments in the Indo-Pacific directly affect Euro-Atlantic security and resolved to strengthen cooperation with Asia-Pacific partners (AP4) to address shared security challenges. Germany unveiled its China strategy on July 13. The strategy included Germany's 2020 Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific. It was explicit about growing concerns with China's actions. Australia's flagship regional engagement activity, Indo-Pacific Endeavour (IPE) 2023, began in India and would visit 14 countries over a four-month period.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Modi Visited France from July 13-14 and his trip commemorated 25 years of partnership with India's first strategic partner and set out an ambitious vision for the next 25 years. PM Modi also visited the UAE on July 15 which signalled increased levels of mutual comfort and a thrust to connect Arab finance and energy to India's growth.

Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi Visited India and met External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar. They held the 15th Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue and also expressed their commitment to secure a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Japan has also unveiled its 2023 Defence White Paper wherein, China's threat is explicitly mentioned. The 33rd Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) 2023 meeting took place on July 29, with the 'principals' expressing satisfaction at the progress in upgrading of US force posture in Australia, capability development cooperation and regional security integration.

Jai Hind

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AUKUS, Advanced Capabilities and Defense Integration in the Indo-Pacific

Read more about it at :-

<https://isdpc.eu/content/uploads/2023/07/Brief-July-25-AUKUS-3.pdf>

QUOTE

"India is 'indispensable' in ensuring free and open Indo-Pacific"

- Fumio Kishida

Japan's Prime Minister

Opinions/Review/Expert View

India is Becoming a Power in Southeast Asia

Source: Derek Grossman, Rand

https://www.rand.org/blog/2023/07/india-is-becoming-a-power-in-southeast-asia.html?utm_campaign=&utm_content=1689090575&utm_medium=rand_social&utm_source=twitter 10 July 2023



India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh (L) and Vietnam's Defence Minister General Phan Van Giang (R) shake hands during a ceremonial reception in New Delhi, India, June 19, 2023

Photo by Kabir Jhangiani via Reuters Connect

The moment has been long in coming, but India is turning into a strategic actor in Southeast Asia. Amid a flurry of regional diplomacy, India has sealed an arms deal with Vietnam, sided with the Philippines over China on sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, and enhanced defense cooperation with Indonesia. It is balance-of-power politics worthy of an international relations textbook: Even though most Southeast Asian governments have long made it their mantra not to choose geopolitical sides, China's aggressive posture in and around the South China Sea is driving India and its partners in the region together. As yet, none of these relationships are on the level of alliances or include a serious force deployment component, but the trend is clear. And even though the United States and its Asian treaty

China's aggressive posture in and around the South China Sea is driving India and its partners in the region together.

allies are not involved, India's moves raise the tantalizing possibility that it will increasingly complement the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China in the coming years.

India's strategic outreach had its humble beginnings in 1991, when New Delhi announced the Look East policy—a recognition of the geostrategic significance of Southeast Asia to Indian security. More a vision than a concrete set of measures, Look East was followed by the Act East policy in 2014, when India began to proactively engage with the region to prevent it from succumbing to Chinese domination. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who first announced Act East, India in recent years has steadily strengthened key partnerships across Southeast Asia, particularly with countries along the maritime rim of the Indo-Pacific. These moves are clearly designed to cooperate with Southeast

Asian partners who also seek to maintain the rules-based international order and norms of behavior in the face of rising Chinese assertiveness in the region.

Last month, Vietnamese Defense Minister Phan Van Giang visited his Indian counterpart, Rajnath Singh, in New Delhi and announced that India would transfer a missile corvette to the Vietnamese Navy to enhance maritime security. The two sides also reportedly discussed stepped-up training for Vietnamese military personnel operating submarines and fighter jets, as well as cooperation on cybersecurity and electronic warfare. There is also ongoing speculation that Vietnam may soon purchase India's BrahMos cruise

missile, which is co-produced with Russia and could complicate Chinese military operations in disputed seas. To strengthen relations further, Hanoi and New Delhi have also been considering a potential trade deal.

These recent moves reinforce the “comprehensive strategic partnership” India and Vietnam have maintained since Modi's 2016 visit to Vietnam. Hanoi maintains just four partnerships at this highest of levels—with China, India, Russia, and most recently South Korea. That underscores the high strategic value Hanoi places on New Delhi. By comparison, the United States is only a “comprehensive partner” for Vietnam, two levels below India's status. Washington has struggled to raise the partnership.

