

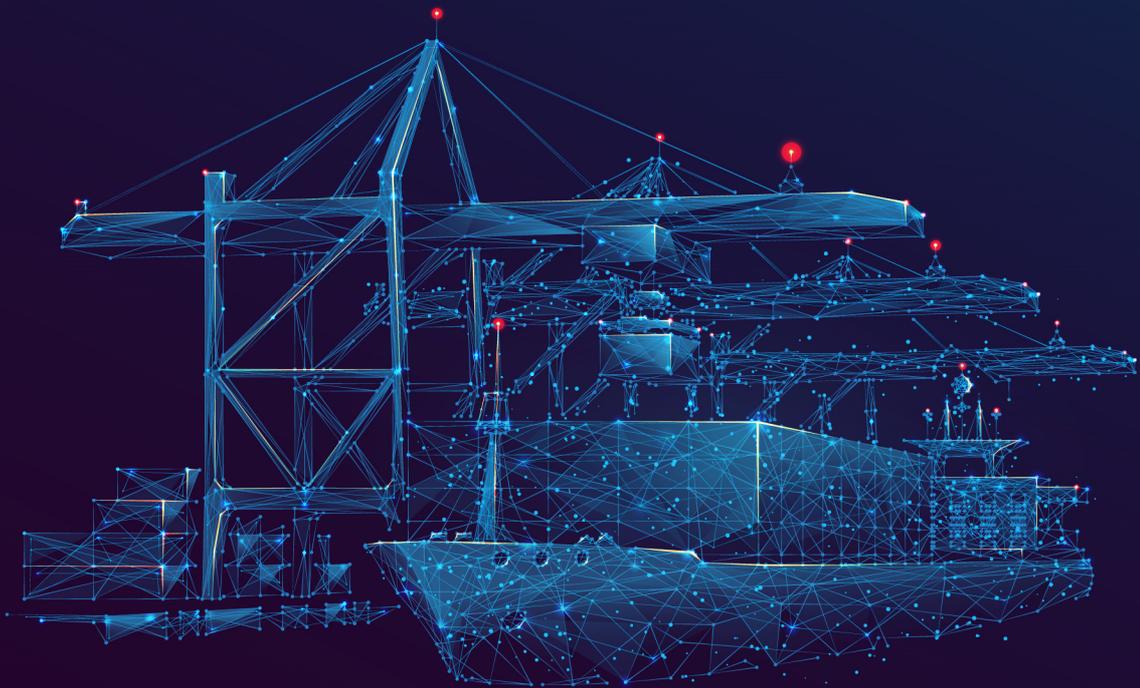
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Navigating the Stormy “Indo-Pacific”

How the Quad, AUKUS, & US-China Competition Shape Pakistan's Choices

Ejaz Haider



Bismillah irr Rahman irr Rahim

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Navigating the Stormy Indo-Pacific: How the Quad, AUKUS, & US-China Competition Shape Pakistan's Choices

Ejaz Haider

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Executive Summary

- Relations between the United States and China are likely to become more adversarial. The US policy has clearly moved from one of engaging China to considering it a peer competitor. The shift came during President Donald Trump's tenure but has endured under President Joe Biden's administration. The trend, given the bipartisan consensus in the US, will continue.
- China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, has broken away from the policy under Presidents Deng Xiaoping, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin of staying below the radar and only focusing on the economy. Xi has also centralized power and done away with the two-tenure limit introduced by Deng, getting himself elected for a life-term. China has accelerated its military modernization, R&D in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, lethal autonomous weapons, hypersonic weapons, directed energy weapons, biotechnology, and quantum technology.¹
- Assessments by western experts, as also information put out by Chinese analysts, indicate that China aims to "become the global leader in technologies emerging from advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics."² While China asserts that this strategy is vital for accelerating the transformation of China's economy and building it into a cyber power, the US and its allies point to the military applications of China's advancements.
- In keeping with Xi's policy of asserting China's place in the world, Beijing has become more assertive in both East and South China Seas. This has made Japan and Australia, as also the ASEAN countries nervous. This is also one of the main areas of friction between China and the US-led coalition of states.
- The US' shift from an Asia-Pacific strategy to an "Indo-Pacific" strategy is an expression of Washington's threat perception from a more assertive China. While the US couches it in the narrative of upholding a rules-based order and freedom of navigation, Washington wants to reassert its primacy in the region, which it has successfully maintained since World War II.
- China claims that it has no interest in disturbing the sea-lanes of communication in South China Sea because those SLOCs are the lifelines for China's economy. But as is clear from the reaction from ASEAN states, they are not convinced that China's power projection is merely benign.
- While the ASEAN nations are concerned about China's more assertive behaviour, the US countermoves in the form of freedom-of-navigation operations, the formation of QUAD and AUKUS make them equally nervous.
- Pakistan has two primary concerns with reference to growing US-China tensions. Will it have to choose between the US and China? While Pakistan has a deep strategic partnership with China, Islamabad also has a long history of relations with the US. During the 1950s and 60s, Pakistan was referred to as the most allied ally. Despite ups and downs in US-Pakistan relations, the US remains Pakistan's biggest export market. Pakistan's military in the first four decades of the country's existence, relied heavily on the US for military supplies. If relations between the US and China deteriorate further, the number of issues on which Pakistan will be

expected by both the US and China to side with them will inevitably increase. If the US adds China to its Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, Pakistan could face sanctions for its military exports from China and other joint-production programmes.

- AUKUS and events in South China Sea do not directly impact Pakistan. But QUAD and the concept of Indo-Pacific do because of the growing strategic partnership between India and the US. The US wants India to play a more active maritime role and is also eager to enhance India's military capabilities. The possibility of growing military asymmetry between India and Pakistan is an obvious cause of concern for the latter. Pakistan-India relations have reached a new low since 2014 and there is no real possibility of the resumption of dialogue between the two sides unless India gets a different government in 2023 which is also prepared to roll back India's illegal annexation of Occupied Kashmir in August 2019.
- At this moment, there are three schools of thought about what is likely to come next between the US and China: the US and China (and with them the world) are poised to enter a new cold war; the two have already entered a new cold war. Both these approaches propound the conflictual model that inheres in the Structural Realist approach to peer competition; the third projection refutes the inevitability of a conflict and argues that "competition does not necessarily lead to conflict" and the US and China should be able to manage their bilateral relations and strive towards coexistence despite their competition.
- The situation has been further compounded by Russia's approach to security in Europe. This is evident by President Vladimir Putin's decision to order an all-out offensive against Ukraine, a sovereign state which Russia deems a threat because of Ukraine's desire to lean towards the European Union and NATO.
- Some three weeks before ordering the Ukraine offensive, Putin had met with Xi ahead of the Winter Olympics. The meeting was widely billed as a "show of unity" as the situation deteriorated between Russia and Ukraine. China has abstained from condemning the war, signalling that Russia-China relations will have a bearing on US/NATO China policy.
- As the visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to Moscow and Islamabad's decision to not participate in the UNGA emergency session on Ukraine showed, in some situations countries will have to make choices. This is also true of US' disappointment with reference to India's decision to abstain from voting against Russia while being a member of QUAD. Going forward the frequency of states being forced to make choices will likely increase. Pakistan must prepare itself for charting choppy waters.

1 The Road to a US-China World

Five weeks after he was sworn in as Secretary of State, Antony Blinken made his first speech at the US Department of State. Blinken described America's relationship with China as "the biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century". "China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system". He defined that system, somewhat honestly, as comprising "all the rules, values, and relationships *that make the world work the way we want it to, because it ultimately serves the interests and reflects the values of the American people.*" (Italics added) His punchline: "Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be."³ This was on March 3, 2021.

He was to repeat this two weeks later, on March 18, in Anchorage, Alaska when he met China's Director of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi, along with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. That meeting began explosively after two brief statements by Blinken and Sullivan. Blinken made clear that the US has "deep concerns with actions by China, including in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan, cyber-attacks on the United States, and economic coercion toward our allies. Each of these actions threaten the rules-based order that maintains global stability. That's why they're not merely internal matters and why we feel an obligation to raise these issues here today." In response, Director Yang said that "what China and the international community follow or uphold is the United Nations-centred international system and the international order underpinned by international law, not what is advocated by a small number of countries of the so-called 'rules-based' international order." He reminded his US interlocutors that "[China does] not believe in invading [other states] through the use of force, or to topple other regimes through various means, or to massacre the people of other countries, because all of those would only cause turmoil and instability in this world."⁴

The Anchorage exchange has come to typify relations between China and the US. But relations were going sour much before this exchange. In his meeting with China's President Xi Jinping on September 25, 2015, US President Barack Obama spoke about US concerns over what he described as cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property. The two leaders settled on a cyber-agreement at the two-day summit.⁵ It was the first time that a US president warned China of countervailing measures. On September 16, days before Xi's state visit, Obama called the alleged Chinese cyber-theft of trade secrets "an act of aggression that has to stop." In the same statement, he warned that the US government is "prepared to [impose] some countervailing actions to get their [China's] attention." For his part, Xi stated that "both government[s] will not be engaged in or knowingly support online theft of intellectual properties."⁶

While China's rise, cyber-warfare, and military modernisation were topics that had begun to engage US policy circles as early as 2000 and picked up steam by 2011, tensions began to rise in actual terms with President Donald Trump's arrival in the Oval Office. Obama's 2011 Pivot to Asia was meant to compete with China economically and to counter China's growing clout. However, as reflected in US National Security Strategy documents (2011; 2015), the Obama administration, while growing wary of China, sought to partner it.⁷ That changed with Trump. Trump walked out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the agreement which was the centrepiece of Obama's Pivot to Asia, on his first day in office.

1.1 The Trump Effect

Trump's four years in office have set the tone for more confrontational US-China relations. Analyses, policy briefs, newspaper op-eds and books increasingly talk about this relationship as the most critical foreign policy issue for the United States. The Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School initiated a project under Graham Allison, a Harvard professor, which resulted in the 2017 book *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* The term, Thucydides Trap, has since gained wide currency. The book defines it as "a deadly pattern of structural stress that results when a rising power challenges a ruling one," and uses Thucydides' statement to that effect: "It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made [the Peloponnesian] war inevitable." The debate has since seen views on both sides: a conflict is inevitable; a conflict can be avoided.⁸ The book itself looked at sixteen cases over a period of five hundred years to see how the trap has worked. In four cases, three in the last century, "imaginative statecraft averted war." While the debate continues, there is a clear sense both in the US and China that "after Trump came to power in 2017, US policy on China officially shifted from strategic engagement to strategic competition, and the Sino-US relationship underwent a fundamental transformation."⁹

Even those who fight shy of predicting a hot conflict seem to believe that the world is headed towards another cold war. In a November-December 2021 Foreign Affairs article, "The New Cold War America, China, and the Echoes of History", Hal Brands and John Lewis Gaddis write, "Is the world entering a new cold war? Our answer is yes and no. Yes, if we mean a protracted international rivalry... No, if we mean the Cold War, which we capitalize because it originated and popularized the term." Another essay in the same issue of Foreign Affairs by John Mearsheimer, "The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics", makes the Realist case for US-China peer competition: "Today, China and the United States are locked in what can only be called a new cold war—an intense security competition that touches on every dimension of their relationship. This rivalry will test U.S. policymakers more than the original Cold War did, as China is likely to be a more powerful competitor than the Soviet Union was in its prime. And this cold war is more likely to turn hot."

1.2 The Biden Compulsion: Stuck in Trump's World?

Eight days before former United States President Donald Trump left the Oval Office, he instructed his administration to declassify a very sensitive national security document, the US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific.¹⁰ The document's original declassification date was December 31, 2042. The Trump administration, which had originally marked the document for release on January 5, 2021, finally released it on January 12. The document, which was put together in 2018 and followed the overarching strategy laid out in the National Security Strategy (NSS) 2017, details a US strategy that must focus on the Indo-Pacific to "[maintain] US strategic primacy," counter "Chinese predatory economic practices," and prevent China from establishing "illiberal spheres of influence". This, as the document reveals, must be done with the support of Australia, Japan, and South Korea. The document also mentions India, arguing that the US must help accelerate "India's rise as a major defence partner" to "counterbalance...China."¹¹

The NSS 2017 mentions China thirty-three times and describes it as a “revisionist power”. It conceded, however, that “competition does not always mean hostility, nor does it inevitably lead to conflict”¹². The Strategic Framework, however, talked about deterring China’s military power and developing the capabilities “to defeat Chinese actions across the spectrum of conflict”. According to analysis published by National Public Radio, “critics say that by publicly releasing the document, the Trump administration was trying to bind the incoming Biden administration to its policies, while confirming China’s worst fears about U.S. intentions.”¹³

As noted, America’s concerns about China predate Trump, but 2016 marked an inflection point in US policy—both in terms of rising anti-China rhetoric as well as concrete policy actions that strove to target China’s economy, technological development, and military modernization. Trump sanctioned Chinese companies and individuals, started a tariff war, and took measures that aimed to stem China’s strides in cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, cloud computing and quantum technologies. That trend has continued under President Joe Biden’s administration. French diplomat, and currently senior fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, Frederic Grare, called the AUKUS agreement, “Trumpism by another name”.¹⁴

The new administration’s approach was first put out in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance. While the document talked about “strategic competition” with China, it went on to say that it “should not... preclude [the US from] working with China when it is in our national interest to do so.” It also spoke about “democratic alliances” as “America’s greatest strategic asset” in the effort to “hold countries like China to account.”¹⁵ This language was in keeping with the Foreign Affairs article penned by Joe Biden in June 2020.¹⁶ There was initially a sense that, unlike Trump, Biden would be more circumspect in picking his battles with China and would also reduce the shrillness of anti-China rhetoric which defined the Trump presidency. That has not really happened. For instance, while the “White House officials insist their trade vision is a marked departure from the Trump era...key elements of Trump China trade policy...remain intact.” The US Trade Representative, Katherine Tai, indicated in a speech on October 4, 2021 that “the administration won’t take any tools off the table, including the possibility of additional tariffs in the future.”¹⁷ Where the Biden administration has departed from the Trump-era policies is with respect to traditional US allies. This is in keeping with Biden’s insistence on working “with its allies and partners to mobilize collective action on global threats.”

