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GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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**Indo-Pacific
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Seminar (IPAMS),
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***Turkey Will Back
Sweden's NATO
Bid If U.S. Keeps
Promise On F-16
Sale - Erdogan***

**Following India,
U.S. Raises
Concerns Over
Chinese Vessel
With Sri Lanka
Govt**

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Israel, US, India And UAE Announce I2U2 Joint Space Venture

https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/israel-us-india-and-uae-announce-i2u2-joint-space-venture/

The governments of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States announce a new joint space venture on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the US State Department says.

COMMENTS

The I2U2 group comprising of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the US on the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 21, 2023, made the announcement of a new joint space venture which aims to create a “unique space-based tool” for policymakers, institutions and entrepreneurs.

It was on July 14, 2022 that the heads of government of India, Israel, the UAE and the US convened the first leaders’ summit on July 14, 2022, to establish the I2U2 Group. The I2U2 Group identifies bankable projects and initiatives to tackle some of the greatest challenges confronting the world, with a particular focus on joint investments and new initiatives in the field of water, energy, transportation, space, health, food security and technology. The US Department of State media Note spells out the Group aims to mobilise private sector capital and expertise to achieve a variety of goals, including modernizing infrastructure, advancing low carbon development pathways and improving public health. These joint projects and initiatives are not limited in geographic scope– the Group aims to explore opportunities anywhere in the world where it can make a positive impact. The I2U2 Group is currently being led by senior government representatives of each partner country who work together closely. On September 21, 2023, the Group launched a website to strengthen the public-private partnership in several sectors. The I2U2 website will be an important platform for private sectors which will enable private countries to submit their project details and increase their ability to share new technologies and trade collaboration amongst four nations.



Source: Defence News

USA

The Group has already made substantial progress in the field of 'Food Security', 'Clean Energy' and 'Climate'. This however is the first announcement by the Group for Joint activities in Space. All four nations are members of the Artemis accord.

Artemis Accord was launched on October 13, 2020 with eight founding members, viz. the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg and UAE. India signed the Artemis Accord in June 2023, during PM Modi's official state visit to the US. The Accord now has a total of 29 members, including Nigeria and Rwanda from Africa. India's Chandrayaan-3 mission has helped boost country's standing at the global stage and it is also getting applauded for its unique Sun mission (Aditya-1). India has always been a great proponent of space cooperation in the international sphere.

Primarily using their space-based observation data and capabilities, the four nations aim to create a unique space-based tool for policymakers, institutions and entrepreneurs, enabling their work on environmental and climate change challenges and furthering the I2U2 partner countries' cooperation in the applications of space data for the greater good of humanity.

Through the newly launched website, private companies in respective countries can propose various projects. In the space domain this is a huge opportunity for the fledgling Indian Space startups to get noticed, it will open the doors for private players. New York Times (NYT) in July this year complimented that with at least 140 registered space-tech startups, India stands to transform the planet's connection to the final frontier.



Source: US Embassy & Consulates in India

Indian private players have been exploring global markets for their products. The Indian space economy accounts for barely 2.1 per cent (USD 7 billion) of the global space economy in 2020, amounting to USD 9.6 billion, 0.4 per cent of the Indian GDP. Collaboration is very much possible in the field of disaster relief, ecological studies, building rockets and satellites, setting up astronaut training facilities, in the field of PNT through indigenous solutions by the NavIC, enhancing Space Situational Awareness (SSA) and exploring possibilities for space tourism. Forums such as I2U2 would go a long way in helping Indian Space Tech start ups by providing them an opportunity to explore niche markets, across the globe.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

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NEW INDUCTIONS: UKRAINE

Media reports indicate that Washington may soon grant Kyiv's longstanding request for the Army Tactical Missile System, or ATACMS, which would provide Ukraine with additional capability and capacity to attack high-value Russian military targets in occupied territory.

The first batch of Abrams tanks out of 31 promised have reached Ukraine. Some of Ukraine's other Western allies have already supplied the Leopard 2 from Germany and the Challenger 2 from the United Kingdom. Several Danish tanks recently sent to Ukraine to bolster its military arsenal in the war with Russia are faulty. Ukraine has deployed the Lithuanian Counter Drone System EDM4S system for the soldiers. The system has long-range capability covering 3 to 5 km in line of sight, is lightweight at 6.5 kgs, and disrupts drones operating on various frequencies, including 900 MHz, 2.4 GHz, 5.8 GHz, and GNSS L1 1.5 GHz bands.

Over 23,000 Ukrainian civilians have undergone basic infantry training as part of 'Operation Interflex,' the first training program for Ukrainian recruits outside Ukraine. The U.K.-led multinational program—with trainers from nine countries- provides Ukrainians with training to defend their homeland against Russia's ongoing invasion

UKRAINE COUNTEROFFENSIVE KINETIC WAR

Given the relatively static nature of the ground battle, both sides actively seek advantages by striking deep into the strategic territories of their adversaries. There have been reports of explosions at Russian logistics sites, air bases, and command posts in Crimea, the Krasnodar regions, and near Moscow. Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol of Crimea again came under heavy attack on Sep 22, 2023, killing at least nine people and wounding 16, including senior leaders of the Russian Navy, as claimed by the Ukrainians.

RUSSIA UKRAINE CONFLICT

On Sep 16, 2023, Ukraine said that its armed forces had captured Andrivka, a village south of Bakhmut, which Russia seized in May after months of gruelling effort. Ukraine has shifted tactics in ground fighting by sending small infantry units to clear trenches ahead of armoured vehicles; drone units have adapted, too.

RUSSIAN DEFENCE



Source: The Kyiv Independent

On Sep 18, 2023, Russia claimed it had repelled a Ukrainian attack on Crimea on Sunday but that Ukrainian drones had disrupted air traffic in Moscow. The explosions at Chkalovsky Air Base near Moscow are likely causing the most strategic concern for Russian leadership

RUSSIAN ATTACKS

Russia pounded energy facilities across Ukraine on Sep 21, 2023, in its most significant missile attack for weeks, firing what Ukrainian officials saw as the first salvo in a new air campaign against the national power grid. Power cuts were reported in five Ukrainian regions in the west, centre, and east. The winter months will result in long-range strikes, and the problems of energy security faced by the EU nations will shape the future of conflict. It is now almost 600 days since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and the war that has followed has not only tested the resilience of both countries but also tested those in the West who have supported Ukraine from the start. Tens of millions of cubic litres of natural gas are still flowing daily from Russia to Europe across Ukraine through pipelines crisscrossing some of the areas most devastated by Moscow's full-scale invasion.

The route supplies around 5 per cent of Europe's total gas imports. The transit contract signed in 2019 between Naftogaz and Russian state-owned energy Gazprom is due to expire next year. With the freezing—and destruction—of the Nord Stream pipelines running to Germany, the Ukrainian route and Turk Stream artery are the only two remaining avenues for Russian natural gas to get to the continent. The imminent closure of the Ukrainian route poses serious questions for European nations struggling to wean themselves off Russian energy imports. Unlike coal and oil, imports of Russian natural gas have never been put under European Union sanctions; a reflection of its importance to EU economies.