The Philippines, a U.S. treaty ally, is steadily expanding and deepening its security partnership with India as well. Late last month, Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo visited New Delhi and met with his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar. For the first time, India recognized the legitimacy of the 2016 arbitration ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in favor of Philippine sovereignty claims over China in the South China Sea. During the meeting, Jaishankar reiterated India's call on China to respect this ruling. Both sides further vowed to enhance their defense partnership through increased interactions between defense agencies and by sending an Indian defense attaché to Manila. India also offered a concessional line of credit to the Philippines to buy Indian defense equipment. According to

a diplomatic source close to the negotiations, “We are both maritime nations and there is great scope where we could identify various cooperative activities including, in the future, joint sales and joint patrols and exchanging information, best practices, and anything to enhance [maritime domain awareness].”

Both nations have closely collaborated on

Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo visited New Delhi and met with his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar.

security matters in recent years. In 2019, for example, India participated in a joint naval drill in the South China Sea with Japan, the

Philippines, and the United States. In 2021, the Indian Navy conducted bilateral drills with the Philippines. In addition, a fourth round of high-level defense dialogue between India and the Philippines concluded in April, with the two sides pledging to deepen defense cooperation further. In 2022, the Philippines inked a major deal to purchase India's BrahMos missiles. According to the Indian ambassador in Manila, India is exploring a preferential trade deal with the Philippines to boost their relationship, similar to what it is discussing with Vietnam.

Meanwhile, India's security partnership with Indonesia has quietly been evolving in ways that also support the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. In February, an Indian Kilo-class conventional submarine made a first-ever port call to Indonesia, underscoring that New Delhi's undersea assets could have access to Indonesian ports sitting astride the strategic waterways traversing the vast archipelagic nation. Beijing already faces a major strategic headache in the form of the so-called Malacca dilemma—China's vulnerability to having

its most important trade route cut off by the United States and its allies in the narrow waters between Singapore and Malaysia. Add potential blockades of Indonesia's Sunda Strait and Lombok Strait—two other strategic narrows—and China might have to rethink future military operations entirely.

Indo-Indonesian defense relations truly kicked off in 2018, when Modi visited Jakarta and elevated relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership. As part of this, the two nations signed a new defense cooperation agreement. That same year, India and Indonesia launched a new naval exercise, Samudra Shakti, that incorporated a warfighting component. Since then, the two navies have conducted four rounds, the last of which was in May and prioritized anti-submarine operations. The Indian Navy has further supported Indonesia with humanitarian and disaster relief operations, particularly following the Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami that hit Palu in 2018. New Delhi and Jakarta are exploring potential air force cooperation as well. Indonesia may also follow in the footsteps of the Philippines by purchasing BrahMos missiles.

On the economic side, the two nations are considering a preferential trade agreement, similar to what India is discussing with Vietnam and the Philippines. Other plans include enhancing links between Indonesia's Aceh province and India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These parts of the two countries are separated by just over 500 miles of sea, and Jakarta and New Delhi have been

cooperating to boost trade and travel between them. India and Indonesia are also cooperating on developing infrastructure, such as a port at Sabang in Aceh, which could be viewed as India's rival to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

India is also cooperating with Malaysia, another counterclaimant against China in the South China Sea, on the basis of an enhanced strategic partnership signed in 2015. In 2022, both Jaishankar and Singh met their Malaysian counterparts and expressed interest in deepening their partnership. After his meeting with Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin bin Hussein, Singh described the engagement as “wonderful.” Although

India and Indonesia are also cooperating on developing infrastructure, such as a port at Sabang in Aceh, which could be viewed as India's rival to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Kuala Lumpur's decision earlier this year to cancel a deal to purchase Indian-made Tejas fighter aircraft may have dampened the partnership somewhat, the intent clearly remains to strengthen ties in line with upholding the mutual goal of maintaining the rules-based international order in the region—especially internationally recognized maritime borders and freedom of navigation, neither of which Beijing accepts. When Jaishankar met then-Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah, the latter emphasized that India is a friend who shares the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific,” using the acronym for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Brunei is another emerging partner for India along the South China Sea. In 2021, the two nations renewed their defense agreement for five years, and they regularly engage in

joint exercises, port visits by navy and coast guard ships, and official defense exchanges.