1.3 America’s Strategic Options on China

The China threat for the US is not just about Beijing’s “unfair” trade practices but a sense that China is a “revisionist” power and is employing political, economic and military means to upstage the US as the world leader. An Atlantic Council paper, “The Longer Telegram: Towards a New American China Strategy,” penned by Anonymous seeks to replicate George Kennan’s historic 1946 long telegram that set the stage for the US’ containment policy against the Soviet Union. Anonymous, according to Fredrick Kempe, executive editor of the Atlantic Council’s editorial board, is “a former senior government official with deep expertise and experience dealing with China.” The paper seeks to identify the broad spectrum of threats posed by China and stresses the need for the US to “develop an integrated, operational, and bipartisan national strategy to guide the content and implementation of US policy toward Xi’s China for the next three decades.”

The paper lists the areas of concern from the US perspective. It is instructive to quote the concerns listed by Anonymous in full to get a sense of the range of issues that inform the US' threat perception vis-a-vis China. The article says that China wants to "leapfrog the United States as a technological power and thereby displace it as the world's dominant economic power; undermine US dominance of the global financial system and the status of the US dollar as the global reserve currency; achieve military preponderance sufficient to deter the United States and its allies from intervention in any conflict over Taiwan¹⁸, the South China Sea, or the East China Sea; diminish the credibility of US power and influence sufficiently to cause those states currently inclined to 'balance' against China to instead join the bandwagon with China; deepen and sustain China's relationship with its neighbour and most valuable strategic partner, Russia, in order to head off Western pressure; consolidate the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) into a geopolitical and geo-economic bloc in support of China's policy ambitions, forming the foundation for a future Sinocentric global order; use China's growing influence within international institutions to delegitimize and overturn initiatives, standards, and norms perceived as hostile to China's interests—particularly on human rights and international maritime law—while advancing a new, hierarchical, authoritarian conception of international order under Xi's deliberately amorphous concept of a 'community of common destiny for all mankind'."¹⁹

This is classic structural realism, what John Mearsheimer called the "tragedy of great power politics." Great powers do not like peer competitors. While the US expanded its influence in the Western Hemisphere and has done everything to retain its primacy, it will not allow China to do the same in East and South China Seas, or to acquire the politico-economic and military strength that rivals or surpasses its own. It is what endangers the US' primacy which drives the US policy towards China rather than any possibility of China attacking the US. This approach, which has bipartisan support in Washington D.C., is increasingly moving the US and China towards a competition where the two are emerging not just as rivals, but adversaries.

So far there have been three direct contacts between Biden and Xi Jinping. The first was a phone-call in February 2021; the second call came after seven months in September 2021. The third, a video-summit, happened on November 16, 2021. It lasted for three-and-half hours and thus far has been the most important virtual meeting. Both leaders struck a conciliatory tone and talked about the how they could establish what Biden termed "common-sense guardrails, to be clear and honest where we disagree and work together where our interests intersect, especially on vital global issues like climate change."²⁰ The underlying tensions continue, however, and the rhetoric has picked up again, especially after China lashed out at Biden's Democracy Summit from which China was pointedly excluded.

Relations between the United States and China are likely to become more adversarial as the US policy moves further away from engaging China to considering it a peer competitor. The trend, given the bipartisan consensus in the US, will likely continue.

1.4 China's Strategic Imperatives & Choices

China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, has broken away from the policy under Presidents Deng Xiaoping, Hu Jintao, and Jiang Zemin of staying below the radar and focusing on the economy. Xi has also centralised power and done away with the two-tenure limit introduced by Deng, getting himself elected for a life-term. China has accelerated its military modernisation, R&D in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, lethal autonomous weapons, hypersonic weapons, directed energy weapons, biotechnology, and quantum technology.²¹

Assessments by western experts, as well as information put out by Chinese analysts, indicate that China aims to “become the global leader in technologies emerging from advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics.”²² While China asserts that this strategy is vital for accelerating the transformation of the Chinese economy and building it into a cyber power, the US and its allies point to the military applications of China's advancements and the need to both thwart and counter those capabilities.

In keeping with Xi's policy of asserting China's place in the world, Beijing has become more assertive in both the East and South China Seas. This has made Japan and Australia, as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries nervous. East Asia and the Southern Hemisphere are the main areas of friction between China and the US-led coalition of states. The US' shift from an Asia-Pacific strategy to an Indo-Pacific Strategy is an expression of Washington's threat perception from a more assertive China. While the US couches its concern in the narrative of upholding a rules-based order and freedom of navigation, it is clear that Washington wants to reassert its primacy in the region—which it has successfully maintained since World War II.

China claims that it has no interest in disturbing the sea-lanes of communication (SLOCs) in South China Sea because those SLOCs are the lifelines for China's economy. But as is clear from the reaction from ASEAN states, no one seems convinced that China's power projection is merely benign. While the ASEAN nations are concerned about China's more assertive behaviour, the US countermoves in the form of freedom-of-navigation operations, and the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the Australia, United Kingdom, United States security pact (AUKUS) make them equally nervous.

At this moment, there are three schools of thought about what is likely to come next between the US and China:

1. the US and China (and with them the world) are poised to enter a new cold war;
2. the two have already entered a new cold war;
3. conflict isn't inevitable and the US and China should be able to manage their bilateral relations and strive towards coexistence despite their competition.

1.5 The Shape of Things to Come

Going forward, the US-China rivalry will continue to grow. History bears witness to the fact that an existing hegemon faces the "structural stress" in dealing with a rising power. As Thucydides wrote in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, "I have written my work, not as an essay to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time." In his 2017 book *Destined For War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap* Graham Allison wrote: "This is not a book about China. It is about the impact of a rising China on the US and the global order. For seven decades since World War II, a rules-based framework led by Washington has defined world order [...] Today, an increasingly powerful China is unravelling this order, throwing into question the peace generations have taken for granted."

But what Allison describes as a "rules-based framework" is led by the US precisely because it's a security and financial architecture put in place by Washington post-WWII and which it guards with alacrity, going to war or fomenting regime changes in states because it places the US at the apex as a hegemon. The "Long Peace" was and is a peace for the US and its allies, not the periphery that got bloodied in the proxy, ideological wars between the US and the Soviet Union and later with the US invasions and interventions in the Middle East. While the US is the top spender on defence with its budget more than the aggregate budgets of the next fifteen top spenders, it is not just the US military that ensures US' place in the global pecking order. It is also the US dollar, the result of the 1944 Bretton Woods agreement. When the link between the US dollar and gold ended in the 1971 Nixon shock, it allowed the US to control the supply of currency. Result: even though the US accounts for about 20 percent of the world's economic output, more than half of all global currency reserves and trade is in dollars.²³ The US can and does weaponise its currency through sanctions. The effects of that weaponisation have been devastating for states subjected to US sanctions.

As Allison notes, there's nothing inevitable about Thucydides Trap. "The point of Thucydides's Trap is neither fatalism nor pessimism. Instead, it points us beyond the headlines and regime rhetoric to recognize the tectonic structural stress that Beijing and Washington must master to construct a peaceful relationship." That of course is the point: can the US and China master that stress? Structural Realists say they can't. Even if there's no hot, direct conflict, there are still a number of areas where oneupmanship could lead to miscalculations. The history of broader wars, including two of the most devastating wars of the 20th century, also shows that bigger powers can get dragged into wars because of regional power rivalries. The world is also experimenting with many emerging technologies. AUKUS itself, for instance, is not just about providing Australia nuclear-powered submarines; it is a package of capabilities which includes "cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities".²⁴ China too is embarked on R&D in these areas. In fact, US military has assessed that China's capabilities in some of these areas are more advanced than the US'. The US, China and Russia also have advanced hypersonic missiles programmes. The increasing distrust will make it more difficult for the powerful states to agree to multilateral frameworks and treaties to offset the dangers some of these technologies will throw up. The problem of disarmament increases with distrust among states. Salvador de Madariaga, once chairman of the League of Nations Disarmament Commission, was spot-on about the direction of causality in disarmament efforts: "The trouble with disarmament was (and still is) that the problem of war is tackled upside down and at the wrong end ... Nations don't

distrust each other because they are armed; they are armed because they distrust each other. And therefore, to want disarmament before a minimum of common agreement on fundamentals is as absurd as to want people to go undressed in winter. Let the weather be warm, and they will undress readily enough without committees to tell them so."²⁵

Even analyses and books that advise engagement do concede that US-China relations are in a nosedive. But unlike the Realist and even Neoliberal approaches, the engagement school (which is not a monolith) argues that a conflict—even a cold one—will be disastrous not only for the US and China, but many other state actors. This is one of the motivations for this paper: How does the US-China competition and potential conflict impact Pakistan?

To adequately answer this question, we need to investigate the immediate big picture implications of the US-China dynamic, namely the idea of the Indo-Pacific, the Quad, and the AUKUS partnership.

2 Understanding the Quad & AUKUS

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is a four-member group: the US, Japan, Australia, and India. It began as a maritime cooperative response to the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. At that time, it was not termed the Quad but was described as a Tsunami Core Group. "The group was seen as a model for ad hoc collaboration by multiple countries, but quadrilateral engagement itself paused after it was disbanded."²⁶ While the "core group" became the basis for the first iteration of the Quad with officials meeting in 2007, by 2008 it had come apart. Interestingly, in its first iteration, the moving spirit behind Quad (as also the hyphenation "Indo-Pacific" was Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe). His "confluence of the two seas" speech on August 22, 2007, envisioned the formation of the grouping.²⁷ But Abe's idea, which gave the ballast to the Quad grouping and the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, according to some analysts, can be traced back to his 2006 book, "Toward a Beautiful Country."²⁸

2.1 The Quad Version 1.0

The first meeting of Quad 1.0 was held in May 2007 in Manila to sync with the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting. The meeting discussed areas of common interest to the four members and the dialogue partners, including maritime cooperation for disaster relief. In September the same year the US-India Malabar naval exercise was enlarged to include two vessels each from Royal Australian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force. The exercise also featured one missile frigate from Singapore Navy.²⁹ This was the only exercise in the first iteration of Quad but it caught Beijing's eye. China lodged protests with all the four countries. Pressure from China caused Australia to withdraw "from further dialogue 'of that nature'."³⁰

Even before the Malabar Exercise, in July 2007, Australia's Defence Minister Brendon Nelson had stated that he had "reassured China that [the] so-called security quadrilateral dialogue with India is not something we are pursuing."³¹ Similar sentiments were expressed by Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith at a joint press conference in Canberra on 5 February 2008 with his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi: "'One of the things which caused China concern last year was a meeting of that strategic dialogue [with Japan and the US] plus India, which China expressed some concern with' and 'Australia would not be proposing to have a dialogue of that nature' again. On 10 February, Smith explained that the 2007 quadrilateral meeting had been a 'one-off'. While the trilateral dialogue with Japan and the US would continue, the 'four-way conversation' would not."³² The same month Prime Minister Kevin Rudd pulled Australia out of the naval exercises. Earlier in September 2007, shortly after the naval exercise, Shinzo Abe, the man who had championed the Quad, resigned.³³ The US, for its part, declared in December 2007 that it was "prioritising its trilateral engagement with Japan and Australia, over the new quadrilateral initiative."³⁴ That was the end of the first iteration of Quad, though as some analysts have suggested, the intervening period between 2008 and 2017 which saw the revival of Quad was more a hiatus.³⁵

2.2 The Quad Version 2.0

In November 2017, without much fanfare, the Quad was revived. Once again, this happened on the sidelines of the ASEAN and East Asia Summit meetings in Manila. The United States, Japan, India, and Australia held a meeting, though they did not issue any joint statement. The separate statements stressed “the need for a string of goals: a free and open Indo-Pacific; a rules-based order; freedom of navigation and overflight; and respect for international law and maritime security,”³⁶ the last bit a fairly clear reference to China’s power projection in South China Sea and greater militarisation of the sea from the perspective both of Tokyo and Canberra.³⁷ In a January 2018 blogpost for International Institute for Strategic Studies, William Choong, former Shangri-La Dialogue Senior Fellow for Asia-Pacific Security, summarised the objectives of Quad 2.0 thus: “Ten years on, China’s continued ascendance provides a clear rationale for the revival of the Quad. India has persistent concerns about Chinese naval activities in the Indian Ocean, is engaged in territorial disputes with China and is suspicious about growing Sino-Pakistani ties. Japan, meanwhile, is worried about China’s militarisation of the South China Sea and its incursions into and around the disputed Senkaku islands. For its part, Australia is concerned about the growth of Chinese influence in the country’s politics, the use of Chinese capital to buy up Australian companies and, in common with Japan, China’s build-up in the South China Sea.”³⁸

Until March 2021, the Quad officials had met twice in November 2017, three times in 2018, and twice in 2019. No joint statement was issued following these meetings. Separate statements presented their “perceptions of the outcomes of these meetings.” That changed on March 12, 2021 with the first leader-level virtual summit. It was also the first time the Quad issued a joint statement, outlining its broad agenda. This was followed by an in-person summit on September 24, 2021. The joint statement said that the Quad states “recommit to promoting the free, open, rules-based order, rooted in international law and undaunted by coercion, to bolster security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.”³⁹ These wordings obliquely referred to China both in relation to “maritime rules-based order... in the East and South China Seas,” as well as critical and emerging technologies “to ensure the way in which technology is designed, developed, governed, and used is shaped by our shared values and respect for universal human rights.”⁴⁰

2.3 Rising Tensions Between Australia and China

Interestingly, though not surprisingly, while Quad 1.0 unravelled because of China's official protests and Australia's reluctance to be part of a security architecture that could anger China, developments since 2008 have impacted the thinking of all four Quad members. The United States, under Trump, broke away from the policy of engagement with China to one of competition and rivalry across a broad spectrum of issues; 2010 saw China-Japan tensions; following the 2018 Wuhan leader summit between China's Xi and India's Modi, China-India relations have deteriorated over the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC) that forms the 3348-km-long nominal border between the two and remains unsettled and disputed⁴¹; and, finally, Australia-China relations began to deteriorate further after Scott Morrison took office as prime minister in August 2018.