A Russian drone and missile strike near Odesa damaged port infrastructure, a grain silo, and an abandoned hotel and injured one person, as attacks on Ukraine killed four civilians and wounded 13 in the past day, Ukrainian officials said on Sep 25, 2023. During a press conference on Sep 23, 2023, at the United Nations General Assembly, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov indicated Russia would recognize Ukraine's borders before Moscow's invasion if Kyiv pledges not to join a military alliance

COMMENTS

- Russia has continuously targeted port and grain storage facilities in Odesa since pulling out of a deal that allowed Ukrainian grain exports to countries facing the threat of hunger. President Zelensky angered his neighbour Poland when he told the United Nations General Assembly in New York that Kyiv was working to preserve land routes for grain exports but that the "political theatre" around grain imports was only helping Moscow. Poland decided last week to extend a ban on Ukrainian grain imports. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, on Sep 21.2023, said Warsaw will no longer transfer weapons to Ukraine as a reaction to the statement given at the UN.
- Ukraine's strategy and tactics have evolved. Ukraine has put its armour aside and is attacking in small packets of dismounted infantry. A spectacular strike on a Crimean naval base would have boosted Ukrainian morale.
- Despite their slow progress, the Ukrainians have been able to travel further into Russia in pursuit of artillery sites, and map Russian land mines and Air defence areas, thanks to the employment of drones. Unlike some military drones, Ukraine's simpler versions fly without GPS navigation, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage; without it, pilots and their navigators must rely on landmarks on the ground, such as buildings, roads, or intersections, to find their way.
- A fleet of inexpensive, primarily off-the-shelf drones is helping Ukrainian forces evade and target sophisticated Russian air defense systems by flying close to the ground or switching frequencies in mid-air.
- The Russian side is paying careful attention and has adjusted by producing a greater number of drones and employing their counter drone systems to neutralise the Ukrainian drones. According to estimates, 10,000 drones are lost in Ukraine each month.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan have been fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, a largely Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan, for more than three decades. This week tensions between the two former Soviet republics escalated, triggering a military operation in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region that allowed Azerbaijan to take full control of the breakaway enclave. With the Russian military busy in Ukraine, President Putin knows he can't help Armenia as the construction of a new railway line between Azerbaijan and Turkey is critical for Russia.

Nepal Says ‘No’ to China’s Global Security Initiative, but Takes Forward Border Rail Plan as Prachanda Visits Beijing

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/nepal-and-china-sign-12-agreements-during-pm-prachandas-visit-to-beijing/article67346376.ece> - 26 September 2023

□Nepal on Tuesday appeared to reject calls from China to join President Xi Jinping’s Global Security Initiative (GSI), but agreed to take forward ambitious cross-border connectivity projects during the visit of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to Beijing. A lengthy joint statement released by the two sides outlined a number of border infrastructure projects, but failed to mention the GSI. “The Nepali side supports the Global Development Initiative (GDI) proposed by China and will consider to join the Group of Friends of the GDI,” the statement said. It also noted the 2017 agreement for both sides to cooperate under Mr Xi’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), saying they would “accelerate consultations to finalise the text” on an already delayed BRI implementation plan “at an early date.” The GDI, GSI and Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI) are three key new initiatives proposed by Mr Xi that will underpin China’s foreign policy during his third term.

□Nepal did reaffirm its commitment to China on Tibet and said “it will never allow any separatist activities against China on Nepal’s soil.” China, for its part, said it “firmly supports Nepal in upholding its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity”.

□While Nepal refrained from endorsing the GSI in the statement, it did appear to agree to some elements of the kind of security cooperation envisaged by the initiative. The joint statement said both will “undertake joint inspection of China-Nepal boundary” and agreed that “law enforcement cooperation is of great significance to the security of the two countries” as well as “to further strengthen information exchange, capacity building and cooperation on training between their law enforcement institutions”.

The joint statement outlined the breadth and depth of connectivity projects that Nepal and China are working on, including the flagship cross-border railway from Lhasa to Kathmandu that was once dismissed by most observers as unfeasible. They “agreed to strengthen connectivity in such areas as ports, roads, railways, airways and grids in an orderly manner” and “jointly build the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network”, as the plan is called.

They welcomed the opening of the Lizi-Nechung port and the reopening of the Zhangmu-Khasa port to passenger services and agreed to maintain communication for the opening of other border ports such as Chentang-Kimathanka and Riwu-Olangchungola at an early date.

REGIONAL SCAN: NEPAL

□ Beijing announced support for work to begin on the fourth phase of the Araniko Highway maintenance project and said it would repair the Syaphrubesi-Rasuwadhi Highway once the demolition work was completed. An agreement was also reached to launch construction of a 220 KV Cross-Border Power Transmission line from Jilong/Keyrung to Rasuwadhi/Chilime.

□ The joint statement also “expressed satisfaction over the progress of the feasibility study of the Jilong/Keyrung-Kathmandu Cross-Border Railway”. The 8th Working Meeting on China-Nepal Railway Cooperation will shortly be held while Beijing will soon begin an initiative to train Nepal railway professionals.



Source: NBT

COMMENTS

Infrastructure connectivity and transit transportation cooperation are two major concerns for Nepal. Chinese projects in Nepal including the border infrastructure have been stuck for a long time, as China had closed its borders during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a landlocked country, much of Nepal's imports go through India. China attempts to weigh in to reduce Nepal's dependence on India as part of efforts to expand its own influence.

Nepal consistently urges efforts to promote infrastructure connectivity and expand transit transportation cooperation to help it transform from a landlocked country to a land-linked country. The above mentioned joint statement reflects a balancing act from Nepal, which while working with China on development projects, take a cautious approach on matters pertaining to security cooperation.

26 Nations Discuss Sharing Maritime Information

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/sep/15/26-nations-discuss-sharing-maritime-information-2615017.html>

The Maritime Information Sharing Workshop brought together members of 26 countries exclusively of the IORA and the Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment from 14-16 September 2023. The workshop was hosted by the Information Fusion Centre – IOR. The theme this year was 'Advancing Maritime Security for a Sustainable Future' and the event included a tabletop maritime security exercise simulating various maritime contingencies.



Source: The Indian Express

COMMENTS

IOR plays a vital role for the larger part of humanity and thus the significance of collaboration to address the maritime security challenges unique both in their nature and complexity in the region. There is thus an indispensable need to afford cohesive and collective responses and develop a robust functional understanding among participants.

Vice Admiral Sanjay Mahindru, DCNS, highlighted the need for enhanced and shared situational awareness of the maritime domain to respond to these challenges effectively due to their transnational nature. He added that the maritime security is not just crucial for economic stability but also for geopolitical equilibrium. [1]

[1]<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/sep/15/26-nations-discuss-sharing-maritime-information-2615017.html>

India Extends Its Sea Legs To Oman And Mauritius To Monitor Indian Ocean Region

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-extends-its-sea-legs-to-oman-and-mauritius-to-monitor-indian-ocean-region-101695340351241.html>

India has extended its tentacles by establishing a maritime support base in Duqm port in Oman and is preparing to support close ally Mauritius by establishing an air support facility in North Agaléga Islands, South of Seychelles especially in the face of Beijing's growing presence in the region.

While the government is tight-lipped about these two most significant developments, HT learns that the facility in Duqm port in Oman has already been operationalised to maintain, repair and overhaul Indian ships as well as provide berthing, fuel and rest facilities to Indian Navy ships in the vicinity and travelling beyond.

COMMENTS

India has built an airstrip in North Agaléga islands, some 1,050km North of Port Louis, to provide maritime security to the island nation as well help protect its tourism assets in the region. While it is learnt that the facility under the Mauritius government will be thrown open to public in December, the Indian Navy is already preparing plans to send at least 50 officers and personnel to man the airstrip, with capability of handling Boeing P-8I surveillance and ASW aircraft. [2] Enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness is a critical need of the hour in the IOR towards keeping a check on the growing Chinese presence in the region and thus India needs to widen its sphere of influence in the region. The renewed Indian response stems from concerns over the Chinese surveillance vessel Shi Yan 6 entering the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) on September 23. It is expected to dock at Colombo on September 29. [3]



Source: Twitter

[4]<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-extends-its-sea-legs-to-oman-and-mauritius-to-monitor-indian-ocean-region-101695340351241.html> - Shishir Gupta

[5]<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/other/from-mauritius-to-oman-india-expands-sphere-of-influence-to-counter-china-s-presence-in-indian-ocean-region/ar-AA1h5bjl>