India's strategic partnerships with Singapore and Thailand—a key partner and ally of the United States, respectively—are also close and longstanding. Singapore regularly engages in bilateral exercises, high-level dialogues, visits, and professional training with India. Modi visited (PDF) Singapore twice in 2018, and on the first trip, he signed 35 memoranda of understanding agreements on a range of security and economic issues. For example, he signed a logistical agreement to boost bilateral naval cooperation and multiple agreements pertaining to investment in human capital. On his second trip, Modi attended the India-ASEAN summit, underscoring New Delhi's emphasis on the region's significance.

Singapore regularly engages in bilateral exercises, high-level dialogues, visits, and professional training with India.

In 2022, Thailand and India took stock of their partnership and pledged to elevate defense engagements further, to include cybersecurity. Perhaps of greater importance is the economic side of their relationship. In a nod to New Delhi's original Look East policy, Bangkok implemented (PDF) its own Look West policy in 1997, in part to tap into the enormous Indian market. Moreover, Thailand and India are partnering with Myanmar to construct the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway that will significantly upgrade transport links between Southeast Asia and South Asia. Once the highway is completed, Modi and his government also want to add connections to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam—another clear rival to China's BRI.

India further has good relations with both

Cambodia and Laos. In May, Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni visited India, and the two sides reaffirmed “the strong civilizational bond between us.” Phnom Penh and New Delhi cooperate on a range of socioeconomic projects, de-mining, water conservation, and heritage protection. India's engagement with Laos is less robust, but nevertheless, New Delhi and Vientiane are likely discussing ways to boost economic ties. This is all the more remarkable as both Phnom Penh and Vientiane are widely considered to be firmly in China's camp.

Not all Indian engagements in the region

are necessarily positive for the United States and its Indo-Pacific strategy, however. One notable example is India's relationship with the military junta in Myanmar,

which has plans to enhance its partnership with Beijing. New Delhi has yet to condemn the 2021 coup that brought it to power, and India refuses to join Washington in putting political pressure on the junta in the form of sanctions or through other means. To be sure, India is in a difficult spot as chaos in Myanmar has caused concerns that instability could spill over the border, where the Indian states of Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland have ethnic and kinship ties with Myanmar. New Delhi hopes that its continued cooperation with the Burmese junta will contribute to greater stability in the border region.

But even in Myanmar, India is doing some things that are in Washington's interest. Modi's joint statement with U.S. President Joe Biden last month, for example, mentions Myanmar and notes the importance of the junta releasing

all political prisoners and returning to constructive dialogue. While this is hardly the condemnation of the regime Washington has been seeking, it is a start. Additionally, New Delhi in recent months confronted the junta on how it is apparently allowing Chinese workers to build a listening post to spy on India in the Coco Islands in the Bay of Bengal.

From a multilateral perspective, India has been active as well. Within the existing India-ASEAN framework, the two parties in May held their inaugural group military exercise, known as ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise, in the South China Sea. The exercise reportedly attracted the attention of China's maritime militia, which was operating within Vietnam's exclusive economic zone and approached the exercise participants.

Overall, India's Act East policy is a net positive for the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at countering China. Washington should welcome and gently encourage New Delhi to do even more. For example, additional joint patrols in the South China Sea among India, the United States, and other nations—including those in the region—could bolster deterrence. Additional Indian infrastructure and development projects, as well as trade deals, could help lessen Beijing's economic dominance of Southeast Asia.

Realistically, however, New Delhi rightly worries first and foremost about its own neighborhood, and its time and resources are inevitably constrained. China

also maintains the inside track in Southeast Asia due to its growing power and proximity

to the region. That said, New Delhi's policy of outreach to Southeast Asia—even if it is sustained only at current levels—will help further undermine Beijing. That, in and of itself, is a big win for Washington and its Asian allies.

India's Warship Diplomacy — Will it Reap Benefits?

Source: Ranjit Kumar | ABP Live

<https://news.abplive.com/india-at-2047/india-at-2047-india-warship-diplomacy-ins-kirpan-vietnam-china-south-china-sea-indian-navy-indian-ocean-ins-sindhuvir-1619400> 30 July 2023



The indigenously built Missile Corvette INS Kirpan entered Cam Ranh International Port on July 8 and was ceremoniously received by the Vietnamese People's Navy signifying strong and vibrant bilateral navy-to-navy relations, the Indian Navy stated. (Image Source : Twitter/@indiannavy)

India's unique warship gifting diplomacy, which was confined to the Indian Ocean, has now expanded to the Pacific Ocean, in the Chinese backyard of the South China Sea. This has rattled

With the gifting of a frontline missile warship INS Kirpan to Vietnam, India has taken its naval diplomacy to a new level and added a new dimension to it.

the strategic establishment in China. With the gifting of a frontline missile warship INS Kirpan to Vietnam, India has taken its naval diplomacy to a new level and added a new dimension to it. Till now

India's adversary was creating ripples in Indian waters with its submarines and warships' forays

into the Indian Ocean, but this time India has directly challenged China on its own turf through its subtle but smart naval diplomacy.