Several analysts in Australia as well as government officials began voicing concern about China's growing influence in various sectors of Australian society and government. In November 2019, Channel 9 aired a report alleging that China was trying to infiltrate the Australian parliament. This report was picked up by other wire services like the Associated Press. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesman rejected the report and the inquiry, saying some Australian politicians, institutions and media outlets had "reached a state of hysteria and extreme nervousness". The situation grew worse with Australia speaking out loud about the rights situation in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Speaking about Hong Kong's new security law, Morrison said that Australia had suspended the extradition treaty with Hong Kong. The Morrison government's public criticism of China's handling of the Covid-19 crisis, asking for an international inquiry into the virus' origins and China's disinformation campaign, exacerbated tensions. The situation was further fuelled by Canberra's references to Beijing's muscle-flexing in South China Sea.⁴² Australia also participated in the Malabar 2020 and Malabar 2021 naval exercises⁴³. This is a significant development because in previous years, India had ignored Canberra's repeated requests for participation⁴⁴, though in 2015 Japan's status was elevated as a permanent member, making Malabar a trilateral naval exercise.^{45,46} Since 2020, the naval exercise has come to represent the four countries that make up the Quad and Quad itself has begun to worry Beijing.

2.4 China's Response to Quad

Beijing's growing concerns about Quad and its potential ability to work an integrated strategy are very different from its original reaction to the meeting in Manila in November 2017, the second iteration of Quad. Once again it was former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who invited officials from Australia, India, and the United States to meet in Manila. The time was propitious for Abe's idea, with the Trump administration's decision to consider China and deal with it as a peer competitor. At the time, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi had called it a "headline grabbing idea" and declared that the grouping is "like the sea foam in the Pacific or Indian Ocean: they get some attention but will soon dissipate."⁴⁷ Now, as former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd noted in his Foreign Affairs op-ed (August 6, 2021), "The Quad is uniquely problematic for China's strategy because its aim of unifying a multilateral coalition of resistance has the potential to stiffen spines across the whole of the Indo-Pacific and possibly beyond." Rudd believes that "Beijing has struggled to mount an effective response to the Quad challenge," and

“Whether Chinese officials settle on a strategy that succeeds in undermining the Quad’s progress will be one of the key factors in determining the course of U.S.-Chinese competition—and the fate of China’s global ambitions more generally—in what has already become a ‘decade of living dangerously’.”⁴⁸

This view is increasingly shared by Chinese officials and foreign policy scholars. During Trump’s time in office and his gruff approach to both allies and competitors, most comments from China focused on “the emerging competition between the United States and China over international leadership” given Trump’s “America First” policy, a situation which necessitated “that China should pursue a more facilitative leadership in international affairs, which bears no resemblance to one that is hegemonic, self-serving, or coercive.”⁴⁹ That situation does not obtain with the ascent to power of Joe Biden. China seems to realise that unlike Trump whose style and approach seemed to anger allies, Biden is building coalitions across the world to encircle China. For instance, speaking to *Nezavisimaja Gazeta*, a Russian newspaper, a top Chinese scholar Yan Xuetong noted that “President Biden, after taking office, decided to communicate more often with his allies. He promoted the summit with the leaders of Japan, Australia and India in the Quad format (the quartet), his diplomats conducted talks with South Korea and Japan, and Secretary of State Blinken flew to Brussels for the meetings with NATO and the European Union.”⁵⁰

Wang Jisi, another top Chinese analyst, argues that “The United States and China are embroiled in a contest that might prove more enduring, more wide-ranging, and more intense than any other international competition in modern history, including the Cold War. In both countries, fears have grown that the contest might escalate into open conflict.”⁵¹ Writing in the same issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Yan noted that Beijing’s initial hopes that a Biden administration would ease tensions with China have been dashed,” and argued that Beijing now “views Biden’s attempts at isolating China diplomatically as a serious threat and is working on multiple fronts to make the country less vulnerable to U.S. aggression and pressure.” But Yan is also careful in pointing out that “Beijing’s newfound confidence does not mean it will challenge Washington in every single domain. China rejects U.S. leadership on some issues, but as a developing country, it will limit competition to areas in which it feels it has an advantage.”⁵² Vijay Gokhale, a former foreign secretary of India, writing in *The Indian Express* referred to Wang and Yan as “two...high priests of the Chinese foreign policy community” whose “task is to interpret for the outside world what Xi Jinping means when he says that ‘the Chinese people have stood up and the era of suffering bullying has gone, never to return’.” Gokhale also noted that “It is no coincidence these [Foreign Affairs articles] were timed to dovetail with Xi Jinping’s speech for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC), on July 1, 2021.”⁵³

2.5 AUKUS and What It Means

While debates raged with reference to Quad, the Biden administration raised the temperature further by making an announcement on September 15, 2021 about the “creation of an enhanced trilateral security partnership called ‘AUKUS’ — Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.”⁵⁴ The Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS noted: “Through AUKUS, our governments will strengthen the ability of each to support our security and defence interests, building on our longstanding and ongoing bilateral ties. We will promote deeper information and technology sharing. We will foster deeper integration

of security and defence-related science, technology, industrial bases, and supply chains. And in particular, we will significantly deepen cooperation on a range of security and defence capabilities."⁵⁵ Specifically, the joint statement identified areas in which the three countries will "enhance our joint capabilities and interoperability": cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities.

Somewhat ironically, the statement also contained another announcement that caused immense heartburn not in Beijing but Paris, a close ally of AUKUS: "As the first initiative under AUKUS, recognizing our common tradition as maritime democracies, we commit to a shared ambition to support Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy." The submarines would be provided by the US. This meant the end of a Franco-Australia 2016 deal under which France was to provide Australia with diesel-electric Barracuda submarines for a total of 34 billion euros (A\$55 billion) over a 25-year period.⁵⁶ France was stunned. It was also a huge intelligence failure for DGSE, France's external intelligence agency, which failed to pick up any clue of the collapse of the Franco-Australian deal. The French president, Emmanuel Macron, recalled French ambassadors from Australia and the US. French diplomats described the scuppering of what France had touted as the contract of the century as a "stab in the back" and a "betrayal". Macron also hit out at Australian PM Scott Morrison, accusing the latter of lying. The Australian government also leaked text messages between Macron and Morrison, further angering the French.⁵⁷

However, for all the furiousness expressed by France, Paris remains a footnote in the bigger story, which relates to the US and China and a clear attempt by Washington to build and strengthen the coalitions that Biden promised he would. The significance of France in the footnote is the extent to which the US is prepared to go even against the interests of a NATO ally to enhance the defence capabilities of its allies in the region China regards as its backyard and the willingness of Canberra to throw its lot with Washington. This is a major departure from 2007-08 when Canberra basically ditched Quad and did its best to placate Beijing.⁵⁸ The nuclear submarine deal has since come under much scrutiny also for its impact on the non-proliferation regime.⁵⁹⁶⁰

2.6 Japan, Security Multilateralism, and the Shinzo Abe Factor

When Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe announced his resignation in August 2020, a year before the end of his four-year term, he had already become the longest-serving post-World War II prime minister. Abe's legacy has drawn both critics and admirers at home while Japan's western allies, notably the United States, have admired Abe for his pragmatic, if at times assertive, foreign policy. For the critics his policies — sense of nationalism and Japan's historic place — indicated a conservatism that the country's post WWII pacifism had buried. For his supporters, he reasserted the position Japan must hold as the world's third largest economy but within the post-War multilateral security architecture. He reaffirmed the position of the emperor in Japan's civic life, moved away from overly self-critical historical narratives in high-school textbooks; and sought (ultimately unsuccessfully) to revise the country's post-war constitution. "By contrast, in foreign affairs (whether in security or economic policy), Mr Abe has been a quintessential pragmatist. He reinforced existing alliances (most notably with the US) and developed new partnerships with regional and global actors, both democracies and authoritarian regimes, independent of their ideological leanings."⁶¹

Abe was also alive to what Tokyo perceived as a rising threat from Beijing and the latter's assertive behaviour. At the root of Japan's threat perception lies an old dispute: eight uninhabited islands with a total area of about 7 sq km, referred to in Japan as Senkaku and in China as Diaoyu islands. They lie northeast of Taiwan, east of the Chinese mainland and southwest of Okinawa, Japan's southern-most prefecture. The islands are controlled by Japan. Tokyo does not recognise the islands as disputed and claims that it surveyed the area in the 19th century and determined that the islands were uninhabited. In January 1895 it "erected a sovereignty marker and formally incorporated the islands into Japanese territory."⁶² In the 70s, however, China began to assert its claim on the islands and the area around them. Observers believe that this dovetailed with the discovery in the area of potential oil and natural gas reserves. The islands are also proximate to important shipping lanes and are surrounded by rich fishing areas. Japan rejects China's claims and says Beijing had expressed no reservations to the 1951 San Francisco deal under which Japan had renounced claims to certain territories, including Senkaku islands and Taiwan. In 1971, the United States returned the islands to Japan under the Okinawa reversion deal.⁶³

China disagrees. Its counterclaim is that the islands have been part of China's territory since ancient times and were administered by the province of Taiwan. But more than that Beijing refers to righting the historical wrong. It had to cede Taiwan to Japan in 1895 after the Sino-Japanese war through the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Beijing's view is that when Taiwan was returned in the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco, the Diaoyu (Senkaku) islands should also have been returned but Chiang Kai-shek did not raise the issue because he depended on US support. To further strengthen its claim, Beijing says that Taiwan did not raise the issue even when the islands were named in the 1971 Okinawa reversion deal. This argument hinges on the interesting fact that Taiwan also claims the Diaoyu islands and the surrounding areas. Since, as China says, Taiwan administered the islands and their areas as China's province before the Sino-Japanese war, that extends China's historic claim to both Taiwan and the Diaoyu islands.⁶⁴

The more recent tensions began in April 2012. The Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara announced that he would use public money to buy the islands from their private Japanese owner. Sensing that this would be unnecessary provocation for China, the Japanese government decided to buy three of the eight islands from their private owner. But it served as provocation regardless, with Beijing protesting the move diplomatically. Since the purchase, Peoples Liberation Army Navy ships have regularly sailed in and out of what Japan claims are its territorial waters around the islands. In another move in November 2013, China also announced the creation of a new air-defence identification zone, which would require any aircraft in the zone – which covers the islands – to comply with rules laid down by Beijing.⁶⁵ A further provocation for China was the announcement in April 2014 by US President Barack Obama that the US-Japan security treaty covers the disputed islands. While the United States has not taken any formal position on the issue of sovereignty over the islands, US analysts believe that after Obama's statement a conflict over the islands could drag the US into it.⁶⁶

According to the Council on Foreign Relations Global Conflict Tracker, the total area of the disputed maritime boundary covers 81,000 sq. miles and is estimated to have 200 million barrels of oil reserves. With rising tensions, both sides have been improving "their military capabilities, particularly their radar and missile systems." Equally, "to avoid accidental clashes at air and sea, China and Japan announced a new crisis communication hotline in June 2018."⁶⁷ The tensions, while recent, are determined by history and the structure of

post-WWII security architecture which was put in place by the victorious allied powers led by the United States.

The US has provided security guarantees to its allies in the region, including South Korea, though Seoul has, so far, been much less vocal about China's growing footprint than other states like Japan, Australia and Vietnam, even though public surveys suggest that increasing number of South Koreans are becoming more wary of China and Beijing's intentions.⁶⁸ As Rana Mitter, Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China and Director of the University of Oxford China Centre argues in his book *China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism*, "there is a strong relationship between China's memory of its experience of World War II and its present-day nationalist identity at home and global role abroad." Mitter makes the point that "In territorial disputes and in designing patriotic education, China refers back, again and again, to the war."

Mitter goes on to say that "Contemporary China is shaped by an assertive internationalism in the region and globally, and by an equally assertive nationalism in its domestic politics. Both these elements are profoundly, if not always obviously, defined by China's changing understanding of its own history during the Second World War." When one realises that China's World War II experience was basically the fight against Japan, history begins to make sense. And when one realises that China's new and assertive nationalism seeks the international stage because of those memories, as Mitter asserts, China's tensions with the US begin to make sense. This is China's backyard; it cannot have an outside power (the US) as the security guarantor and the leading influence.