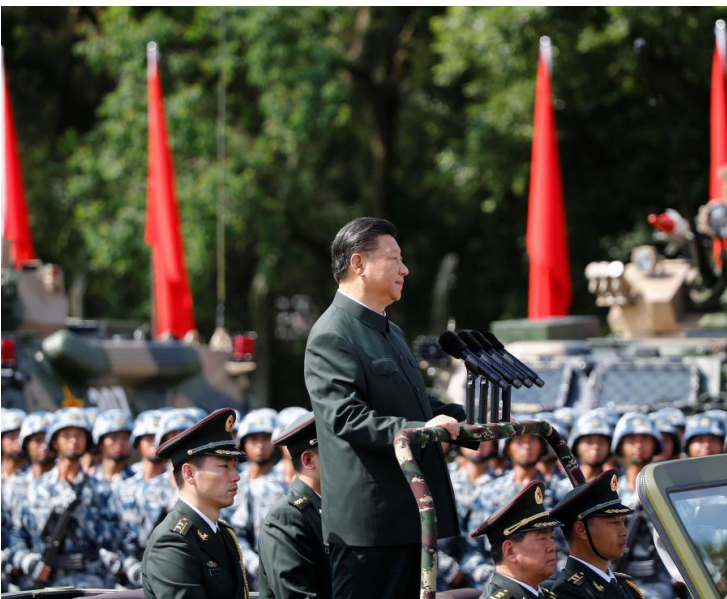
Why Xi Jinping Doesn't Trust His Own Military

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/why-xi-jinping-doesnt-trust-his-own-military?s=08>

Over the last two months, a series of senior Chinese generals have disappeared from public view, including the defense minister and the leadership of the force responsible for China's intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). These disappearances are surprising given the perception that Chinese President Xi Jinping dominates the People's Liberation Army and his ruthless commitment to rooting out malfeasance earlier in his tenure. In fact, such incidents have not only continued but also affected some of the most sensitive parts of the PLA underscores the limits of Xi's power. Xi and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) more broadly have long granted the PLA considerable autonomy to run its own affairs. Allowing the PLA a high degree of independence helps ensure its political compliance with Xi and the party, yet with no civilian checks and balances, it also creates the conditions for malfeasance and poor accountability to fester. Although the details of the recent purges are still murky, they reflect Xi's lack of confidence in some of his most senior officers.

The recent spate of disappearances began in August, when the top commander and the political commissar of the PLA Rocket Force were replaced with appointees from the navy and air force, a highly unusual move that bypassed lower-ranking Rocket Force officers. This coincided with rumors circulating about corruption and the sale of military secrets in the senior levels of that service, although no charges have been announced. It continued when the head of China's military court was dismissed by the National People's Congress. Then in September, observers noticed that Defense Minister Li Shangfu had failed to make several scheduled appearances, validating rumors that he is also under investigation for graft in the procurement system. Li served as equipment czar from 2017 to 2022.

COMMENTS



Source: Foreign Affairs

These disappearances came as a surprise to many observers. Xi is often portrayed as the most powerful head of the Chinese military since Deng Xiaoping's tenure as chair of the Central Military Commission in the 1980s. Xi was active in military matters even before his elevation to chair of the CMC in 2012. He is the son of a Red Army commander and ally of Mao Zedong, was secretary to the defense minister in the early 1980s, often coordinated with the military on mobilization issues during his provincial career in the 1990s and 2000s, and served as CMC vice chair under President Hu Jintao from 2010 to 2012.

Xi has since burnished his credentials under the so-called CMC chair responsibility system, which holds that the chair is ultimately responsible for key military decisions. Xi has also spent more time than his predecessors inspecting military units and has published several military treatises that have become required reading for service members.

Xi and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) more broadly have long granted the PLA considerable autonomy to run its own affairs. Allowing the PLA a high degree of independence helps ensure its political compliance with Xi and the party, yet with no civilian checks and balances, it also creates the conditions for malfeasance and poor accountability to fester. Although the details of the recent purges are still murky, they reflect Xi's lack of confidence in some of his most senior officers. Such doubts about the competence of his people and the equipment they have apparently mismanaged could weigh on Xi's calculations of the risks of initiating a conflict—making him less certain that a decision to use force would achieve the intended results. As long as Xi doubts the stories his generals are telling him about their own proficiency, his mistrust in his own military will likely serve as a deterrent to war.' The internal chaos is Xi's attempt to politicize the PLA via Party Political Commissars at each echelon. The new format is a two-headed monster where the Party always must have strict control of the military. This dual control faded over the past decades and Xi is staging a full-scale rectification in all Theaters to ensure he is getting his information straight from the Commissars.

Dalai Lama Overseeing Backchannel China Talks

<https://stratnewsglobal.com/china/dalai-lama-overseeing-secret-china-talks/>

A backchannel dialogue is underway between the Dalai Lama's representatives and China. It's too early to say how it will pan out, said Penpa Tsering, Sikyong of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamshala. Speaking on The Gist, he said the Dalai Lama is clear about autonomy for Tibet under Chinese rule, but what China has in mind is not clear. The Tibetans have been trying for some years to bring other ethnic minorities like the Uyghurs on a common platform to engage China but that is a work in progress. Tune in for more in this conversation with Sikyong Penpa Tsering. Tibetans are asking for more autonomy, but not political separation, asserted Tibetan leader the Dalai Lama, and said that while he wishes to revisit Lhasa, he would prefer to live on in Dharamshala.

In July this year, the Dalai Lama had surprised many by announcing that he had been contacted "officially or unofficially" by the Chinese government. "In order to deal with Tibetan problems, they want to contact me. I am also ready [for talks]", he added. While the Chinese government did not confirm any talks at present, Beijing has maintained at various points, including in 2021, that any talks it holds are for the "future of the Dalai Lama", not the "future of Tibet", indicating that the Dalai Lama may be allowed to return to Lhasa for a visit.

COMMENTS

According to members of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA, the body that oversees the Tibetan population in exile) Dalai Lama is expected to hold daily teachings from October 2 in Dharamshala, and leave for Gangtok on October 10, holding discourses not far from the border with China and the Doklam plateau, where Indian and Chinese soldiers faced off in 2017. Earlier this year, he spent a month in Ladakh, as he does most years. He is also slated to travel to Bylakuppe in Karnataka, which houses the second largest Tibetan refugee settlement after Dharamshala, where he is expected to be joined by former U.S.

President Barack Obama. China has in the past objected to the Tibetan leader's meetings with senior U.S. officials, formally protesting what it called contact between "external forces" and "Tibetan Independence" forces, including in July this year, when the Dalai Lama met U.S. Under Secretary for civilian security, democracy, and human rights Uzra Zeya, who is also the U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, in Delhi. If we see from the Tibet angle they will first analyze the effects and non-effects and consequences of these talks on global politics. There do exist backchannels and the first step from the Tibet side would be to reestablish contacts and which would be more informal ones.



Source: India Narrative

African Nations set to Visit India for Ethanol Blending, Biogas Studies

https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/african-nations-to-visit-india-to-study-ethanol-blending-biogas-schemes-123091901090_1.html

Close on the heels of its historic outreach to African nations and the successful launch of the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA), India will soon welcome delegations from countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda who are keen to replicate India's ethanol blending and biogas initiatives, senior officials from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas have confirmed. Launched on the sidelines of the recent Group of Twenty (G20) summit, the GBA aims to reshape the global landscape and expedite the uptake of biofuels worldwide, set standards for biofuel, expand the size of formal biofuel markets, and better map demand and supply. "Faced with increasing oil import bills for a growing population, both these nations have shown keen interest in adopting ethanol blending in petrol for transportation after learning about the benefits and success of India's programme," said a senior official. The visiting teams will interact with oil-marketing companies (OMCs) and other stakeholders during their upcoming visit, an official said.