China's silence on the gifting of INS Kirpan to Vietnam may indicate that they are not bothered and not shaken over the development, but commentary seem to convey that the Chinese are perturbed over the Indian move as it enhances the threat perception from the Vietnamese navy aided by its archrival India. The warship can stoutly challenge Chinese belligerent actions against Vietnamese vessels in the South China Sea.

Chinese online media outlet Sentinel Jiang reacted feverishly. Its commentary was titled, "Throwing sand in China's eyes, India sent warships to Vietnam." The commentary in Chinese roughly translated into English by Google, explained, "India gave Vietnam a big gift, directly to Vietnam a warship! The cooperation between India and Vietnam does not stop there, while sending warships to Vietnam, it is also continuing to strengthen defence relations with Vietnam, and even helping Vietnam train troops. India has been helping Vietnam train Su-30 fighter pilots and helping Vietnam train submariners! And India did this for only one purpose, to add sand to China's eyes."

This is not for the first time that the Indian Navy has gifted powerful warships to friendly partner countries. The Indian Navy has gifted, till date, over 20 small and big offensive naval, patrol and maritime surveillance warships. They include four island nations of the Indian Ocean i.e. Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles, and two littoral states, the African Mozambique and the Bay of Bengal littoral nation Myanmar. Gifting a submarine to Myanmar in October 2020,

which was then friendly towards India, before the coup by the military junta, was the high point of Indian naval warship diplomacy. This is a Soviet-designed Kilo class submarine INS Sindhuvir, acquired by India in 1998. Through this move, the Indian strategic establishment wanted to take bilateral relations to a new height, but China did not want this to happen and hence conspired with military generals to dethrone the democratically elected government, which was gradually moving towards a strong strategic partnership with India. However, gifting of the submarine will compel the receiving nation's dependence on India for the maintenance of the ship.

India's Successful Naval Diplomacy with Small Island Nations

Though China derailed India's very significant strategic move to arm Myanmar with submarines, aimed to counter Chinese submarine forays in the Indian Ocean, India was successful with its new brand of naval diplomacy with other small island nations, where China has been making strenuous efforts to set up their military bases. Instead of helplessly watching Chinese military overtures to small island nations, India made a very smart move of gifting, from coastal surveillance ships to small reconnaissance aircrafts, which dissuaded the friendly island nations from deepening maritime contacts with China. The warships donated by the Indian Navy to island and littoral nations include – one to Myanmar (submarine INS Sindhuvir), four to Maldives, including a Fast Patrol Vessel and a landing craft assault ship in 2023, Offshore Patrol Vessel in 2019, and a Trinkat class Patrol vessel MCGS Huravee in 2006.

India had gifted way back in 1974 INS Amar,

This is not for the first time that the Indian Navy has gifted powerful warships to friendly partner countries.

a Seaward defence boat, to Mauritius. Reviving this diplomacy, India gifted another batch of 9 Mandovi class patrol boats and later replaced them with 5 Praga class Patrol craft in 2000. In 2001, India gifted another interceptor boat CGS Observer to Mauritius.

To Seychelles, India had gifted a Trinkat class patrol vessel Topaz in 2005. In 2014, India gifted another Trinkat class patrol vessel PS Constant. In 2021 India gifted the third Fast patrol vessel to Seychelles. Later, a fourth, named Zoroaster, was also transferred.

The Indian Ocean littoral African country, Mozambique, received two fast interceptor boats in 2019 and another two in 2021. India gifted Sri Lanka Vikram-class offshore patrol vessel ICGS Varah in 2015.

Thus the Indian Navy has been playing a silent but effective role in deterring the Chinese Navy from dominating the Indian Ocean. The India-China rivalry guides India's strategic direction towards containing China in the third largest ocean. But India's strategic interests cannot be safeguarded unilaterally and can be protected only through a multilateral cooperative approach and empowering small island nations of the Indian Ocean for capability and capacity building to help them safeguard their maritime area on their own.