History also determines Japan's idea of itself and its place in the world. Abe not only stressed the US-Japan alliance — a commitment affirmed by the current Japanese Prime minister Fumio Kishida — he also wanted Japan to play a more assertive role. In 2020, Abe's defence minister, Kono Taro, stated Japan's desire to be part of the Five-Eyes intelligence-sharing arrangement. Analyses in the US have discussed this possibility very favourably, pointing out that "the argument for Japan to formally become the 'sixth eye' has strengthened in the face of China's growing military and cyber capabilities."⁶⁹

In December 2020, Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) published a report, 'Towards Establishing an Economic Security Strategy'. "In view of the recent Chinese maritime expansion in Southeast Asia," the report proposed that Japan 'should seek to join the Five Eyes alliance'.⁷⁰ In late 2020, shortly after the assumption to power of Yoshihide Suga as Japan's prime minister, his Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi met with Australian Defence Minister Linda Reynolds and agreed to "initiate discussion and coordination to enable Japan's Self-Defence Forces (SDF) to provide 'asset protection' for the Australian military — in short, to deploy weapons to protect Australian military assets including ships and aircraft."⁷¹ Kotani refers to this as a "regional 'handshake' between the Five Eyes and Japan" and says it "seems inevitable," though "specific talks have not progressed at all."⁷²

Other analysts do not agree. Tsuruoka Michito, an Associate professor at the Faculty of Policy Management at Keio University, argues that "Tokyo should pursue closer cooperation, rather than membership, with regard to the Five Eyes." Writing for *Nippon.com*, Michito makes the point that, in his August 2020 interview with *Nikkei Shimbun*, former Defence Minister Kono Taro "was not advocating 'membership' per se," but saying that "[Participation] just means that we have a seat at the table and are saying, 'Count us in.'" He further states, about the Five-Eyes hierarchy, "Five Eyes is hierarchical in nature with the United States at the top and followed by Britain. It seems doubtful that Japan, as the newest addition, would enjoy unrestricted access at the highest level. Even if

formally admitted, a much more likely scenario would be a de facto 'Five Plus One' framework, with Japan as a formal member, but somewhat different from the long-standing members. In that case, the advantages of membership over ad hoc collaboration are less obvious."⁷³

It should be clear that tensions in the region are defined both by history and the post-WWII security architecture at a time when China has decided, under Xi Jinping, to become more assertive not only economically but also technologically and militarily, integrating these components to create synergies. What makes the situation increasingly problematic, if not outright dangerous, is not just peer competition between the US and China but also the regional dynamics. History bears witness to many instances where bigger powers got dragged into wars that involved regional rivalries and states.

2.7 The Regional Impact: ASEAN

The world today is far more integrated than it was during the Cold War. Deteriorating US-China relations will not only impact the world's two largest economies, but a number of other states along the East and South China littoral as well as in South Asia.⁷⁴ One of the central issues in debates surrounding Quad (and now AUKUS) is the role and response of ASEAN countries – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Some analysts have suggested that Quad could be expanded to Quad-plus to bring into its fold the ASEAN states. These analyses are pegged on the nervousness of Southeast Asian nations regarding the more aggressive positions China has taken in following up on its claims of sovereignty over South China Sea and Beijing's so-called "nine-dash line".

By all indications, however, ASEAN states remain cautious about the Quad and the thrust of this quadrilateral cooperative security thrust. They are also concerned about China's reactions to the second iteration of Quad. If the Quad were to become a vehicle for great power rivalry, it would hold little interest for ASEAN states. That said, the reactions to developments in South China Sea have been different among ASEAN states: Vietnam and the Philippines have been more vocal than others regarding China's power projection. Manila has been the venue for both iterations of Quad and had taken the issue of Philippines' claims to the arbitration tribunal in January 2013. A five-judge tribunal constituted under the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague gave the award in favour of Manila, an outcome that was rejected by Beijing. Secondly, reactions to Quad and AUKUS by ASEAN states will also depend on how Beijing treats them and what kind of threat perceptions Beijing's power rejection could develop. At this point, ASEAN is concerned about its own centrality, though it would like to link up with the Quad on cooperative issues that complement the ASEAN agenda and objectives.

As one op-ed in Bangkok Post put it: "ASEAN must learn how to live with the Quad following the latest in-person summit in Washington. The region's 'new normal' together with the Quad's purposes and objectives can complement various existing development frameworks in ASEAN including the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). Proposed areas of Quad cooperation are quite comprehensive, focusing on the anti-Covid-19 campaign, economic recovery, climate change, infrastructure, education, critical and emerging technology and others."⁷⁵ What is clear, however, is the fact that ASEAN states realise that Southeast Asia is where the US-China rivalry will play out.

Up until now, ASEAN was central to the ten states that make it up. The regional institutions were anchored in the umbrella organisation. The question is whether ASEAN will now have to compete with Quad and AUKUS both of which are openly security architectures aimed at containing China or find space for cooperation. The Indo-Pacific discourse also makes the ASEAN states nervous and is viewed "as a thinly-veiled containment strategy against China, with potentially destabilizing implications for the region." While "many Southeast Asians are deeply worried about China's growing influence and aggressive actions in the South China Sea, they largely prefer to manage China's rise by engaging and 'enmeshing' Beijing in ASEAN institutions and mechanisms, rather than relying on a counter-coalition of major powers."⁷⁶

2.8 India, its Place in the Quad, and its Reactions To AUKUS

Since the 90s, when India broke free of what was once described as the Hindu rate of growth, it has sought to play a bigger role in the region and beyond. While its economy has not grown as impressively as China's, its progress has been steady. It also capitalised on its democratic credentials and soft power through its entertainment industry, students, impressive standards of its technical institutes and entrepreneurial innovation in informational technology.⁷⁷ Today, a number of Indians lead some of the top tech giants in the United States.⁷⁸ Others have gone on to occupy faculty positions in top US universities and think tanks across the US, the UK, Europe and Australia. In December 2007, India's Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Kamal Nath, "called on the new generation of Indian entrepreneurs to go global and look for synergies and integrations arising out of developments in the international trade and business environment."⁷⁹ In October 2021, Times of India reported on how "the world has seen a plethora of tech innovations and India has been at the forefront of this wave." The report goes on to say that "This is not surprising at all: the Indian software industry led the way not only to build the face of New India but also to become the software hub for the world."⁸⁰

While there are other factors emanating from realpolitik and the changing nature of alliances in the world since 2000, it is an undisputed fact that India reaped the benefits because it had managed to place on the world map human resource which was competitively world class. Pakistan, which was far more plugged in with the outside world from the 50s to late-70s began to lose its sheen by the time the 80s dawned. Today, while India interests the world and top Indians are part of global elite across different sectors, Pakistan worries the world – barring only some exceptional Pakistanis, the numbers of which on the global scene are very small.⁸¹

In analysing India in the framework of realpolitik, Pakistani researchers often ignore the role played by Indians on the global stage. That is a mistake. While the international security architecture has been evolving since 2000 and that has created space for India to operate in a complex environment, the fact is that India could not have exploited the opportunities arising out of those changes without the benefit of its top human resource. This is precisely why many Indians, as also foreign analysts, have been sounding alarm bells about India's slide into a supremacist, Hindutva ideology and how that trend is hurting, and could further hurt, India's global standing.⁸²

It is in this backdrop that India is grappling with the pluses and minuses of Quad as well as AUKUS. New Delhi's policy, ideally from its perspective, is one that allows India to retain its decision-making autonomy while reaping the benefits of bilateral and

multilateral relations and arrangements regardless of ideological camps and other state rivalries. A good example of that would be its relations with the US on the one hand and Russia on the other. Through the Cold War and even after, the Soviet Union and later, Russia, have been India's biggest exporters of arms. While India has been diversifying, buying arms from other sources like Israel, the US, France etcetera, it continues to import weapons and systems from Russia. India and Russia have also signed a contract providing India with its next-generation assault rifle.⁸³ India has also purchased Russia's state-of-the-art S-400 anti-access, area-denial system, the first squadron of which, according to reports, will be ready and deployed by April 2022. For its aerial attack and defence requirements, India has bought 36 Rafale Medium Multirole Combat Aircraft from France. It originally wanted to purchase 126 but the deal got bogged down in controversies. One report, quoting the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, says the Indian Air Force was bent on buying a French aircraft from the word go and manipulated the system to acquire Rafale.⁸⁴ While India has bought some systems from the US – C-130, C-17, Apache attack helicopters and heavy-lift Chinooks – it has not shown much interest in acquiring US equipment, including fighter jets.⁸⁵

Since 2007-08, think tank reports in the US have begun focusing on US-India defence cooperation. A January 2010 event at the Woodrow Wilson Center discussed the growing strategic partnership but also touched on growing demands from each side: "India wants more U.S. involvement in building indigenous capacities, and the United States wants India to do more to promote South Asian regional stability and security."⁸⁶ A June 2012 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies talked about "the foundations of a partnership that has the potential to be one of the more consequential relationships of the twenty-first century." The report while appreciating that the two sides have forged a "wide-ranging partnership that holds the promise of collaboration on [many] issues," noted that bilateral defence trade has also witnessed some setbacks. The report then goes on to identify "five categories of challenges that need to be effectively addressed."⁸⁷

Much ground has since been covered. US-China relations, as well as deteriorating India-China relations, have begun to impact India's calculations more than before. But while India seeks closer cooperation with the US, it is still reluctant, according to many observers, to play a junior partner in a strategic playbook written by the US. As the CSIS report on defence trade and cooperation noted, "it is highly unlikely that the United States and India will reach" the optimal point "anytime in the near to mid-term."⁸⁸

Debates continue with reference to both Quad and now AUKUS. For instance, Shashi Tharoor writing for Noema Mag on September 11, 2020, advised that "India should constrain, not contain, China." While arguing that Quad can be used to "manage Beijing's most destabilizing actions through diplomatic, geopolitical and military pressure, in concert with like-minded extra-regional powers led by the U.S.," Tharoor advises against getting into an alliance to contain China and notes that "India's aversion to alliances is the right policy."⁸⁹

Other analysts want India to not only make use of Quad (and Quad-plus) but also AUKUS. "AUKUS is a significant step towards managing the geopolitical turbulence in the Indo-Pacific, and it will complement, not diminish the importance of Quad."⁹⁰ Rajesh Rajagopalan, a professor of International Relations, believes AUKUS has enlarged the Quad tent: "The latest trilateral arrangement in the Indo-Pacific – the Australia-United Kingdom-United States or AUKUS – is good news for both the Indo-Pacific and India. The Joe Biden administration, in quite a dramatic fashion, has put to rest any lingering questions about the United States' willingness to play a global role." He believes that

"China's aggressive behaviour will [now] be under watch."⁹¹ Raja Menon, a former naval officer, thinks that India's dithering (what Tharoor called aversion to alliances) has not worked to India's advantage. Calling the AUKUS announcement "a resounding slap to the Indian foreign policy establishment," Menon argues that "Canberra has reaped the rewards of steadfast friendship with the US and accepting the punishing tariffs imposed by Beijing on Australian agricultural exports to China." Now "the [Indian] Navy has been hit hard by the news that US nuclear submarine technology – the finest in the world – will only be made available to Australia."⁹²

But while proponents want India to play a bigger role both in Quad and, by extension, consider AUKUS a positive development with reference to containing China and supplementing Quad, the sceptics are not convinced. Bharat Karnad refers to the deal as "Anglosaxon" which, while "building up Australia's naval muscle will not lessen [for India] the Chinese pressure in the Himalayas." Karnad also believes that "AUKUS has occasioned serious doubts about the utility of the Quad other than as its strategic backup – a distinctly subsidiary role neither India nor Japan signed up for."⁹³ Some analysts are of the view that "With the Indian navy's conventional underwater capability fast shrinking, the possibility of Australian submarines in the Indian Ocean isn't reassuring for India's security observers....Increased foreign submarine presence in India's near-seas would serve only to erode Indian influence and authority in the neighbourhood."⁹⁴

Official thinking in India may be clearer in terms of taking the alliance route. In his article for Noema Mag, Tharoor says that "Some clues to new thinking in New Delhi have emerged from the September [2020] publication of a book by Foreign Minister Jaishankar." According to Jaishankar, India faces the challenge of managing "a more powerful neighbour while ensuring its own rise." "In doing so, there must be an understanding on our part that this search for equilibrium is an infinite process." Jaishankar also says that "the initial advocacy in India of more trade with China has now given way to strong resentment at its one-sidedness" – a deficit of \$55 billion.⁹⁵

Leaving aside the rhetoric about playing a bigger role, the real issue for India is China. India's experience at the LAC has opened the wounds from the 1962 defeat at the hands of China. But while the US and its allies are more interested in containing and countering China in the East and South China Seas, India's immediate China problem is along the LAC and on land. Although if China were to play a bigger role in the Indian Ocean, the China problem would also acquire a maritime dimension. As Tharoor wrote in his article, "Increasing strategic convergence between America and India is now undeniable. Continuing down this path may be very much in India's interest," because "as India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, put it: 'There is no nonalignment vis-à-vis China.'" He also believes that "There seem to be only two strategic options for New Delhi: reconcile itself to playing second fiddle to an assertive China, or seek strength and leverage by aligning itself with a broader international coalition against Chinese ambitions."⁹⁶

Corollary: India is in a dilemma. Its economy has slowed down. Its illiberal majoritarianism is being noted.⁹⁷ The capabilities gap between India and China is increasing even as relations between the two have slipped. Another round of skirmishes at the LAC could increase the toxicity. That would also nudge India closer to the US and force it to make a choice between keeping its strategic autonomy or get a stronger state partner to balance China. In other words, if India wants to balance China, it will have to bandwagon with the US and the broader coalition Washington is putting together to countervail Beijing. A South China Morning Post editorial from August 23, 2020 advised Narendra Modi "to put every effort into easing tensions with China." The editorial says rather baldly that "New

Delhi does not have the resources," and [India] cannot risk armed conflict with China given the latter's superior power. Wiser is to put every effort into talks to prevent another border clash and implement previous agreements to improve trade and investment links."⁹⁸

3 Framing the Pakistani Stake

Pakistan, which had initially not reacted to US-China tensions, has come to realise the implications of deteriorating relations between Washington and Beijing and their implications. Some of these statements have come directly from Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan.⁹⁹ Khan's statements aside, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not seem to have made any official statements with reference to Quad. On the AUKUS question, however, at a press briefing on September 23, 2021, the spokesperson in response to a question on "the nuclearization of Indian Ocean region" because of AUKUS, responded cautiously by saying that "nuclearization is a shared concern of many countries. There are various angles and perspectives through which AUKUS is being gauged, and many countries, including friends and allies of these countries are looking at it with different degree of concern." He went on to explain Pakistan's position by noting that "in principle we [Pakistan] do not subscribe to bloc politics. Rather, we support broader, inclusive multilateral cooperation, based on open and transparent principles. Peace and stability are best ensured through cooperative frameworks, and not by arrangements that can be perceived as directed against some other country, or countries, or a tool to expand some countries' self interest."¹⁰⁰

The spokesperson's statement, as also general statements made by officials make clear that, ideally, Pakistan would like to stay away from any camps. Equally, these statements imply some growing unease at where US-China relations are headed. The United States is Pakistan's biggest export market. Despite ups and downs in Pakistan-US relations, the United States has been an important partner for Pakistan's defence needs and has played an important role in managing crises between Pakistan and India and brokering peace. The US, given its influence with its western allies as also with the international financial institutions—like the IMF—has been instrumental in helping Pakistan in the latter's dealings with the IMF.¹⁰¹ Despite accusations of bad faith, the two sides were also partners in the US war in Afghanistan and continue to stay connected even after the US withdrawal.