While in India, the countries may also sign government-to-government memoranda of understanding on collaboration and information sharing with Indian agencies and OMCs, he added. Officials said talks on finalising the visit are at an advanced stage. The ministry also plans to showcase the Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARdhan) scheme that aims to set up new solid waste management plants that produce energy from organic waste. Uganda is keen to learn about India's existing compressed biogas (CBG) programmes. This includes the Sustainable Alternative towards Affordable Transportation scheme, which incentivizes the production of CBG from various biomass sources and targets the setting up of 5,000 commercial CBG plants by 2025. The nations have expressed particular interest in replicating the model of government incentives that central government schemes have used to attract investments for necessary infrastructure in the sector. This includes the Pradhan Mantri Jaiw Indhan-Vatavaran Anukool Fasal Awashesh Nivaran Yojana, which provides financial support to OMCs for setting up integrated second-generation bio-ethanol projects.

COMMENTS

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIA

The visit of African nations to India, focused on ethanol blending and biogas studies, carries several potential implications for Indian oil companies.

MARKET EXPANSION

Collaborating with African nations in the realms of ethanol blending and biogas studies could unlock fresh markets for Indian oil companies. This, in turn, may lead to increased sales of ethanol and related products



Source: NDTV

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Indian oil companies stand to gain from the exchange of technology and expertise with their African counterparts in biogas production and blending techniques.

DIVERSIFICATION OF ENERGY SOURCES

Through this partnership, Indian oil companies can diversify their energy portfolio by incorporating sustainable and renewable sources like ethanol and biogas into their offerings.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRIBUTION

A higher utilization of ethanol and biogas in fuel blends could play a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, aligning with global environmental objectives.

ECONOMIC PROSPECTS

Indian oil companies may explore investment opportunities in African nations linked to ethanol and biogas production, potentially fostering economic advantages for both regions. This visit holds the potential to strengthen bonds, stimulate innovation, and create mutually advantageous prospects for Indian oil companies and their African counterparts in the energy sector.

OPPORTUNITY FOR REVENUE SHARING MODEL FOR THE SUSTAINED GROWTH IN BIOFUEL

Expanding the production of crops for biofuels will affect the entire rural sector in Africa as resources are shifted away from traditional crops and the prices of all agricultural commodities rise. India can promote the sustainability and significant contribution of this enterprise. Since Biofuels in Africa provides guidance in formulating suitable policy regimes, which are based on protecting the rights of current land users, India can help in developing revenue-sharing schemes with local communities, safeguarding the environment and biodiversity, expanding institutional capacity, formulating new regulations and procedures, and emulating best practices from experienced countries which will be of value to policy makers, development practitioners, private investors, researchers, and the general public.

Quad And ASEAN Must Learn To Work Together

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/quad-and-asean-must-learn-to-work-together-101692625530090.html>

Indonesia, a key ASEAN member, hosted the leaders' conference in September coined ASEAN centrality—the concept that ASEAN should drive Asia-Pacific architecture. Each member differently sees ASEAN centrality, although some see the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad)—a collaboration including Australia, India, Japan, and the US—as a rival. Due to its unique structure and features, the Quad complements ASEAN rather than replacing it. ASEAN's non-intervention in member nations' affairs has helped economically integrate the region. Balancing China and delivering global public benefits have limited the grouping. China has tighter ties to certain ASEAN members than others, therefore ASEAN has long been concerned about containing China. However, the Quad exists to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific, where China cannot define or reinterpret maritime behaviour rules.

COMMENTS

Dynamics between the ASEAN and the QUAD and their relevance in the larger geopolitical context of the Indo-Pacific:

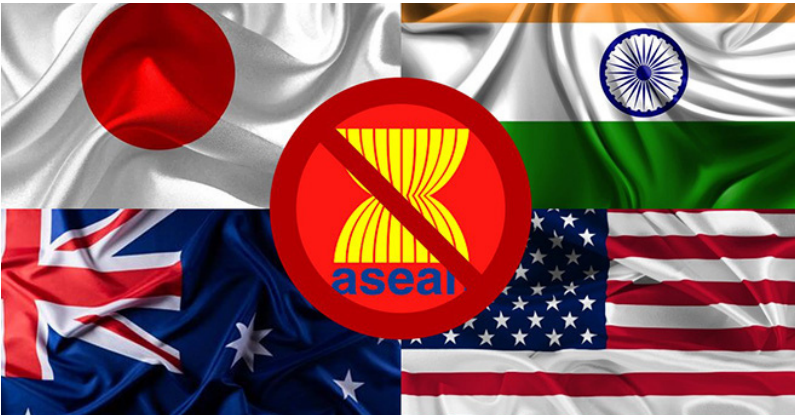
a) **The Centrality of ASEAN.** Indonesia's hosting of the ASEAN leaders' conference exemplifies its pivotal position within the organisation.

b) **ASEAN Centrality.** The text underscores the concept of "ASEAN Centrality" — that ASEAN should be the primary generator of the geopolitical and economic order in the Asia-Pacific region. However, member states' perceptions of this centrality diverge.

c) ASEAN members regard the Quad, which consists of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, as a threat to ASEAN's prominent role in the region. This indicates that there may be concerns about the influence of external powers on the region's dynamics.

Despite these misgivings, the text argues that the Quad's distinctive structure and objectives make it complement to ASEAN, rather than a replacement. This distinction is significant because it implies the possibility of collaboration rather than competition.

The Non-Intervention Principle of ASEAN and the China Factor: - ASEAN's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of its members has fostered trust and facilitated economic integration in the region. The challenge for ASEAN is to strike a balance in its relationship with China, given that some member states have closer ties to Beijing than others. This demonstrates the complexity and diversity of ASEAN-China relations.



Source: OrfOnline

a) Quad, China and Maritime Rules. The primary objective of the Quad is assuring that maritime rules in the Indo-Pacific remain open and is not dominated or redefined by China. This is consistent with ASEAN's concerns regarding Beijing's influence;

b) Mutual Advantages of ASEAN-Quad Cooperation: - Reduced Burden on ASEAN. The objective of the Quad indirectly benefits ASEAN by sharing the burden of sustaining a power balance in the region.

c) The Quad's emphasis on providing global public goods, such as humanitarian aid, infrastructure, digital connectivity, and healthcare, align with ASEAN's broader goals. This similarity can serve as the basis for increased cooperation.

d) Both ASEAN and the Quad have their own unique assets and limitations, as well as the need for partnership. Recognising, this emphasises the significance of a strong partnership between the two will ensure stability in the Indo-Pacific.

In conclusion, this report describes the complexities and opportunities in the relationship between ASEAN and the Quad. The report suggests that while there are challenges and differing perceptions, there exists a compelling case for collaboration, particularly considering the evolving geopolitical landscape moulded primarily by China's role in the region.

Southeast Asia Nations Hold First Joint Navy Drills Near Disputed South China Sea

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/southeast-asia-nations-hold-first-joint-navy-drills-near-disputed-south-china-sea/articleshow/103781186.cms>

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations began its first joint naval exercise on Tuesday at a time when several member countries are responding more strongly to increasing Chinese assertiveness in the area. The non-combat drills, named ASEAN Solidarity Exercise, include joint maritime patrol operations, search and rescue operations, and humanitarian and disaster relief, Indonesian military chief Adm. Yudo Margono said the five-day exercise in Indonesia's Nantua waters aims to boost military ties among the ASEAN nations and enhance interoperability. The drills also involve civilian groups involved in humanitarian relief and disaster prevention. ASEAN nations have taken part in naval exercises before with other countries - including both the United States and China - but this week's drills are the first involving just the bloc and are being read by many as a signal to China.