This is contrary to the Chinese policy of using carrots and sticks to deepen defence partnerships. Whereas, through gifting of various maritime platforms like patrol ships and surveillance ships to small island nations, India has been trying to prevent the rise of anti-India maritime forces in

the Indian Ocean.

Though China has made its visible presence in the littoral African state Djibouti with a naval base, India has dissuaded other coastal nations to expand Chinese area of influence. Since India would not be able to singlehandedly contain China either in Indian or Pacific waters, it has to develop a web of friendly nations directly enabling them to deter China.

The Indian Ocean, considered the courtyard of India, which was world's leading hotspot of big powers during the cold war, is now being eyed by big non-littoral powers like China, USA, France, Britain etc, whose naval flotilla brazenly roam around the Indian Ocean to deter other naval powers from staking their claims in the Ocean. With this intention, the Chinese naval ships have of late made invasive forays raising concerns in Indian strategic circles.

The way China has been eyeing these island

Indian Ocean littoral African country, Mozambique, received two fast interceptor boats in 2019 and another two in 2021. India gifted Sri Lanka Vikram-class offshore patrol vessel ICGS Varah in 2015.

nations speaks volumes and relevance of the famous quote, almost 125 years ago, in 1897, of the then American Admiral Thayer Alfred Mahan, "whoever controls Indian Ocean will dominate Asia. This Ocean will be the key to seven seas in the 21st century. The destiny of the world will be decided on it's waters."

During the cold war, the Indian Ocean was evolving as a zone of conflict between the two superpowers, Soviet Union and USA. Hence, the then Indian strategic establishment yearned for the Indian Ocean to be declared as Zone of Peace. Being a maritime nation and a top naval power of the Indian Ocean, India has a role and responsibility to manage the Indian Ocean as a

zone of cooperation, to work with leading India-friendly naval powers to keep the maritime sea lanes of trade open and secure. Since over 55 percent of India's maritime trade is conducted through these trade routes, it is in prime interest of the country to align with small and big powers to keep the Indo-Pacific maritime region free and open. India's naval warship diplomacy has a big role to play in achieving this aim.

NATO's Inclination Towards Japan and other Partners in the Indo-Pacific Region

Source: Simran Walia, ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/natos-inclination-towards-japan/> 19 July 2023



The Russia-Ukraine conflict has made NATO summits more significant than ever and this year's summit held in Vilnius, Lithuania discussed several critical global issues. The top agenda of this summit was the Ukraine crisis and all the leaders focused on ensuring that Ukraine has full support from the major countries. The wide presence of four Asia-Pacific countries: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea has made this year's summit more prominent and suggests the growing importance of these nations for NATO. Ukraine's invasion has brought countries of the

United States-led alliance close since the Cold War. NATO allies discussed the potential for Ukraine's membership in the group as Ukraine is attempting to join NATO.

NATO is working on bolstering cooperation with its partners in the Indo-Pacific region and in the current complex security environment, relations with like-minded countries have become important to address global challenges. The Indo-Pacific region is vital for the alliance owing to major developments affecting Euro-Atlantic security. NATO also shares a common goal with Indo-Pacific partners of strengthening the rules-based international order. The Asia-Pacific countries which participated in the summit have been vital nations in supporting Ukraine and imposing sanctions on Russia. NATO's strategic concept of 2022 mentioned China's policies as a major challenge to NATO's security and values. It further mentioned deepening cooperation between China and Russia which is a threat to the rules-based international order. NATO recognising China's expansionist behaviour as a challenge implies the growing significance of Indo-Pacific countries for the alliance.

Japan-NATO Deepening Cooperation

Japan's security is under threat in the current scenario owing to China's assertive behaviour and North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Japanese

The Japan-NATO partnership is expected to be an effective one that would further expand in the near future in light of the growing threat posed by China and Russia.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also stated that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow." which explains the increasing need to boost Japan's security policy to deter any potential conflict. This has led to growing convergence between Japan and NATO and made their partnership pertinent in this

complex security environment.