3.1 Stuck in the Middle with US and China

China and Pakistan traditionally have had close relations. In 1963, they also managed to come to an agreement on border delineation amicably. The border agreement removed an issue that could have been a major irritant between the two. As a comparison of the significance of that agreement, it is important to refer to continuing and growing tensions between India and China along the long LAC. The two sides fought a war in 1962 and there have been military episodes at the LAC in 2014, 2017 and 2020.¹⁰² China has, over the years, emerged as Pakistan's most significant supplier of military equipment and weapons systems. Since 2014, Chinese companies have also invested in several projects in different sectors under the umbrella of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC, by China's own account, is the flagship of Xi Jinping's BRI. In a July 2017 article for Asia Policy magazine, Andrew Small quoted Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister, as saying that "If One Belt, One Road is like a symphony involving and benefitting every country, then construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the sweet melody of the symphony's first movement."¹⁰³¹⁰⁴ China and Pakistan have also traditionally taken joint diplomatic positions on issues of concern to both sides. How to offset the negative effects of a

growing gulf between the US and China should, therefore, be a top priority for Pakistan's policymakers.

3.1.1 Warm Waters During the Cold War: No Going Back

It does not appear, however, that much thinking has gone into how Pakistan can stay out of the power rivalry between the US and China beyond pro forma statements about staying neutral. There is also a sense that if Pakistan could be closely allied with the US and China during the Cold War, it can still do that. This argument proffers a poor reading of how Pakistan managed those relations during the Cold War. It is important to note the differences. The US' major competition in that period was with the Soviet Union, not China. While it took the US sometime to appreciate the cracks that had appeared in Soviet-China relations, China was never the US' bigger concern. Also, beginning late-fifties until the early 1960s, Pakistan was helping the US to spy on both the Soviet Union and China. According to Diana Bolsinger writing for Texas National Security Review, "Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, the chief of Karachi Station simply asked then-President Iskandar Mirza if, 'hypothetically speaking,' the CIA could exfiltrate Tibetan fighters into East Pakistan for transport onwards for training. Pakistani officers met groups of Tibetan volunteers at the northern border and escorted them to the site, known as Kurmitula. The CIA then whisked the Tibetans off to training sites in Colorado, Okinawa, and elsewhere, before eventually air-dropping them back into Tibet. These CIA-trained fighters captured valuable intelligence on Chinese military operations while increasing the cost to Beijing of consolidating its hold on Tibet. The CIA also used Kurmitula from 1957 to 1959 as a base for U-2 flights over China, especially over Tibetan territory."¹⁰⁵ Even so, President Lyndon Johnson was unhappy with Pakistan's growing ties with China and Pakistan's decision to shut down the Kurmitula facility in former East Pakistan. By the time Richard Nixon came to power, the US had realised the extent of the falling out between the Soviet Union and China and needed Pakistan's good offices to reach out to China. From 1970 onwards, the US did not have any strategic problem with growing China-Pakistan ties. Equally, China had no objection to Pakistan's closeness with the US. In fact, it encouraged it. Successive US administrations sought to engage China since the two countries established diplomatic relations in January 1979. The policy of engagement, even when differences had begun to emerge, continued until Barack Obama left office. The Trump administration put an end to it, describing China as a competitor.

The China-US balance Pakistan could maintain during the Cold War was owed to factors that do not obtain any more. The US' main rival today is China. China itself, under Xi, has shed the policy of staying below the radar and working quietly on improving China's economic potential, an approach favoured by Deng Xiaoping. Many commentators have noted and stressed Xi's projection of ethnonationalism and called Xi's centralisation of power as quasi-Maoist, though other analysts consider Xi's comparison with Mao — beyond Xi's successful concentration of power — as "thoroughly wrongheaded."¹⁰⁶ With CPEC and Chinese investments in Pakistan, China now has the space to exercise much greater influence on the conduct of Pakistan's foreign policy than before. The rise in China's influence has also coincided with the ebb in US-Pakistan relations since 2011.

3.1.2 Getting Pulled into the US-China Competition

Internally, the current government in Pakistan is divided over how to create the balance which in practical terms is not easy to maintain. This was also on display on the decision about whether to attend the Democracy Summit convened by Biden and to which Pakistan was invited. By some accounts China pressured Pakistan into refusing to attend, with the Chinese ambassador meeting government officials and lobbying for staying away. While the real reason for staying away had more to do with the summit being virtual and Pakistan asked to send in a three-minute pre-recorded statement by the prime minister, a perception was created that Pakistan stayed away from the Summit because of China's sensitivity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs put out a cautious statement, which said that "We [Pakistan] value our partnership with the U.S. which we wish to expand both bilaterally as well as in terms of regional and international cooperation. We remain in contact with the U.S. on a range of issues and believe that we can engage on this subject [democracy] at an opportune time in the future." Some Pakistani-American analysts considered the decision by Pakistan to be a mistake.¹⁰⁷ Be that as it may, it portends — beyond just the personal preference of the current prime minister — of what awaits Pakistan if relations between the US and China deteriorate further.

The two sides continue to target and sanction companies, groups, and individuals and are increasingly at loggerheads despite the generally cordial exchange between Biden and Xi at the November virtual summit. The US invitation to Taiwan to the Democracy Summit was an insult directed to draw a response from China. And react Beijing did. "Those who provide a platform for Taiwan secessionists will only bring themselves down," Zhao Lijian, spokesman of China's Foreign Ministry, told a news conference in Beijing. China also reacted sharply to the US government's diplomatic boycott of the recently-concluded Winter Olympics in Beijing. When the US announced its boycott last year, Liu Xiaoming, the former Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom called it "a grave travesty of the spirit of the Olympic Charter, a blatant political provocation and a serious affront to the 1.4 billion Chinese people. It will only make the Chinese people and the world see clearly US politicians' anti-China nature and hypocrisy." Other countries — UK, Canada and Australia — said they were weighing their options, even as New Zealand and Lithuania (which is under sanction from China for its relationship with Taiwan) said they would not send diplomatic representatives to the games.¹⁰⁸ All these countries — like the US — have cited "PRC's ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses."

The countries that considered a diplomatic boycott also happen to be US allies. The episode shows that the camps have already emerged and countries, both for reasons of their internal governance patterns as well as the alliance structures, are making choices about what to do. This should also make clear that maintaining a neutral posture would increasingly become difficult for Pakistan. In fact, the day, December 8, when Pakistan's Foreign Ministry issued the statement declining the invitation to the Democracy Summit, Prime Minister Imran Khan spoke at the Islamabad Conclave 2021 and said that "The situation is going towards a [new] Cold War and blocs are forming. Pakistan should try its best to stop the formation of these blocs because we should not become a part of any bloc."¹⁰⁹ Yet, Pakistan did ultimately choose to stay away from Biden's virtual summit even at it desires to have relations with the US that are more broad-based and not just transactional. And less than two months later, PM Khan attended the Beijing Winter

Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing alongside President Vladimir Putin and President Xi Jinping.

But the blocs are getting formed, as is clear from the situation developing after Russia's decision to invade Ukraine. While that development is not the focus of this paper, it is instructive in regard to what is being discussed here in relation to the growing US-China rivalry and the emergence of rival camps. Pakistan's prime minister was scheduled to visit Moscow, a visit that had been finalised before Russia began deploying troops against the Ukraine border. There was an internal debate about whether the prime minister should go ahead with the visit. In the end it was decided that he should go ahead with the visit because it concerns bilateral relations. However, while the PM was in Moscow, President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine. Given the world's reaction to that move, Pakistan found itself in a very awkward position.

3.2 The India Factor

The principal, though not the only, driver of complexity for Pakistan, in the US-China competition (and all its manifestations), can be crystallised in one word: India. Pakistan perceives a threat from its eastern neighbour and since the coming to power of Narendra Modi's Bharatya Janata Party government in that country, relations have reached a breaking point. Since August 5, 2019, when India illegally annexed the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, there has been no official dialogue between the two sides. The negativity has even impacted Track II initiatives which, over the years, were being conducted in third countries. In November 2021, Pakistan declined a National Security Advisor-level dialogue invitation by India on Afghanistan, with NSA Moeed Yusuf saying that "a spoiler cannot be a peacemaker." Following Pakistan's refusal to attend the dialogue, China also declined the invitation.¹¹⁰

In September 2016, India claimed to have carried out a surgical strike into Azad Kashmir across the Line of Control. The Indian mainstream and social media went into a tizzy, pushing out the BJP narrative about a "new normal" and Modi's "muscular" policy.¹¹¹¹¹² Pakistan denied any Indian ingress into AJK, but did not retaliate. Then, early morning on February 26, 2019, a combat package of Indian Air Force fighter jets bombed a compound near Balakot, a town in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. The incident was the first time since the 1971 War where India used its air force to strike a target inside Pakistan. The Indian aggression followed an attack against India's paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force troops in Occupied Kashmir in mid-February which India immediately pinned on Pakistan.

Following the unsuccessful Indian strike, the Pakistan Air Force was given the task to show resolve and a PAF strike package executed Operation Swift Retort by bombing four targets in Occupied Kashmir but taking care to hit them close by and not directly to avoid escalation. The strike was carried out in daylight and when an Indian combat air patrol tried to intercept the PAF jets, one of them was shot down and another damaged.¹¹³ The pilot of the downed plane was captured, debriefed, and returned after two days. The day after the downing of the plane, India threatened to fire missiles at targets in Pakistan. The threat was conveyed by India's NSA, Aji Doval, to Director-General, Inter-Services Intelligence in a phone-call. Pakistan responded by threatening to shoot three targets to India's one strike. India backed off.¹¹⁴

Tensions continue and by all accounts of internal debates in Pakistan's official policy circles, Pakistan anticipates Indian aggression before the 2023 elections in that country. The threat anticipation is grounded in the belief, buttressed by analyses – including in India – that Modi thrives on the bogey of a crisis with Pakistan to shore up his party's political ratings.¹¹⁵ The annual threat assessment report by the Director of US National Intelligence put out on April 9, 2021 states: "Although a general war between India and Pakistan is unlikely, crises between the two are likely to become more intense, risking an escalatory cycle. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is more likely than in the past to respond with military force to perceived or real Pakistani provocations, and heightened tensions raise the risk of conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, with violent unrest in Kashmir or a militant attack in India being potential flashpoints."¹¹⁶ There have also been reports of India's proclivity to engage in false flag operations to create a crisis with Pakistan which can then be used for domestic political purposes. On January 17, 2021, the spokesperson for Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the Pulwama attack a false flag operation after WhatsApp chats of India's Republic TV Editor-in Chief Arnab Goswami went viral in ongoing investigations into a television ratings scandal. "The recent transcripts revelations in India further vindicate our consistent position that RSS-BJP Govt. stages 'false flag' operations; maligns Pakistan with terrorism-related allegations; stokes hyper-nationalism in its bid to win elections," the spokesperson said in the statement. According to a report in India's online news website theprint.in, "Goswami's purported messages from three days before the airstrikes appear to show that he was aware of the operation."¹¹⁷

3.2.1 India's Accumulation of Offensive Military Capability

Pakistan's threat perception is also deeply related not just to India's intentions – reflected in statements by Narendra Modi, his National Security Advisor, Aji Doval, and other top BJP leaders – but also to India's growing military capabilities. Given the disparate sizes of the two economies, Pakistan has never sought to compete with India in terms of numbers. Instead, its policy has been to invest in platforms and weapons systems that can either give it technological parity with India or, better still, some edge. Pakistani planners have, therefore, sought to work out ratios that can help deter Indian aggression and, at a minimum, ensure that India cannot use strategies of coercion. While India's economy has taken hits because of the pre-Covid-19 slowdown in various sectors as well as because of the Covid-19 outbreak¹¹⁸, Pakistan has not reaped any benefit from it given the state of its own economy.¹¹⁹