COMMENTS

- 1. Historical Importance.** This is ASEAN's first combined naval drill with just its member nations, indicating a change in regional security strategy. ASEAN has always been an economic and diplomatic union that makes decisions by agreement. This experiment shows a strategic shift from its prior efforts, which frequently included foreign forces.
- 2. Strategic Nantua Waters Geolocation.** These drills are in Indonesia's Nantua seas for a reason. Due to overlapping territory claims, Indonesia and China have often fought in the waterways. ASEAN may be signalling its support for regional sovereignty and marine rights by choosing this location.
- 3. Drills Are Non-Combat.** The non-combat exercises show a balanced approach to the exercise's vigorous collective activity. ASEAN emphasises regional collaboration on non-traditional security challenges while quietly addressing classic security issues via humanitarian aid, disaster prevention, and search and rescue missions.
- 4. Civilian Collaboration.** Civilian engagement in humanitarian and disaster assistance parts of the exercise shows a comprehensive approach to regional issues. It emphasises the interdependence of military and civilian forces in tackling regional security issues.
- 5. ASEAN Regional Autonomy.** ASEAN countries have historically engaged in naval exercises with major powers like the U.S. and China but holding an exclusive naval exercise may be seen as an expression of its autonomy and relevance in Southeast Asian politics. This implies that ASEAN values its ties with large nations but also wants to be autonomous in regional geopolitics.
- 6. Impact on Sino-ASEAN Relations.** The timing of the drill is noteworthy considering rising Chinese aggression in the area. The story implies that this is a countermeasure to China's operations. The drill may indicate ASEAN's intention to handle China's maritime claims without outright addressing the Asian behemoth.
- 7. Conclusion.** This article successfully shows ASEAN's changing geopolitical role. It shows the bloc's efforts to balance diplomacy, aggressiveness, collaboration, strategic autonomy, and regional objectives with global relationships. The ASEAN Solidarity Exercise shows the bloc's developing strategy for handling Southeast Asia's changing dynamics. India must lend support for ASEAN only formats.

Pakistan National Election To Be Held In Last Week Of Jan 2024, Says Poll Body

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/pakistan-national-election-to-be-held-in-last-week-of-jan-2024-says-poll-body-4410442>

The elections had been due to be held in November, but were delayed by a couple of weeks due to fresh marking of constituencies, according to a new census.

COMMENTS

Three days shy of having completed the tenure of the government, Shehbaz Sharif dissolved the parliament on 9th August 2023 and since then a caretaker government, headed by Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar as the interim Prime Minister, has been running the affairs of cash-strapped Pakistan. The General Elections are required to be held within 90 days of the dissolution of the parliament. However, owing to the requirement of the delimitation exercise that is to be held, there were fears of the General Elections to be delayed indefinitely. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced that the elections will be held in the last week of January 2024. The ECP published the Preliminary Delimitation Report on its website on 27th September 2023 and plans to finalise the list of constituencies and publish it by 30th November 2023 after hearing complaints and comments on the preliminary report. The elections are planned to be conducted in the last week of January 2024 post a 54-day long election programme.

What remains to be seen is whether the Election Commission of Pakistan is able to honour its commitment and meet the deadline it has posted for itself and more importantly, whether any other factors hinder it from achieving the target. The Pakistani military institution, however, is unlikely to remain aloof from the political processes as was confirmed when the interim PM Kakar, on 27th September, commented during an interview, that because of the inefficiency of the civil institutions, the military will continue to play a significant role in the politics of the country.

PNS Babur Commissioning Ceremony Held In Türkiye

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1777735>

The commissioning ceremony of the first Pakistan Navy MILGEM class corvette PNS Babur was held at the Istanbul Naval Shipyard in Türkiye on Sunday.



In a bid to strengthen its naval capabilities, the Pakistan Navy commissioned PNS Babur, the first of the four MILGEM class corvettes being built in collaboration with Türkiye's M/s ASFAT, at Istanbul Naval Shipyard in Türkiye on 24th September 2024. The ceremony was attended by the Defence Minister of Türkiye Yaşar Güler, the Defence Minister of Pakistan Lt Gen Anwar Ali Hayder (Retd) and the Pak Naval Chief Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi. Earlier last month, the Pak Navy had held the launching ceremony of PNS Tariq, another one of its PN MILGEM class ships, at Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works[1] and had commissioned PNS Tipu Sultan and PNS Shahjahan frigates of Chinese origin at Karachi in July 2023[2]. PN MILGEM corvettes are reported to be equipped with two 3-Launcher Surface-to-Surface Guided Missile Systems, two 6-cell Surface-to-Air Guided Missile Systems, a Torpedo Launching System, a 76 mm SUPER RAPID Main Gun, two 25 mm Remote Controlled Stabilized Gun Systems (STOP), a Close Air Defence System. The on-board electronic systems are reported to include the Northrop Grumman LN-270 INS/GPS navigation system, the Sea Eye-AHTAPOT electro-optical surveillance system, the Meteksan YAKAMOS hull-mounted sonar, the SMART-S Mk2 S-Band 3D radar, the AKREP (AKR-D Blok B-1/2) fire control radar, the ARES-2N electronic warfare system and the Hızır torpedo jamming and deception system. The Pak Navy appears to be on a spree to strengthen its naval defence capabilities along with enhancing its indigenous naval ship building capability.

CPEC: China For No More Collab With Pakistan

<https://www.ahmedabadmirror.com/cpec-china-for-no-more-collab-with-pak/81864573.html>

China has refused to further expand cooperation in the areas of energy, water management, and climate change under the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it emerged on September 25th, signalling a strain in the 'ironclad' friendship between the two all-weather allies.

COMMENTS

The flagship project of the multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China, the \$60 billion CPEC connecting Pakistan's Gwadar Port in Balochistan to the Xinjiang province China appears to have hit some hurdles. It has been reported, based on the minutes of the 11th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) of the CPEC that have been signed by Pakistan and China, that there have been a host of proposals by Pakistan towards furthering cooperation under the CPEC that have been turned down by China. The 11th meeting of the JCC was held virtually on 27th October last year but the minutes were signed only on 31st July this year during Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng's visit to Pakistan. This points to the fact that there were differences of opinion between the two countries that resulted in such a big delay in arriving upon solutions agreeable to both sides or rather Pakistan having to relent on its demands.

[1] Geo-Strategic Scan (1-15 August 2023), Volume 8, Issue 1, pp 10, [https://cenjows.in/pdf-view?url=2023/08/Geo Strategic Scan 1-15 Aug2023 CENJOWS.pdf&pID=20915](https://cenjows.in/pdf-view?url=2023/08/Geo%20Strategic%20Scan%201-15%20Aug2023%20CENJOWS.pdf&pID=20915)

[2] Geo-Strategic Scan (16-31 July 2023), Volume 7, Issue 2, pp 11, [https://cenjows.in/pdf-view?url=2023/08/Geo Strategic Scan 16-31 July 2023.pdf&pID=20843](https://cenjows.in/pdf-view?url=2023/08/Geo%20Strategic%20Scan%2016-31%20July%202023.pdf&pID=20843)

Amongst the various proposals of Pakistan disagreed by China are cooperation in the areas of cross-border tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, PoK and cooperation for the promotion of coastal tourism, inclusion of Water Resources Management and Climate Change and Urban Infrastructure Development, inclusion of a 500 kV transmission line from Hub to Gwadar to link the seaport city with the national grid, the South-North gas pipeline project, joint exploration, development and marketing of metallic minerals and transfer of Chinese technology. Pakistan also wanted to either shelve the imported fuel-based 300 MW Gwadar Power Plant project or change its location to Thar to use local coal because of the increasing international coal prices that is resulting in escalating cost of electricity, liquidity and foreign exchange issues for Pakistan. But China has not agreed to the proposal and the existing plan for the project is to be progressed.

No reasons have been cited till now for China not agreeing to the proposals of Pakistan and this means that the two sides are facing challenges in deepening the economic ties. Probably, China is not confident that Pakistan will be able to provide adequate security to the projects and Chinese citizens in the insurgency hit areas of Pakistan. Also, Pakistan appears to have confused the economic cooperation under CPEC by China with economic aid and expects China to continue to infuse money in Pakistan's economy which might help it stay afloat amidst the economic meltdown that it faces. China, in the present economic landscape of Pakistan, might not be very willing to continue to invest in its economy that the former has to bear the brunt of as the prospects of Pakistan's political class uplifting the country out of the economic mess are rather gloomy.