The growing convergence between Japan and NATO is part of this overall trend. One of the latest developments in their partnership is NATO's planning of opening a liaison office in Tokyo. Japan shares common democratic values with NATO and for the alliance, Japan offers a reliable partner in East Asia. However, one of the NATO's powerful European countries France opposed the plans of opening a NATO liaison office in Tokyo, fearing that it could estrange China as NATO identified China as a threat to the alliance's security. France is also apprehensive of the fact that any action jeopardising China's legitimate rights would lead to an unwavering response. Moreover, France feels that NATO should be restricted to North Atlantic and if the alliance wishes to spread its situational awareness in the East Asian region, it can use the embassies designated as a major point of contact. In a joint communique published during the summit, there was no mention of NATO's plans of opening an office in Tokyo. Nevertheless, NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, stated that plans of opening an office in Tokyo are not concrete yet but will be considered in the future.

Kishida and Stoltenberg are planning to adopt a document to bolster cooperation between Japan and NATO for tackling Russia and China as they are strengthening their own military cooperation. The plan is to establish an Individually Tailored Partnership Program (ITPP) that would focus on increasing cooperation between Indo-Pacific and

Europe. The agreement would also emphasise cooperating on the cyber and space domains, and maritime security as NATO conducts large-scale cyber defence drills with its members.

The Asia-Pacific countries which participated in the summit have been vital nations in supporting Ukraine and imposing sanctions on Russia.

Japan would also focus on joint evacuation operations with NATO from third-world countries such as Afghanistan. NATO also looks to coordinate with Japan on emerging technologies and share information regarding dual-use technologies of artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

There have been several efforts to integrate with NATO countries in bilateral as well as minilateral formats, for instance, Japan is working on developing a next-generation fighter jet with the UK and Italy to increase the level of interoperability of Japan's Air self-defence force with NATO air forces. Furthermore, Japan has attempted to deepen its security and cooperative partnerships with nations like India, Vietnam, and the Philippines since the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Being the world's third-largest economy, Japan is an important development and trade assistance partner for

NATO recognising China's expansionist behaviour as a challenge implies the growing significance of Indo-Pacific countries for the alliance.

most of the countries and therefore, for NATO, Japan is a vital counterbalance to the influence of nations of having shared security concerns. Japan-NATO partnership would also enhance Japan's position and prestige as an actor in the international arena and their partnership could prove to be powerful as a deterrent against regional threats.

Japan's PM Kishida has been apprehensive since the Ukraine invasion which led to the

revision of Japan's National Security Strategy (NSS) document in December 2022. The document explicitly warned that Japan's security environment is complex and adverse and Ukraine invasion has breached the foundation of rules-based international order. Therefore, Tokyo is working on reinforcing and developing more security partnerships which also includes Europe. Over time, Japan has also understood the importance of deterrence which is evident through its revised NSS documents which mention Japan's plans of acquiring counter-strike capabilities.

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NATO along with the four Asia-Pacific nations would further aim to improve the interoperability of their militaries to work together effectively. This will also deepen the knowledge of one another's military assets. However, NATO exhibits that it is capable enough of maintaining and enhancing engagement in the Indo-Pacific region by strengthening partnerships to respond to challenges posed by Russia and China.

It is quite evident that it is vital for NATO allies to strengthen their partnership with Indo-Pacific nations and allies to be able to address threats and challenges through mutual interests and values. Moreover, NATO and Japan share shared values and concerns and with China's rise and Russia's threat, the Japan-NATO partnership is expected to be an effective one to counterbalance and would expand in the near future. Their fundamental aim has been to strengthen deterrence by developing strategic ties and interoperability and further building bridges between the US alliances and the Indo-

Pacific region. The current complex security environment and threats posed by China and Russia have led to a clear need for coordination and cooperation among countries and such new partnerships can prove to be beneficial in addressing concerns of maritime security, cyber-defence and space to mention a few. NATO is a regional alliance of Europe and North America, however, over time, its concerns have increasingly become global which go beyond the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific.

Germany Just Unveiled its First-Ever China Strategy

Source: Mary Hui, Quartz

<https://qz.com/germany-china-strategy-asymmetric-dependency-1850638319> 13 July 2023

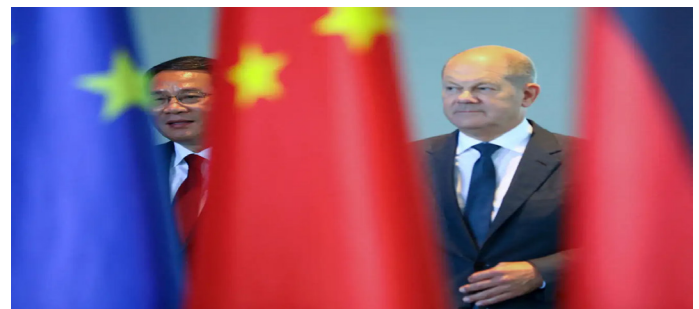


Photo: Nadja Wohlleben (Reuters)

The German government has published its first ever strategy on China. The document, which was adopted by the German cabinet on Thursday, outlines a playbook for reducing dependence on Beijing in "critical sectors," at the same time as it tries to strike a balance between dealing with a China that is at once a "partner, competitor and systemic rival" of Berlin.