Immediately after Pakistan's retaliation on February 27, 2019, the Indian prime minister as well as the Indian air force chief stated that if the IAF had the Rafale fighter jets, the result of the aerial skirmish would have been different.¹²⁰ These statements were made in the weeks after the aerial battle between Pakistan and India following India's aerial strike inside Pakistan. Since then India has acquired the Rafale fighter jets from France and has also acquired first of the four S-400 regiments, a Russian anti-access, area-denial system billed as the best in the world. More than a year-and-a-half after the Balakot crisis and two months after a deadly encounter with Peoples Liberation Army troops in the Ladakh region, Air Marshal A S Dhanoa, the former IAF Chief, came on record on the purpose of these acquisitions: "In case of Pakistan...the purpose of the S-400 and Rafale is to hit Pakistani aircraft inside Pakistani air space and not when they come inside Indian

territory....[Pakistan] would not have responded on February 27 last year to the Balakot air strikes if India had the French-manufactured jets then."¹²¹

Pakistan continues to closely monitor these growing capabilities as well as statements of intent on the Indian side. But monitoring also requires acquiring new platforms and upgrading the existing ones to retain the qualitative edge. For several reasons, not least given shallow pockets, Pakistan has come to rely primarily on Chinese imports for its defence needs. The European systems and platforms are far too expensive and security assistance from the US remains suspended. This is another potent, strategic reason which would hamper Pakistan's ability to avoid a two-camp situation if relations between China and the US deteriorate further.¹²²

3.2.2 Three Decades of America's Partisanship in South Asia

While the US has brokered peace in past crises – Kargil (1999); Twin Peaks (2001-02); Mumbai (2008)¹²³ – its closeness to India and its actions in the 2019 crisis have reduced Pakistan's confidence in US being a neutral broker both in terms of crisis prevention and resolution. Since 1999, US-India relations have steadily improved. As described by India's Ministry of External Affairs brief, "India-U.S. bilateral cooperation is broad-based and multi-sectoral, covering trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high-technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and applications, clean energy, environment, agriculture and health."¹²⁴

3.2.3 A Discriminatory Nuclear Safety and Security Issues Discourse

Since the Civil Nuclear Agreement of 2005 – which was pushed by the US even though India is a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – India-US defence cooperation has been advancing rapidly, though the US government still believes that it is below its potential. As part of the US-India strategic partnership, the two sides signed a New Framework for India-U.S. Defence Relations in 2005. The agreement was updated and renewed for another ten years in June 2015. Even before this agreement, India and the US signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement in 2002. It was the first of the so-called four "foundational agreements" between the two. The other three agreements signed by the two sides are the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (2016), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (2018), and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (2020). As one report in the India media noted: "The U.S. has relaxed restrictions on technology trade in India's favour considerably, and India is designated a 'Major Defence Partner'. Foundational agreements deepen defence cooperation, in trade and operation. India and the US are also part of a broader shared vision for the Indo-Pacific region, where both countries, along with Japan and Australia, are increasing their military cooperation. US-built platforms used by partner countries can talk to one another and share operational information."¹²⁵

3.2.4 The China Factor in the US Approach to South Asia

While there are rising concerns in the US “about India’s fiscal limitations, its ties with Russia, its ponderous response to a pattern of Chinese provocations on its border, and its drift toward illiberal majoritarian politics,” there is continued interest in deepening relations with India to support India’s rise as a constructive global leader and counterweight to Chinese influence; limit China’s ability to coerce India and other states in South Asia; and mitigate the risks, and enabling de-escalation, of inevitable India-Pakistan and India-China crises.¹²⁶ The structural nature of rising US-China tensions has also played and continues to play to India’s advantage. This space has also been dextrously utilised by Indian analysts and most importantly by Indian Americans, some of whom occupy important positions in official, policy circles, think tanks and top universities. In keeping with the mood in the Beltway, Indian American think tankers exploit the space China-US competition provides to India, pushing for more closeness between the two.¹²⁷

Even reports and recommendations that propose that Washington’s approach to regional engagement in South Asia should stand “on its own rather than as an instrumental response to China”, and stress a rebalancing of relations with Pakistan, make clear that in case of a crisis between Pakistan and India, the US must match Chinese diplomatic support for Pakistan with a tilt toward India, and mobilize US allies to impose sanctions on Pakistan over financing and sponsoring terrorist acts against India.¹²⁸ The USIP report’s findings and recommendations, in fact, provide a great summary of the contradictions that inform the US approach to India-Pakistan relations and US-India relations, as tensions between the US and China rise.

The report seeks to find a balance that is likely to be elusive. For instance, while acknowledging the importance of greater India-US strategic partnership, the report is concerned about India’s “more risk-acceptant approach to confrontations with Pakistan” in recent years, which it describes as exhibiting “some emboldenment, false optimism, and overestimation of US intervention.” It recommends a frank discussion between the US and India in non-crisis moments in order for the “United States [to] manage expectations about its role as India’s partner and a third-party crisis manager to preempt risks of entrapment or perceptions of abandonment.” But in a more substantive way recommends that the US should “Deepen ties with India—along with facilitating New Dehi’s cooperation with US allies and partners in Asia and Europe—across diplomatic, economic, technology, and military areas.”

3.2.5 The Russia Factor in the US Approach to South Asia

A November 2021 Stimson Centre report, *Towards A Mature Defence Partnership: Insights from a US-India Strategic Dialogue*, goes even further in terms of stressing and identifying areas where the US needs to enhance cooperation with India. The report says that “While the US-India partnership comprises multiple nodes, including trade, technology, climate, global health, immigration, and institutional norms, the dialogue and analysis herein [the report] focused on the deepening defence partnership.” It then goes on to list a number of areas where the US can engage India and improve India’s military capabilities. The most interesting is the reference to what the report calls disarming “CAATSA Landmine.”

Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act is a 2017 US Federal law that can trigger sanctions against any “persons engaging in transactions with the intelligence

or defense sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation."¹²⁹ (Section 231). The Stimson Centre report argues that "CAATSA sanctions will trigger significant Indian political blowback, setting relations back a decade. The United States should either issue India an enduring waiver or apply very light, symbolic sanctions once, with sufficient forewarning and dialogue with Indian leadership to mitigate political repercussions."¹³⁰

The USD 5.43 billion S-400 air defence system deal for five squadrons was inked in October 2018. According to Russian sources, as well as reports in the Indian media, India will get delivery of the first squadron by April 2022. Indian media reports suggest the first deployments will be in the Punjab sector "to tackle aerial threats from both China and Pakistan."¹³¹ It is instructive to note that the US imposed economic sanctions on Turkey, a NATO member, for the S-400 deal with Russia and has since separated Turkey from its F-35 fighter jet programme besides cancelling the F-35 sale to Turkey. Similar sanctions have been slapped on China for the S-400 deal. The issue was supposed to come up at the December 2021 2+2 Dialogue between the US and India but the dialogue was postponed to sometime in early 2022. Reports suggest that India is likely to avoid CAATSA sanctions and get a presidential waiver. According to one report, "U.S. Senators Mark Warner (D-VA) and John Cornyn (R-TX), co-chairs of the U.S. Senate's India Caucus, have written to President Joe Biden urging him not to impose CAATSA sanctions on India. The senators argued that a waiver from sanctions 'would advance the national security interests of the U.S.' India has found some additional support in the form of an amendment recently introduced by three Republican senators to the National Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, which would make it more difficult for the U.S. to impose CAATSA sanctions on any of the Quad members."¹³²

3.2.6 Having Hindutva Cake and Eating It Too?

Additionally, since December 6, 2021, India and Russia have also agreed to a 2+2 Dialogue Framework. Meanwhile, India held its first 2+2 dialogue with Japan on November 30, 2019. In September 2020, the two sides signed the 'Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services' between the Self-Defence Forces of Japan and the Indian Armed Forces, an agreement also called the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement or ACSA. On September 11, 2021, India and Australia issued a joint statement after their first 2+2 Dialogue, which followed the "elevation of the India-Australia relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) during the Leaders' Virtual Summit held in June 2020." In addition to "Strengthening India-Australia Bilateral Cooperation," the joint statement also referred to a "Shared Vision for the Indo-Pacific, Regional and Multilateral Cooperation," necessitated by "growing maritime challenges" in the "Indo-Pacific region". The statement, in a clear, though oblique reference to China, "emphasized that the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea should be fully consistent with international law, particularly UNCLOS, not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of any nation in accordance with international law and reinforce existing inclusive regional architecture."¹³³

The idiom, to have one's cake and eat it too, refers to the near-impossibility of getting two good things, especially things one can't generally have together. But India seemed to be doing that until Putin's decision to declare war on Ukraine. India has strategic partnerships with three of Quad members — the US, Australia and Japan — as well as Russia with which the US has increasingly tense relations on a number of issues, including Russian ingress into eastern Europe.¹³⁴ Since the Ukraine invasion, however, it

will become increasingly difficult for India to play both camps. India is a very attractive market for US arms manufacturers both for reasons of economic gains and geopolitical partnership as well as operational integration and interoperability. Even before the Ukraine crisis, the US was not particularly happy with India acquiring a state-of-the-art platform from Russia. But it did not want to impose sanctions on India which could undermine the development of Indian military capabilities at a time when India is locked in a border dispute with China and the US is cooling together coalitions to hem in China. This opened a large space for India to operate in a way that allows it to get the best of both worlds.¹³⁵

In fact, as the Stimson Centre report – as also other analyses – points out, the US is concerned about India's reluctance to fully embrace the idea of a partnership that could pull the latter squarely into the US camp: "Despite the strategic consensus, the realities of the partnership have at times fallen short of expectations."¹³⁶ The report recommends that "Since India and the U.S. both see the other as a cornerstone in their Indo-Pacific strategies, it is in both their interests to surmount these divergences for a more mature, reliable defence partnership."¹³⁷ Put differently, US officials are "perplexed" that India, despite the advantages that accrue to New Delhi, is still shy of entering the kind of partnership the US thinks it should. Some analyses have also referred to India's procurement policies and the cumbersome process that makes it difficult for the partnership to realise its full potential. Still others have begun point out to the Hindutva ideology and how India's anti-minorities majoritarianism could serve to undermine its claim of being the world's most populous democracy, a claim India plays up as its narrative and which the US is all too eager to endorse, though with some qualifications now. All in all, the US' desire to get India to play a bigger role in the US scheme of things increased rather than shrinking space for India. It would be interesting to watch how the US would now approach the issue of CAATSA sanctions against India, especially because India's diplomatic position vis-a-vis Russia seems to have sent out a signal which had drawn much flak from the very policy wonks in Beltway who have been most vocal in favour of India and India-US relations.

3.3 Getting the Pakistan Treatment

All of this enhances Pakistan's threat perception. Take for instance the problem for Pakistan of procurement of US weapons systems and platforms. Despite being a Major Non-NATO Ally, a status granted Pakistan in 2004 by President George W Bush, Pakistan has benefited little from the arrangement as stipulated under the US laws. Despite some benefits of the agreement in its early years, in the past decade Pakistan's MNNA status has done little to stabilize the highs and lows in the bilateral relationship or improve the military procurement process. In 2016, Pakistan ordered nine Bell AH-1Z attack helicopters under the U.S. Foreign Military Sales process. But that sale has been on hold since former U.S. President Donald Trump cut security funding to Pakistan. Turkey has not been able to export its T129 attack helicopters to Pakistan because the helicopter's engine is part-built by a U.S. company and the Pentagon refused to issue an export license to Ankara, which is under sanctions for purchasing the Russian S-400 A2/AD platform. So, Turkey, a NATO member, cannot export its attack helicopters to Pakistan which, on paper, is a MNNA. During President Obama's tenure, the U.S. Congress refused to clear funds under Foreign Military Finance for Pakistan's purchase of eight F-16s (despite the MNNA status). Even when certain defense items were cleared for sale to

Pakistan, they could not be delivered because the Trump Administration suspended all security assistance to Pakistan in January 2018.¹³⁸

The result has been for Pakistan to rely primarily on China for two of Pakistan's vital needs, nearly entirely: defence procurement and investment, the latter of which deals with Pakistan's energy needs, infrastructure development, growth, agriculture and job creation. As the official website of Pakistan's CPEC authority notes, the project – a flagship of Xi Jinping's BRI – meant “To improve the lives of people of Pakistan and China by building an economic corridor promoting bilateral connectivity, [involving] construction [and] explor[ing] potential bilateral investment, economic and trade, logistics and people to people contact for regional connectivity.” To this end, the CPEC authority lists a number of areas of investment and cooperation: “Integrated Transport & IT systems including Road, Rail, Port, Air and Data Communication Channel; Energy Cooperation; Spatial Layout, Functional Zones, Industries and Industrial Parks; Agricultural Development; Socio-Economic Development (Poverty Alleviation, Medical Treatment, Education, Water Supply, Vocational Training); Tourism Cooperation & People to People Communication; Cooperation in Livelihood Areas; Financial Cooperation and Human Resource Development.”¹³⁹ Despite unofficial and official assessments from the US which speak of “scaled-back ambitions”, environmental costs and slow-pace of turning “Pakistan into a higher-value manufacturing hub,” the fact is that CPEC has come to become an important engine of growth in Pakistan.¹⁴⁰

For its part, Pakistan has, on a number of occasions, stated officially at the highest levels of government that its commitment to CPEC by no means precludes it from welcoming investment from other state quarters, including and significantly, from the US. However, a mid-2021 report by the US State Department after noting that “Despite a relatively open formal regime, Pakistan remains a challenging environment for investors,” puts the figure of investment pledged by US companies in Pakistan since 2019 at USD1.5 billion, which is minuscule despite spread over a range of sectors.¹⁴¹

Much of this has to do with weaknesses in Pakistan's own governance structures and the inability to create a favourable investment climate for foreign companies. That said, most foreign companies in Pakistan have got higher returns on their investments than in other places. In July 2019, Pakistan entered a \$6 billion IMF Extended Fund Facility yet again. But many of the reforms promised by Pakistan have been delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. “In March 2021, the IMF Board authorized release of the latest tranche under the EFF program, and Pakistan successfully accessed global bond markets for the first time since 2017.”¹⁴² But the necessity to go to the IMF every six/seven years is an indication of structural weaknesses in Pakistan's economy which requires serious reforms and not just periodic cash inflows to help meet recurring balance of payment crises and current account deficit.