New Rules For Foreign Ships And Planes Allaying India's Concerns

<https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/New-Rules-for-Foreign-Ships-and-Planes-allaying-Indias-concerns/108-267744>

Sri Lanka will unveil the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) shortly setting out guidelines to be followed by foreign ships or aircraft in making a port of call in Sri Lanka and carrying out activities in territorial waters, a top source said.

COMMENTS

During the 3rd Annual Indo-pacific Islands Dialogue on the sideline of the UN General Assembly, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced that his country will soon be dishing out a SOP to deal with granting permissions to foreign ships or aircraft visiting Sri Lanka. The SOP is likely to stipulate the kind of vessels and aircraft allowed in Sri Lankan territory, the number of days to stay in the country and the type of activities allowed to be undertaken. The SOP has been prepared in response to the security concerns raised by other countries when vessels or aircraft visit Sri Lanka. Reportedly, the SOP incorporates the amendments that have been proposed by India.

This SOP is supposed to address the concerns raised by countries like India and the US when Chinese vessels visit Sri Lankan ports and conduct surveys in the Indian Ocean waters thereby exposing the installations in southern parts of India and the IOR where naval assets of the US also ply. However, how much control will Sri Lanka have on the actual activities carried out by these vessels is anybody's guess.

Following India, U.S. Raises Concerns Over Chinese Vessel With Sri Lanka Govt

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/following-india-us-raises-chinese-vessel-visit-with-colombo/article67345759.ece#:~:text=Following%20India%2C%20the%20U.S.%20has%20raised%20concern%20with%20the%20Ranil,Colombo%2Dbased%20media%20has%20reported>

Following India, the U.S. has raised concern with the Ranil Wickremesinghe administration, over the scheduled visit of a Chinese research vessel to Sri Lanka in October, Colombo-based media has reported.

COMMENTS

A Chinese vessel 'Shi Yan 6' is planned to visit Sri Lanka in the second half of October 2023. India has raised security concerns over the upcoming visit of the Chinese vessel as it exposes the vital installations and ports in southern India to the spy activities that these vessels may conduct. The US too has expressed its concerns over the visit. India had earlier too voiced its objection to the visit of the Chinese ballistic missile & satellite tracking ship, Yuan Wang 5, when it docked at Hambantota port of Sri Lanka in August last year for a week. As per the Chinese, the Shi Yan 6 is a scientific research vessel that will be involved in oceanography, marine geology and marine ecology tests along with the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry has maintained that till now, permission has not been granted to the vessel to dock in Sri Lanka. He said that if the application for vessel's visit complies with the newly formulated SOP dealing with visits of foreign ships and aircraft, then being a neutral country, Sri Lanka will have to grant the permission. It has been conveyed that Sri Lankan personnel from NARA will be onboard Shi Yan 6 during the research activities and all the research data will be in their possession and that Sri Lanka will not let any activity detrimental to India's security interests from taking place.

Sri Lanka is reeling under a severe economic crisis and trying to recover from it with the help of IMF's bailout package and that of its bilateral lenders. India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour and has already helped it with USD 4 billion. China is its largest bilateral lender and Sri Lanka owes China USD 3 billion. President Wickremesinghe walks a tightrope right now and expects help from both India and China to help restructure its external debt and therefore, cannot afford to align with either. He recently dismissed the claims that the Chinese vessels were spy ships and asserted that they were research vessels. In the given circumstances, though Sri Lanka assures that the Chinese will not be let to snoop around with their vessels, one can clearly see its ability to do so is largely jeopardised.

Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference (IPACC), Indo-Pacific Armies Management Seminar (IPAMS), Senior Enlisted Leaders Form (SELF)-2023 Culminated

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1961331>

A three day event, IPACC, IPAMS and SELF-2023, organised by the Indian Army with the US Army as the co-host culminated today in New Delhi. The event witnessed participation from 30 countries. 18 countries were represented by Chiefs of their respective Armies and 12 countries were represented by Heads of Delegations. The event provided an opportunity for the delegates to exchange ideas and views on security and other contemporary issues of mutual interest, with core efforts directed to promote 'Peace and Stability' in the Indo-Pacific region.

The event commenced with a call-on by General Randy George, the Chief of Staff (COS) of the US Army to General Manoj Pande, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Indian Army on 25th September 2023. Both Chiefs discussed issues of mutual interest and shared views on contemporary issues.

COMMENTS

Indian Army and the US Army co-hosted a three-day event, Indo-Pacific Army Management Seminar (IPAMS), Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference (IPACC) and Senior Enlisted Leadership Forum (SELF) -2023, in New Delhi, which saw participation from thirty countries. IPACC, one of the largest conference for Land Forces is co-hosted annually by US Army Pacific (USARPAC) along with another country. IPAMS focuses on understanding regional challenges and building relationships, while SELF allows enlisted soldiers/JCOs/NCOs to share views. The Indian Army co-hosted the latest editions in New Delhi in September 2023.



Source: The Print

The event aimed at promoting 'Peace and Stability' in the Indo-Pacific region and facilitated discussions on security and regional issues. There was emphasis on collective responsibility, sharing of best practices, and the importance of open dialogue in the Indo-Pacific region. The event held significant importance for India because it will commence its strategic collaboration with global powers, especially with the US.

This strengthens India's position geopolitically and can have long-term benefits for India's trade, security, and diplomatic relations. India's hosting and engaging in open dialogues with numerous countries indicates its proactive approach in military diplomacy, which can pave the way for further strategic partnerships and collaborations. Most importantly, India's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiative and the display of indigenous military equipment highlights India's commitment to self-reliance in defence production. This not only boosts domestic industry but also positions India as a potential exporter in the global defence market. The event also provided a platform to exhibit its intent in addressing contemporary issues like climate change vulnerabilities and humanitarian assistance.

Gen. Manoj Pande, the Chief of the Indian Army, assured India's commitment to ensuring a free and stable Indo-Pacific. He guaranteed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, amidst growing concerns over China's influence and assertiveness in the region. The Army Chief drew upon the words of India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar and quoted: "to say that we have skin in the game is an understatement. I think we have vital stakes today in ensuring that the Indo-Pacific is stable, that it is secured, that there is cooperation, and that the focus is on the right things."

Building on this sentiment, the US Army Chief, Randy George, underlined the Indo-Pacific's significance for the US and highlighted the importance of the security network built through IPACC.

On the sidelines of the event, the COAS Indian Army also held bilateral meetings with Chiefs of the armies of the participating countries. He held one to one discussions with General Morishita Yasunori (Japan), Lieutenant General Simon Stuart (Australia), Lieutenant General Mnguyen Doan Anh (Vietnam), Lieutenant General Peter Mbogo Njiru (Kenya), Prasiddha Prabal Janesewashree General Prabhu Ram Sharma (Nepal), General Sheikh Md Shafiuddin Ahmed (Bangladesh), Major General John Boswell (New Zealand), General Sir Patrick Sanders (UK), Lieutenant General Mao Sophan (Cambodia), General Jung Hwan Park, Republic of Korea, General Pierre Schill (France) and General Datuk Muhammad Hafizuddeain Bin Jantan (Malaysia). Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar, Vice Chief of the Army Staff also held bilateral meetings with the heads of delegations of Brazil, Singapore, Mongolia and Thailand.[1] Moreover, Brazil has expressed a keen interest in acquiring weaponry from India, with a particular focus on artillery. They are in the process of dispatching a group of specialists to assess the available weapon systems.