"China has changed," the document states (pdf). "As a result of this and China's political decisions, we need to change our approach to

China.”

What exactly that change entails and what consequences it will have is hard to say. But on one point Germany is explicitly clear: “de-risking is urgently needed.”

Less clear is what de-risking means, even as more governments adopt the term in the push to be less reliant on China in supply chains, particularly in high-tech and strategic sectors like critical minerals, chips, and electric vehicles.

The strategy document identifies several areas where Chinese actions are heightening risks to Germany’s “security, sovereignty and prosperity,” including, it said, China’s increasingly assertive attempts to reshape the existing rules-based, liberal democratic international order.

Germany Inc. and China Inc.’s Deep and Tangled Ties

Another risk factor for Germany and Europe is China’s competitive strategy of shoring up its own economic self-reliance while simultaneously working to embed itself more deeply into global supply chains, the document noted.

“China’s economic strategy aims to make it less dependent on other countries, while making international production chains more dependent on China,” it said.

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In particular, China’s approach to industrial policy “sets out objectives that are leading to greater economic independence for China while at the same time increasing asymmetrical dependencies abroad.”

That’s especially apparent when looking at German industrial giants’ dependence on the

vast Chinese market. China was Germany’s most important trading partner for the last seven years.

And Germany Inc. doesn’t think it can afford to cut ties with China Inc. In May, the CEO of German automaker Mercedes-Benz said that cutting ties with China would be “unthinkable for almost all of German industry.” Meanwhile, Volkswagen and BMW are continuing to ramp up investments in China, and chemicals giant BASF is forging ahead with a \$10 billion investment in southern China.

Germany Warns on China’s Strategy of Asymmetry

Against this backdrop, Berlin is prudent to highlight the risk of “asymmetric dependencies” on China. After all, it is crucial to Beijing’s game plan for becoming the global technological competition.

“We should adopt an ‘asymmetric’ strategy of catching up” with the science and technology levels of developed countries, Chinese leader Xi Jinping said in 2016 (link in Chinese).

Rather than just copying its more advanced competitors, China should seek out what Xi calls “asymmetric shashoujian”—often translated as “assassin’s mace,” a reference to technologies that allow an underdog upstart to effectively compete against more established opponents.

Lithium-ion batteries are one example of this strategy of asymmetry: Chinese companies seized on the cheaper technology, built up massive capacity, and now control vast shares of the global market for lithium processing and lithium battery production. Now Western automakers, which had

previously bet heavily on the more expensive nickel-based battery chemistries, have embraced lithium cells—and in doing so, found themselves heavily reliant on China.

The German government has now explicitly come to terms with this asymmetric conundrum. The more difficult and critical step is figuring out what to do about it.

Japan Affirms Plans for Deeper Regional Ties to Counter China

Ben Dooley, *The New York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/28/world/asia/japan-military-white-paper.html> 28 July 2023



Japanese pilots during a multinational military exercise in Guam in February. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Japan's defense policy has undergone a rapid evolution. Credit...Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

China is the “greatest strategic challenge.” Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a “serious violation of international law.” North Korea is an “imminent threat.” And Japan needs to “fundamentally” strengthen its military and work more closely with countries like South Korea to preserve regional stability.

The tough assessment comes from Japan’s annual defense white paper, approved by the cabinet office Friday amid growing security concerns that have pushed Tokyo to rethink its decades-long commitment to pacifism.

China is the “greatest strategic challenge.” Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a “serious violation of international law.”

The document, which borrows much of its language from the national security strategy released in December, is a reaffirmation of Tokyo’s commitment to playing a more active role in East Asian security. It highlights future military cooperation with South Korea as both countries face an increasingly uncertain security environment.