3.4 Implications for Pakistan

This, then, is the international ecosystem in which Pakistan, as many other smaller and middle powers, is and will be operating. How the US and China deal with each other and how bad the situation might get are outcomes Pakistan can neither determine nor control. The situation, as identified earlier, could become worse if Pakistan comes to rely entirely on China for its defence needs as well as investment. As noted, if the US adds China to its Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, Pakistan's defence dealings

with China could open Pakistan up to US sanctions. China could create its own sanctions regime against the US and states dealing with the US. That would worsen the situation. At the same time, the US remains Pakistan's biggest export market and Pakistan has been trying to increase the volume of its exports and diversify them. Pakistan also wants US investment to develop its infrastructure and benefit from US expertise in other sectors like energy, health and education. While Pakistan cannot influence decisions made in Beijing and Washington or reverse the cold war that is likely to define US-China relations, it has to address its own vulnerabilities to develop offset strategies to counter the negativity that will underscore China-US competition.

As noted before, Pakistan's primary concern in the growing US-China tensions is whether it will be forced to choose between the US and China.¹⁴³ While Pakistan has a deep strategic partnership with China, Islamabad also has a long history of relations with the US. During the 1950s and 60s, Pakistan was referred to as the most allied ally. Pakistan's military, in the first four decades of the country's existence, relied heavily on the US for military supplies. If relations between the US and China deteriorate further, the number of issues on which Pakistan will be expected by both the US and China to side with them will inevitably increase.

AUKUS and events in the South China Sea do not directly impact Pakistan. But Quad and the concept of Indo-Pacific do, because of the growing strategic partnership between India and the US. The US wants India to play a more active maritime role and is also eager to enhance India's military capabilities. This reliance on India has consistently risen across US Republican and Democratic administrations, and has most recently been reinforced in the "Indo-Pacific Strategy Of The United States" released by the White House on February 11, 2022, which recommends "steadily advanc[ing] our Major Defense Partnership with India and support its role as a net security provider."¹⁴⁴

The possibility of growing military asymmetry between India and Pakistan is an obvious cause of concern for the latter. Pakistan-India relations have reached a new low since 2014 and there is no real possibility of the resumption of dialogue between the two sides unless India gets a different government in 2023 which is also prepared to roll back India's illegal annexation of Occupied Kashmir in August 2019.

4 Recommendations for Pakistan

Pakistan at the official level needs to begin to study and analyse the current trend and formulate its policy approaches. There are indications that high-level officials are already resigned to the inevitability of a US-China conflict. Given Pakistan's closeness to China and growing US-India relations, they believe Islamabad does not have the option of moving away from Beijing. Resignation is not policy, however. While the emerging situation is a difficult one, and Pakistan does not have the size and clout to change perceptions of two of world's biggest powers, it does need to operate in a way that allows it to increase its options. Hitching Pakistan's wagon to one or the other gives the impression that Pakistan has no agency. That perception will only increase the difficulty for Pakistan to project its own interests.

The following steps are essential to Pakistan's capability and capacity to serve the interests of the Pakistani people, secure its economic and strategic interests, and navigate the tricky and dangerous waters of a world in which alliances like the Quad, and frameworks like the Indo-Pacific offer both tactical and strategic opportunities, as well as representing long-term threats.

4.1 Signal and Noise: Pakistani Strategic Communications

Signalling and creating perceptions is very important. While Pakistan has stated at the highest official levels that it does not want to be in one or the other camp, statements must be followed with actions. Even when it is more diplomatic to convey Pakistan's concerns without a public statement, a firm position goes a long way in keeping expectations realistic. This would require focusing on public diplomacy and effective lobbying in Washington and other capitals of concern in the Far East and the QUAD/AUKUS region, including Seoul, Tokyo and Canberra.

4.2 Reform the Architecture of Pakistani Trade, Foreign Policy & National Security

As the unclassified part of Pakistan's National Security Policy (NSP) argues, Pakistan has to look at national security in a broader framework — i.e., it must be citizen-centric, should place geoeconomics centre-stage, focus on connectivity and inclusiveness. These objectives, as per the NSP require an integrated inter-ministerial approach. It should be obvious that presenting Product Pakistan to the rest of the world is not just about lobbying or marketing. The Product must be saleable and interest the world. This does not mean, as NSP makes clear, that geopolitics and its concerns are passé. They are not. But effective geopolitical heft requires deep pockets and shared interests. That is where Pakistan's work is cut out both internally and externally. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Commerce and other ministries in between, Pakistan needs to reform their workings and change the current mindset which is heavily bureaucratic, lacks vision and focuses on day-to-day problem-solving.

4.3 Consistency, Non-Interference & Strategic Silence

Pakistan already has a long tradition of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. That position is not new and it is not peculiar to Xinjiang or Hong Kong. Ditto on Taiwan. These are areas of concern for China, and Pakistan's position remains clear and consistent. If it runs contrary to the US' neoliberal approach, that is not Pakistan's concern. However, China's actions in South China Sea could likely result in difficulties for Pakistan, given Islamabad's relations with the ASEAN states. It would be prudent to respond to such issues as and when they arise while remaining mindful of the principles of International Law and Pakistan's own interests. Of late, Pakistan has had to face embarrassment because of statements made by ministers and other influential persons — including former senior generals — that did not jibe with Pakistan's official positions on issues of concern. This trend must be taken note of and curbed. It would also be prudent to make use of social media judiciously but sparingly.

4.4 Invest in Improved Private Sector Investment from Japan and Australia

Australia and Japan both represent large markets, and key strategic actors in Pakistan's immediate space. Their growing relationship with India does not necessitate a withdrawal of Pakistani attempts to engage Tokyo and Canberra. It is vital to engage the people and the firms of these nations in trade, commerce and cultural dialogue. Shared Commonwealth heritage with Australia provides several common ideals, goals, governance structures as well as a substantial stock of cultural capital from which to build and deepen Australia-Pakistani ties. The long-term view should be to substantially increase exports to Australia and draw much larger Foreign Direct Investment from that country. Japan's long and storied role in supporting key infrastructure in Pakistan, its leadership of the Asian Development Bank and its continued economic and technological capability means it must remain an indispensable trade and technology-transfer partner.¹⁴⁵ Pakistan hosts the world's most vital civilisational capital as the home of the Gandhara civilisation. Much more effort needs to be invested in engaging with Tokyo and the people of Japan, with whom Pakistanis share much more cultural heritage than has been explored to date.

4.5 Help Deepen US Economic Interests in Pakistan

Given the structural nature of US-China tensions and US' strategic partnership with India, the US and Pakistan are more likely to engage each other in an issue-based manner. However, that does not preclude relations from growing in other areas. The government in Pakistan could help facilitate the private sector to reach out to US companies and investors. Investment and trade could help give a more solid footing to US-Pakistan relations. This would also require a rethink on what kind of skill-set Pakistan's ambassador to the US should have.

4.6 Reform Institutions of Economic Policymaking

The current government of Pakistan had promised to restructure tax collection, boost trade and investment, and fight corruption. While it inherited a balance-of-payment crisis, it has lagged behind its own stated goals of restructuring the economy. A strong economy opens up the space for a country to exercise options in its foreign policy. This is a job for Pakistan to do. No one else can or will do it for Pakistan. Investment also requires consistency in the legal regime and governance structures.

4.7 Reorient CPEC as “One of Many”

Pakistan also needs to review the progress on CPEC and see what benefits it has accrued so far. It should best be done by experts outside the government and the findings made public. There is much talk about debt entrapment and underperformance. People have a right to know. Recent protests in Gwadar also make it essential that the governments must be alive to local sentiment wherever such projects are being implemented.

China and Pakistan are two different states and societies with different historical trajectories. While Xi in China can get things moving with the stroke of a pen, no one in Pakistan can do that. There must be a conversation with regard to these differences in order to avoid misunderstandings. While CPEC is important and Pakistan reasserted its commitment to CPEC goals and objectives during Prime Minister Khan's visit to Beijing for the Winter Olympics, CPEC should be treated as one track — albeit a very important one. Pakistan has already indicated on a number of occasions that it would welcome investment from any other country whether within the framework of CPEC or independently. That must be followed up vigorously and the government should make every effort to facilitate it. It is also important to not flog CPEC all the time and beyond its actual potential. The cheerleading on CPEC has already drawn unnecessary and bloated attention to it, some of it negative.

4.8 Investing in Pakistani Human Capital

Pakistan needs to invest in education and health sectors to develop its human resource. Current standards, unless improved exponentially, will continue to keep Pakistan dependent on outside sources for its defence and other needs. This requires immediate action because the benefits will begin to show in a decade.

Education reforms must target immediate as well as medium- to long-term objectives. The immediate target should be to identify and develop the potential and competencies of top-rate students from across Pakistan in all the fields but especially in STEM.

There are clear linkages here. Reforming education and developing first-rate human resource are vital both for innovation, entrepreneurship as well as defence R&D. And all of this requires a healthy population. But none of this is possible without a political consensus and consistency of policies. This is also the message delivered by the National Security Policy whose unclassified part was put out by the government for public debate.

The NSP identifies both traditional and non-traditional threats and emphasises the need for a citizen-centric approach. Without a healthy and educated human resource Pakistan will be hard-pressed to shield itself from the many challenges that await it and the world. However, the government's recent ill-informed actions with reference to the Higher Education Commission do not inspire confidence.

4.9 National Consensus on Strategic Direction

None of the above can be achieved unless Pakistan develops a multi-partisan consensus on certain goals and objectives. Without policy consistency in core areas, it is not possible to achieve results. A good example is Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear weapons capability. Despite pressure and sanctions, Pakistan managed what many other states could not. Because regardless of who was in power, the policy remained consistent, as did the doggedness with which Pakistan pursued the objective. It is important to develop a similar consensus in other core areas. Given the political fault-lines and the powers devolved to the provinces, doing so seems like a long shot. But it's not impossible, if the leaders of the main political parties show maturity.

5 Endnotes

¹Emerging Military Technologies: Background and Issues for Congress; Congressional Research Service; November 2021

² <http://www.caict.ac.cn/english/research/whitepapers/202003/P020200327550643303469.pdf>

³ <https://www.state.gov/a-foreign-policy-for-the-american-people/>

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-chinese-director-of-the-office-of-the-central-commission-for-foreign-affairs-yang-jiechi-and-chinese-state-councilor-wang-yi-at-th/>

⁵ <https://www.cnbc.com/2015/09/25/us-china-agree-to-not-conduct-cybertheft-of-intellectual-property-white-house.html>

⁶ <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IN10376.pdf>

⁷ John Mearsheimer, *Foreign Affairs* (November-December 2021), The Inevitable Rivalry. Mearsheimer writes: "Since a mightier China would surely challenge the U.S. position in Asia and possibly beyond, the logical choice for the United States was clear: slow China's rise. Instead, it encouraged it. Beguiled by misguided theories about liberalism's inevitable triumph and the obsolescence of great-power conflict, both Democratic and Republican administrations pursued a policy of engagement, which sought to help China grow richer. Washington promoted investment in China and welcomed the country into the global trading system, thinking it would become a peace-loving democracy and a responsible stakeholder in a U.S.-led international order."

⁸ While books on US-China relations continue to proliferate, views differ about how events will pan out. For instance, Rush Doshi's 2021 book, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*, argues that the US should avoid both confrontation and accommodation and instead adopt an "asymmetric competitive strategy" to counter China's quest to blunt "the West's overwhelming global influence." Kishore Mahbubani's book, *Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy*, argues that the US is making a mistake by using the playbook from the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Other works also stress the need for engagement. The common denominator, however, is an acceptance that the two big powers have reached an inflection point and there is a problem, which is growing bigger and more problematic.

⁹ China-US Strategic Competition and the Descent of a Porous Curtain, Jue Zhang and Jin Xu, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2021 (August)

¹⁰ The ten-page, lightly redacted document can be found at <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>

¹¹ Sino-Australia Relations: Beijing's Power Play, Ejaz Haider, March 19, 2021: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/sino-australia-relations-beijings-power-play/>

¹² The declassified parts of NSS 2017 can be found at <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

"For decades, U.S. policy was rooted in the belief that support for China's rise and for its integration into the post-war international order would liberalize China. Contrary to our hopes, China expanded its power at the expense of the sovereignty of others. China gathers and exploits data on an unrivaled scale and spreads features of its authoritarian system, including corruption and the use of surveillance. It is building the most capable and well-funded military in the world, after our own. Its nuclear arsenal is growing and diversifying. Part of China's military modernization and economic expansion is due to its access to the U.S. innovation economy, including America's world-class universities."