Brazilian Army Chief, General Fernando Jose' Sant'ana Soares e Silva, while speaking to Times Now stated that preliminary talks have taken place regarding the potential acquisition of approximately 40 Indian-manufactured 155mm howitzers. The General mentioned that he has personally examined both artillery systems, namely the Dhanush, an enhanced version of the Bofors gun, and the ATAGS weapon designed by DRDO and manufactured by Baba Kalyani. He expressed his admiration for the quality and cost-effectiveness of these systems, stating,

"They are of high quality and cost less."

Following the initial evaluation by a Brazilian army delegation, discussions about pricing can commence, he added.

The other deal under consideration is distinct: a potential exchange. Gen Silva affirmed:

"We have a keen interest in acquiring the Aakash anti-aircraft system, and in return, we are willing to offer our Embraer aircraft."

India has already been using Embraer aircraft, typically for VIP transportation, and they have performed satisfactorily.[1]

However, China's response to such a dialogue can never be ignored. China might view it as a strategic move to counter its influence in the region. This might encourage China to reiterate its stance on the South China Sea and increase its naval presence in the Indo-Pacific region as a show of strength and commitment to its claims.

Beijing might also not hesitate to intensify its engagement with other countries in the region, either through diplomatic means or by economic incentives.

Overall, events like these accentuate India's growing role and influence in the Indo-Pacific region and globally. This could potentially lead India to enhance its partnerships, increased security cooperation, and a strengthened position in international forums.

In New York, Quad Foreign Ministers Reaffirm Commitment To Indo-Pacific

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/in-new-york-quad-foreign-ministers-reaffirm-commitment-to-indopacific-101695406293159.html>

The Quad is committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient and to a region that is peaceful and prosperous, stable and secure, free from intimidation and coercion, and where disputes are settled in accordance with international law, the foreign ministers of the group's four countries have reaffirmed.



Source: The Hindustan Times

COMMENTS

In the meeting, the QUAD members reaffirmed their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive, resilient, peaceful, prosperous, and stable. They specifically reviewed the commitments made at the Hiroshima summit to deepen cooperation, including on infrastructure through the “Quad Infrastructure Fellowships Program” and “the Quad Partnership for Cable Connectivity and Resilience”. Maritime Security remained a significant agenda in the recent meeting too. The Quad Maritime Security Group so far has been able to drive practical and positive outcomes for the region, through initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness. Commitment to international law and sovereignty, along with climate and renewable energy, health security, technology and cybersecurity, remained other pivotal areas of focus among the QUAD members. Apart from these, a notable development observed from the recent QUAD meetings is the enthusiasm of QUAD leaders to enhance telecommunications infrastructure throughout the Indo-Pacific. Particularly in the island nation of Palau in the Western Pacific Ocean. They began collaborating with Palau to introduce Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN) capabilities, marking the first such initiative in the Pacific. This move towards Open RAN capabilities underscores a strong dedication to updating the telecommunications framework in the Pacific region. Overall, the Quad has achieved success in many of its endeavors and goals, including areas such as health security, drug distribution, infrastructure, and counter-terrorism efforts, among others. Building upon the G7's introduction of the Build Back Better World (B3W) now “The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)”, there have been aims among the members to boost sustainable infrastructure investment, targeting USD 600 billion by 2027 to bridge infrastructure gaps. It addresses key issues like climate change, supply chain resilience, digital connectivity, health systems, and gender equity. The G7 plans to align it with Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) for added impact. [3]

Similarly, Quad Working Group on Counter-Terrorism was created to collaborate with the Indo-Pacific partners to address new and rising forms of terrorism. The Quad Counter-Terrorism Policy Meetings encouraged Tabletop exercise on counter-terrorism.

Today, Quad's goals have evolved beyond merely addressing China's aggressive actions in the region. While concerns about China's behavior initially united Quad members, the group has now effectively addressed various global human security issues, indicating its broader success and impact.

[1] Press Information Bureau (2023), “Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference (IPACC), Indo-Pacific Armies Management Seminar (IPAMS), Senior Enlisted Leaders Forum (SELF)- 2023 Culminated”, Government of India, [Online: web], Accessed: 2 October 2023, URL: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1961331>

[2] Srinjoy Chowdhury, (2023), “Exclusive: Brazil Keen on Buying Indian Artillery Drones, Air Defence Systems”, Times Now, [Online: web], Accessed: 2 October 2023, URL: <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/exclusive-brazil-keen-on-buying-indian-artillery-drones-air-defence-systems-article-103982086>

[3] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022), “Factsheet on the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment”, [Online: web], Accessed: 2 October 2023, URL: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100506918.pdf>

Biden Makes New Pledges To Pacific Island Leaders As China's Influence Grows

[https://www.reuters.com/world/us-recognize-independence-two-small-pacific-nations-biden-2023-09-25/#:~:text=WASHINGTON%2C%20Sept%2025%20\(Reuters\),region%20Washington%20consider%20strategically%20crucial](https://www.reuters.com/world/us-recognize-independence-two-small-pacific-nations-biden-2023-09-25/#:~:text=WASHINGTON%2C%20Sept%2025%20(Reuters),region%20Washington%20consider%20strategically%20crucial).

WASHINGTON, Sept 25 (Reuters) - President Joe Biden met Pacific Island leaders for a second White House summit in just over a year on Monday, part of a charm offensive aimed at curbing inroads by China into a region Washington considers strategically crucial. Before welcoming the island leaders, gathered under the umbrella of the 18-nation Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Biden announced U.S. diplomatic recognition of two more Pacific islands nations, the Cook Islands and Niue.

COMMENTS

The United States is expanding its partnership with the Pacific Island as a measure to counter belligerent China. In September 2022, the US released its first 'US-Pacific Partnership Strategy' that highlighted the country's commitment to forge stronger relations with the Pacific Island groups to uphold the US-Pacific Islands historic relations and also at the same time engage in a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

The diplomatic recognition by the US of the Cook and Niue Islands is an attempt by the US to increase its Pacific regional architecture and also additionally bolster committed relations within and beyond the region. The US has also mentioned to assist the Pacific Island nations to combat climate change, build resilient maritime economy and also counter the illegal fishing in the region. An additional \$64 million for development assistance across the region to prioritize the 2050 Strategy for 'Blue Pacific Continent' was also promised in the meeting. [1] The statement from the White House further announced the Biden Administration's plan to increase and build digital.



Source: Kyodo News

PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

connectivity with other allies of the US i.e, Australia and Japan. The US has also pledged to provide an additional \$750,000 that shall be utilized to plan and deliver an 'Annual Pacific Cyber Capacity and Coordination Conference'. [2] In terms of maritime security, the US pledged to intensify its maritime domain awareness as part of the 'Indo-Pacific Partnership For Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative.

The US security outlook for the Pacific Islands has existed throughout history and it is only now that the contours of relationships have changed and intensified. A belligerent China and its revisionist attributes have created imbalances that pose threat to US security architecture in the region. Washington needs to forge multilateral relations with its allies like Japan and Australia to engage further with the Pacific Island countries.

The close interaction can be viewed in the light of an attempt by Washington to 're-shape the strategic environment and create a sphere of favourable interests' with its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. However, it is imperative for the US to broaden its interaction and ability to engage with individual stake holders in the region that may truly assist in a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific Strategy, with the US emerging as a credible and consistent partner if it has to counter China's incursions in the region.

India is also integrating plans for the Pacific Island countries as unveiled in 12 Development points by PM Narendra Modi at the Forum For India-Pacific Islands Cooperation held at Papua New Guinea. India unveiled its plans for the Pacific Island Countries as part of its 'Act East Policy'. The plan of action undertaken by the US and India shows a diplomatic convergence for the Pacific Island countries.

Solomon Islands Joins China-Backed AIIB Days After PM Snubs Biden Invite For Pacific Summit At White House

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3235987/solomon-islands-joins-china-backed-aiib-days-after-pm-snubs-biden-invite-pacific-leaders-summit>

Solomon Islands has joined the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) days after its leader snubbed an invitation to meet US President Joe Biden at a Pacific summit. Solomon Islands joins the bank alongside the Central American nation of El Salvador, which deepened its relationship with Beijing a few years after switching ties from Taipei. Tanzania, another key Beijing ally and where China has vast interests, has also been admitted as a prospective member.