The continuing effort to improve that contentious relationship exemplifies how Japan has changed its national priorities and its defense policy since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Tokyo has pledged to double its military spending, harden local defenses and deepen coordination with countries in the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

The changes come amid growing concerns about the political alignment between Moscow and Beijing and about China’s designs on Taiwan, a crucial source of semiconductors for Japanese industry. Additionally, North Korea has drastically stepped up missile launches, raising fears of a strike, whether accidental or intentional.

Such anxieties have fundamentally shifted public opinion in Japan on issues related to national security and military affairs that had held fast since the end of World War II.

For starters, Japan has supplied nonlethal military equipment, such as body armor, to Ukraine. Japan has also begun discussions about exporting weapons for use in that country and obtaining a so-called counterstrike capability for itself that would use missiles to attack military installations. In recent months, Japan’s military — known as the Self-Defense Forces — has stepped up exercises at home and with friendly countries, including working with the United

States to defend against a simulated invasion of islands near Taiwan.

At the same time, Friday's white paper emphasizes that Japan will "prioritize active diplomacy" in its national security efforts.

Over the last year, Tokyo has taken steps to reduce its vulnerability to, and dependence on, China. Those have included cooperation with the United States on industrial policies intended to reduce reliance on raw materials and finished goods from its neighbor.

Most noticeable since last year's white paper have been efforts by Tokyo to improve its contentious relationship with Seoul. Many in South Korea have criticized what they see as a failure by Japan to make amends for its colonial rule. For its part, Japan has viewed Seoul as an unreliable partner. Mending the relationship has been a longstanding ambition for policymakers in Washington, who see the countries as critical partners in its own Asia-Pacific strategy.

But Japan's diplomatic reach has extended well beyond the Asia Pacific. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has sought deeper involvement by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in East Asia as he seeks to counter China's regional influence.

In July, Mr. Kishida announced agreements to cooperate with NATO on cybersecurity and space policy that he said would elevate the relationship to "new heights." A joint statement with NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg expressed concern about growing military cooperation between China and Russia, including joint exercises near Japan.

Cherry-Picks of the Month

1. *China is Helping Modernize the Pakistan Navy. What does that Mean for India?* - <https://thediplomat.com/2023/07/china-is-helping-modernize-the-pakistan-navy-what-does-that-mean-for-india/>
2. *Why is NATO Expanding its Reach to the Asia-Pacific Region?* - <https://theconversation.com/why-is-nato-expanding-its-reach-to-the-asia-pacific-region-209140>
3. *France and India: Two Nuances of 'Strategic Autonomy'* - <https://www.csis.org/analysis/france-and-india-two-nuances-strategic-autonomy>
4. *Embracing the US-Japan-South Korea Trilateral* - <https://asiatimes.com/2023/07/embracing-the-us-japan-south-korea-trilateral/>
5. *Japan's Foreign Minister Hayashi Set for Two-Day India Visit* - <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/japans-foreign-minister-hayashi-set-for-two-day-india-visit-11690447954366.html>
6. *The Global South Scaled in Japan's New Outreach* - <https://isdpeu/publication/the-global-south-scaled-in-japans-new-outreach/>
7. *Shinzo Abe's Legacy in Transforming Japan's Security Policy Under Kishida* - <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/japans-foreign-minister-hayashi-set-for-two-day-india-visit-11690447954366.html>
8. *An India-France Partnership got Fresh Impetus from Modi's Visit* - <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/an-india-france-partnership-got-fresh-impetus-from-modi-s-visit-11689605388298.html>

Panel Discussions

1. *India is at the Centre of Indo-Pacific Security, ORF* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FdsuZ621Hc>
2. *The Growing Importance of NATO's Indo-Pacific Partners, United States Institute of Peace* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krKV13kmbB4>
3. *U.S.-China Competition and Indo-Pacific Security* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1nhnGEI614>

Debates/Podcasts

1. Britain's Strategic Tilt to the Indo-Pacific, Security and Policy Debate, Global Affairs, King's College London - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuTseJYJ3AA>
2. Great Balls of Power by Whiskey and International Relations Theory - https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/whiskeyindiaromeo/episodes/2023-07-17T05_09_59-07_00
3. Resources & Relationships: Critical Minerals and its impact on global affairs - <https://shows.acast.com/space-defence-security-podcast/episodes/ep-26-resources-relationships-critical-minerals-global>
4. U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy Showing Results, Ratner Tells Congress - <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3466082/us-indo-pacific-strategy-showing-results-ratner-tells-congress/>



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