COMMENTS

The admission of Solomon Islands to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) takes the total number of countries to 109 indicating a great triumph on part of the Chinese government. The AIIB’s inception was to make use of the Chinese foreign currency reserves in the backdrop of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. However, today, the AIIB has accomplished to be the most functional multilateral developmental institution within Asia and beyond.

Solomon Islands and China have started to strengthen bilateral relations that connects and provides the latter an access to Solomon Islands’ defence and economic infrastructure. Beijing is committed to expand and revive the great Chinese hegemony as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. The alleged security pact signed between the two countries has allowed Beijing to penetrate in the South Pacific region and further expand military activities that pose counter to the US security architecture. Although US continues to increase its diplomatic engagements with the Solomon Islands, it is evident that the latter has already calculated its position both geoeconomically and geopolitically.

India is one of the largest shareholders in the AIIB and presently has received funds for infrastructure projects including energy and transportation. [3] In the context of great power rivalry between the US and China, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as a significant geopolitical region. The Pacific Island nations are now presented with a ‘renewed’ geopolitical advantage and many opportunities that could further accelerate growth and investment in the region. Great power competition is only indicative of increasing opportunities for the Pacific Island countries. Alternatively, these island countries are increasingly binding the US and China into a web of Pacific obligations that in turn could restrain ‘adventurism’ by both powers in the region. [4]



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 [2] Ibid
 [3] “Evolving Perspectives on AIIB” Indian Council of World Affairs, June 21, 2019. https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=4791&lid=2210
 [4] “America Is Lavishing Attention On Pacific Island States” The Economist, May 25, 2023. https://www.economist.com/asia/2023/05/25/america-is-lavishing-attention-on-pacific-island-states?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=17210591673&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gclid=Cj0KCCQjw1OmoBhDXARIsAAAYGSEsNWhIUbW6c0Vyb2l0QS8vQX74IMEMVpFVNngsd3xUTKwFwEBkGX4aArVYEALw_wcB&gclidsrc=aw.ds

Turkey Will Back Sweden's NATO Bid If U.S. Keeps Promise On F-16 Sale - Erdogan

<https://www.reuters.com/world/turkey-will-back-swedens-nato-bid-if-us-keeps-promise-f-16-sale-erdogan-2023-09-26/>

Turkey's parliament will keep its promise to ratify Sweden's NATO bid if U.S. President Joe Biden's administration paves the way for F-16 jet sales to Ankara, President Tayyip Erdogan said, according to Turkish media.

COMMENTS

The ambiguity surrounding Sweden's application increased on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's meeting with US President Joe Biden. Following the decision to drop Turkey out of the F-35 joint fighter programme, Ankara requested 40 new F-16s and 79 modification kits. The primary hurdle in securing the \$20 billion sale was Senator Menendez's position as chairperson of the Foreign Relations Committee. His decision not to authorise the deal primarily revolved around Sweden's membership in NATO and also issues like border confrontations with Greece and Turkey's detention of candidates from opposition and reporters. However, the Biden administration maintains that the probable transfer of F-16 fighter planes has little impact on Turkey's decision to end its resistance to the Swedish membership[1].

The Turkish parliament is yet to ratify the decision for the Swedish NATO accession request but President Erdogan reflected Turkey's stance as 'quid pro quo' to the F-16 deal, [2] highlighting Turkey's foreign policy towards its Western allies. Further, Turkey's admission to the EU has been at a standstill since 2018 owing to President Erdogan's democratic slide and disagreements over Cyprus.

For many years, congressional law had an effect on the U.S.-Turkey defence partnership [3], and Ankara has persistently tapped into exports from the United States for sophisticated platforms. A few of earlier proposed American arms deals with Turkey had either ceased or reportedly been blocked by Congress; this primarily may be due to disagreements between the two countries regarding the transfer of technology and disputes over Russia and Syria. The current deal is supported by the White House [4], in attempts to repair the strained ties with Turkey, triggered by America's defence partnership with the self-declared YPG government in control of Syria's northeast and Turkish procurement of Russian S-400 anti-missile systems. Lately, Stockholm has focused on reducing Ankara's concerns over the Kurdish terrorists in Sweden, while Greece and Turkey are attempting to mend relations. [5]

Reports allude that Turkey is looking into Eurofighter Typhoons as a possible F-16 alternative. [6] There are problems that might make such acquisitions more difficult: uncertainty over the Typhoon consortium partners' (Spain, UK, Germany & Italy) approval and it is speculated that Germany is preventing the shipment of certain elements to the Turkish armaments sector.

Turkey's pursuit of buying an F-16 probably intensified given the country's capacity to support NATO militarily in any security crisis. Turkey maintains significant allied facilities with the second-biggest military in NATO and the third-biggest F-16 fleet globally; collaborating alongside the alliance in various capacities, through participating in operations promoting stability of the Baltic and Mediterranean regions. Hence its alliance with NATO remains uncertain if it is unable to acquire F-16s and runs into difficulties acquiring European options. The TF-X Kaan, Turkey's native fighter project's first aircraft, is on standby ahead of its first test flight in December this year, as budgetary issues might stymie the program's effectiveness, regardless of whether the nation pursues collaborators for the programme. Pakistan and Azerbaijan as partners are seen as potential players who could fill these defence procurement gaps in sectors where Turkey's domestic defence industry is unable to create the necessary capabilities given that its' Western allies keep blocking, the efforts to modernise its defence.

US-Saudi Defence Pact Tied To Israel Deal, Palestinian Demands Put Aside

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us-saudi-defence-pact-tied-israel-deal-palestinian-demands-put-aside-2023-09-29/>

Saudi Arabia is determined to secure a military pact requiring the United States to defend the kingdom in return for opening ties with Israel and will not hold up a deal even if Israel does not offer major concessions to Palestinians in their bid for statehood, three regional sources familiar with the talks said.

COMMENTS



Source: India Today

Establishing a deal within a triad of nations whose goals don't precisely align in crucial areas, presents significant challenges that are, in fact, ingrained in the requests made by the various parties. For Saudi, the demand for a United States security commitment [7] appears to carry greater consequences than it does benefits. Americans have aversions to foreign involvement and the idea of American "boots on the ground,"[8] agreeing to defend the Saudi monarchy in a traditionally unstable region of the globe violates this view. Additionally, if a deal like this were to be designated as a "treaty," a majority of the members of the Senate would be required to vote in favour. [9]

The Palestinian problem might ultimately decide how this deal plays out. The American government and the Saudi leadership explicitly anticipate the deal to contribute towards positive milestones in the two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Palestinians have apparently delivered a list [10] of demands for the Americans and Israelis while actively participating in the negotiation process with the Saudis. [11] Development on this front appears to be necessary due to American politics, Saudi reservations on regional security, and the Palestinians' ingrained observations about the Abraham Accords and deliberate attempts to influence and profit from what they perceive to be a necessary consent. Earlier Saudi Arabia has requested America for permission to build a civilian nuclear programme [12] in exchange for improving ties with Israel. Jerusalem sought clarity regarding the same. Further, Israel's acceptance into the US Visa Waiver Programme capped [13] a decades-long campaign.

Alternatively, for America, this could be viewed as a significant foreign policy victory, improving its regional cooperation by expanding the Abraham Accords with a key player; reinvigorating popularity, or possibly emphasising interest in the political scope of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute; while trying to reduce China's growing influence within the Middle East. By getting Saudi Arabia, the defender of Islam's sacred locations, to recognise the Jewish state, President Biden hopes to reaffirm America's position in the region and win political success during election season. Normalisation between Israel and the Saudis would significantly change Israel's position in the area and potentially within the larger Islamic world, in addition to bringing about anticipated financial advantages.

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