¹³ <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/23/959683134/what-trumps-declassified-asia-strategy-may-mean-for-u-s-china-relations-under-bi>

¹⁴ <https://ecfr.eu/article/trumpism-by-another-name-what-aukus-tells-us-about-us-policy-in-the-indo-pacific/>

¹⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>

¹⁷ <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/04/1043027789/biden-is-keeping-key-parts-of-trumps-china-trade-policy-heres-why>

¹⁸ Since the advent to power of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, tensions have increased between Beijing and Taipei. Tsai's party favours independence and has taken a tough approach to Beijing. Beijing in turn has ramped up political and military pressure on Taipei. To my written questions sent through email, Rana Mitter, Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China and Director of the University of Oxford China Centre, wrote back: "A full-scale invasion of Taiwan in the near future is unlikely because it would involve huge amounts of military planning, such as gathering troops on the coast of Fujian, that would be spotted by observers. This would lead to an escalation in rhetoric from the US and its allies and the possibility of sanctions. However, more economic pressure on Taiwan from the mainland is certainly possible. For Beijing there will be a balance between wanting to keep the economy stable in recovery from COVID, and the sense of destiny that comes from unifying with the island. However, it is still more likely to be an issue in the late 2020s than right now."

¹⁹ <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/atlantic-council-strategy-paper-series/the-longer-telegram/>

²⁰ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/16/readout-of-president-bidens-virtual-meeting-with-president-xi-jinping-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

²¹ Emerging Military Technologies: Background and Issues for Congress; Congressional Research Service; November 2021

²² <http://www.caict.ac.cn/english/research/whitepapers/202003/P020200327550643303469.pdf>

²³ "The nation is protected against balance-of-payments crises, because it imports and services borrowing in its own currency. American monetary policies, such as quantitative easing, can influence the value of the dollar to gain a competitive advantage." Satyajit Das https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/how-the-us-has-made-a-weapon-of-the-dollar/articleshow/65715068.cms?Utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

²⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aukus/>

²⁵ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/the-challenge-of-emerging-technologies/>

²⁶ <https://warontherocks.com/2017/11/rise-fall-rebirth-Quad/>

²⁷ <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html> Abe was visiting India and spoke to legislators at India's parliament. "Now, as this new 'broader Asia' takes shape at the confluence of the two seas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, I feel that it is imperative that the democratic nations located at opposite edges of these seas deepen the friendship among their citizens at every possible level." Earlier, in 2006 while campaigning, Abe had spoken about a values-based foreign policy and closer ties with Australia and India. In March 2007, his foreign minister Taro Aso spoke about the "arc of freedom and prosperity" on the "Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Founding of the Japan Forum on International Relations, Inc."

²⁸ <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/01/revived-Quad>

²⁹ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-diamond-past-present-and-future-Quadrilateral-security-dialogue>

³⁰ https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/PR190909_The-Quadrilateral-Security-Dialogue.pdf

³¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2007/s1973940.htm> "I have explained the nature of, and basis of, our trilateral strategic dialogue with Japan and the United States. But I have also reassured China that so-called Quadrilateral dialogue with India is not something that we are pursuing," Nelson told Stephen mcdonell from ABC Radio

³² <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-and-the-Quad/>

³³ Abe would not return to the prime ministerial office until 2012. But it was in his fourth term (2017-20) that the Quad would be revived.

³⁴ https://www.orfonline.org/research/indias-malabar-dilemma/#_edn8

³⁵ For instance, in a paper for a 2019 East Asia Security Symposium and Conference titled, The Quad: A perennial element in Australia's strategic outlook, Dr Anna Hayes argues that "Australia has long viewed regional strategy through the lens of a Quadripartite grouping of like-minded states within the Indo-Pacific region, making the Quad more a perennial element in Australia's strategic outlook than a recent development." Hayes traces Australia's threat perception to WWII when Australia was exposed to imperial Japan's aggression, and later the threat from the Soviet Union.

³⁶ <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/01/revived-Quad>, https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/PR190909_The-Quadrilateral-Security-Dialogue.pdf

³⁷ South China Sea, spanning an area of almost 3.5 million square kilometers, is a "crucial shipping lane, a rich fishing ground, and believed to hold substantial oil and gas resources." It is also rife with disputes. China claims historic sovereignty and rights over it beyond its 12 nautical mile territorial sea limit. For greater detail on the nature of the disputes and the decision of the arbitration under Annex VII of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS or the Convention or the 1982 Convention), see <https://academic.oup.com/chinesejil/article/15/2/265/2548386> and <https://www.lawfareblog.com/tribunal-issues-landmark-ruling-south-china-sea-arbitration>

³⁸ <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/01/revived-Quad>

³⁹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/joint-statement-from-Quad-leaders/> The statement also stressed "the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity of states."

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Military movements and clashes began in the Ladakh region of the LAC in May 2020. In June, a clash left 20 India and four Chinese soldiers dead. Multiple rounds of talks at the military, diplomatic and political levels have failed to resolve the issues, though at one point the two sides did withdraw troops to previous locations. India also sanctioned many Chinese tech companies following the June clash. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/3/india-china-himalayan-border-security-deadly-clashes>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53062484>, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/03/india-china-border-dispute-unlikely-to-end-anytime-soon-nirupama-rao.html>

⁴² <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/sino-australia-relations-beijings-power-play/> A number of analysts agree that China's growing coercion of Australia has forced Canberra to become the moving spirit behind Quad 2.0. In his blogpost for IISS, William Choong wrote: "A further driver in the Quad's revival is Australia's growing willingness to express its concerns about China. A senior colonel in the Chinese People's Liberation Army took the opportunity at the 2017 IISS Shangri-La Dialogue to ask Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull what Canberra's 'ideal regional security network' would look like. Turnbull replied that the ideal environment would be one in which the rule of law is respected, in which states do not use their coercive power to 'intimidate or bully others'. One example, he added, was the militarisation of disputed territories. In November, Canberra went a step further, declaring in its foreign policy White Paper that the South China Sea is the 'major fault line in the regional order'."

⁴³ On October 20, 2020, Press Trust of India reported that China has taken note of Australia's participation in the upcoming Malabar 2020 exercise. Commenting on the announcement, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here that China has "taken note of this development. We always believe that military cooperation between countries should be conducive to regional peace and stability," implying that Beijing did not consider the objectives of Quad and such exercises as conducive to peace. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-says-it-has-taken-note-of-australia-joining-annual-malabar-naval-drills/articleshow/78768560.cms?From=mdr>

⁴⁴ On May 31, 2017, India's newspaper, The Hindustan Times, reported: "China on Wednesday seemed to welcome India's move to "reject" a request from Australia to join this year's Malabar naval exercise, which involves India, Japan and the US and is usually held in the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean or West Pacific maritime regions."
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-welcomes-india-s-rejection-of-australian-request-to-join-malabar-exercise/story-n5ujaitqreshsngylh3fal.html>

⁴⁵ Interestingly, beginning 2015, India and Australia have held bilateral naval exercises called AUSINDEX. September 2021 saw the fourth iteration of the naval drills that have increased in operational scope and interoperability between the Indian and Royal Australian Navies. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-australia-undertakes-4th-iteration-of-biennial-maritime-series-ausindex/articleshow/86638875.cms?From=mdr>

⁴⁶ China reacted sharply to Japan's inclusion in the Malabar exercise. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei at his regular press briefing on December 24, 2015 stressed that "China's position is very clear. Relevant countries should not provoke confrontation and create tension in the region."

⁴⁷ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-06/why-Quad-alarms-china>

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ <https://academic.oup.com/cjip/article/12/3/371/5544745> Minghao Zhao, "Is a New Cold War Inevitable? Chinese Perspectives on US–China Strategic Competition." The Chinese Journal of International Politics; 26 August 2019. Zhao's paper presents a range of Chinese views, papers written in Chinese. That makes it really beneficial for non-Chinese readers.

⁵⁰ <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Yan-Xuetong:-Biden-is-forming-%27a-coalition-against-China-and-Russia%27-52688.html> Yan was commenting after the March 24, 2021 meeting between Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

⁵¹ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-06-22/plot-against-china> Foreign Affairs, July/August 2021

⁵² <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-06-22/becoming-strong>

⁵³ <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/what-beijing-wants-to-tell-the-rest-of-the-world-7410971/> Gokhale is also the author of "The Long Game: How Chinese Negotiate with India."

⁵⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aucus/>

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ <https://theconversation.com/why-the-australia-france-submarine-deal-collapse-was-predictable-168526>

⁵⁷ <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20211102-france-accuses-australia-of-inelegant-methods-after-macron-sms-leaked-to-press>

⁵⁸ "The AUKUS deal...has much more to do with the politics of the main actors. The US and Australia both want to show that they are committed to military defence of the region, and the US is still recovering from the perception under Trump that they did not really rate alliances highly. From the UK point of view, it helps to cement the idea that European actors can have a role in the Asia-Pacific as part of a shoring-up of global order. The actual military value of AUKUS doesn't change the balance that much." My email exchange with Professor Rana Mitter.

⁵⁹ The nonproliferation concerns are outside the scope of this paper but a good explainer can be read at <https://www.lawfareblog.com/legal-mechanisms-aucus-explained>

⁶⁰ Another view is contained in an article by James Acton at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Acton believes "the nonproliferation implications of the AUKUS submarine deal are both negative and serious."

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/09/21/why-aucus-submarine-deal-is-bad-for-nonproliferation-and-what-to-do-about-it-pub-85399>

⁶¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53950704>

⁶² Ibid, and <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/tensions-east-china-sea>

⁶³ For more detail about the Okinawa Reversion Agreement and the return of Senkaku islands to Japan's administrative control see: https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo_eg/senkaku/okinawa.html

⁶⁴ For details of China's claim, see main points of an interview given by China's Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying on October 22, 2012: <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cedk/eng/ztd/dydw/t1036403.htm>

Fu used Japanese sources to justify China's claim. This is what she said at one point: "The Japanese claim that the Islands were 'terra nullius' before 1895 does not square with facts. You may look through the 1972 book by Japanese historian and Kyoto University Professor Kiyoshi Inoue, The Historical Analysis of Diaoyu Islands. He used numerous historical facts to show that Diaoyu Islands were not 'terra nullius' but Chinese territory. This was not unknown to the then Japanese government."

⁶⁵ See: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/tensions-east-china-sea>, and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11341139>

⁶⁶ Obama's statement was widely reported. For details, see some links below:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/japan-usa-obama-interview-idinkbn0d902f20140423>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/24/obama-in-japan-backs-status-quo-in-island-dispute-with-china>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27137272>

⁶⁷ <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/tensions-east-china-sea>

"However, although Japan's Ministry of Defense reported that the number of times Japan's military had to scramble jets in response to Chinese air incursions went down 41 percent in 2017, that number increased in 2018 and is on trend to continue increasing in 2019. Recently, Japan has built new military bases on nearby islands, allegedly to monitor the Miyako and Tokara Straits and prevent China from further developing its military capabilities in the region."

⁶⁸ See Chung Min Lee's assessment for Carnegie Endowment for Peace: "South Korea is one of the few countries in Asia, or for that matter, in the world, that has both long-standing historical ties with China and a critical alliance with the United States. This two-sided reality puts unprecedented pressure on Seoul, as the U.S.-China rivalry intensifies and spills over to affect trade and technology policy. As Asia's fourth-largest economy, South Korea exported goods worth over \$136 billion to China in 2019, comprising a quarter of its total exports. Moreover, since China is North Korea's only ally and indispensable patron, Seoul must also give careful consideration to the complex Beijing-Pyongyang relationship as South Korea tends to its own ties with China." <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/10/21/south-korea-is-caught-between-china-and-united-states-pub-83019>

⁶⁹ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/resolved-japan-ready-become-formal-member-five-eyes>
In an August 2021 article for East Asia Forum, Ken Kotani wrote: "Last year, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson made positive remarks about Japan joining the alliance. Former US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage also wrote that 'the United States and Japan should make serious efforts to move toward a Six Eyes network'. Japanese security scholars Richard Samuels and Brad Williams similarly mentioned the possibility of Japan's participation in the alliance in their recent studies." See also: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/08/26/japans-five-eyes-chance-and-challenge/>

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/11/06/japans-new-defence-minister-makes-his-early-mark-with-canberra/>

⁷² <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/08/26/japans-five-eyes-chance-and-challenge/>

⁷³ For more detail of Michito's argument, see: <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/d00654/>

See also Hiroyuki Akita's article, "Pros and cons of a Six Eyes with Japan and allies" for Nikkei Asia:

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/Pros-and-cons-of-a-Six-Eyes-with-Japan-and-allies>

Another detailed assessment of the difficulties regarding Japan's inclusion in the Five-Eyes club is contained in a long paper for Leiden University:

<https://www.leidensecurityandglobalaffairs.nl/articles/mixed-signals-assessing-japans-prospects-to-join-the-five-eyes-intelligence-alliance>

⁷⁴ According to reports, the cordial tone at the virtual summit between Biden and Xi gave an immediate boost to markets in Asia. This is just a minor indication of how the ups and downs in the relationship have a cascading effect across the regions.

⁷⁵ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/2192563/asean-can-live-with-Quad-and-aucus>

⁷⁶ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/09/23/asean-and-the-Quad-strategic-impasse-or-avenue-for-cooperation/>

⁷⁷ India took an early lead in setting up what have come to be known as Indian Institutes of Technology. The first Indian Institute of Technology was founded in May 1950 at the site of the Hijli Detention Camp in Kharagpur in West Bengal. Today, there are 23 IITs across India. But the history of the IIT system dates back to 1946 when Sir Jogendra Singh of the Viceroy's Executive Council set up a committee whose task was to consider the creation of Higher Technical Institutions for post-war industrial development in India. The 22-member committee, headed by Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, recommended the establishment of these institutions in various parts of India, along the lines of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), with affiliated secondary institutions. See:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070813213137/http://www.iitkgp.ac.in/institute/history.php>

At the first convocation at Kharagpur in 1956, India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Here in the place of that Hijli Detention Camp stands the fine monument of India, representing India's urges, India's future in the making. This picture seems to me symbolical of the changes that are coming to India." For Nehru's speech, see the link above.

⁷⁸ Fortune, Microsoft's Nadella, Google's Pichai, and now Twitter's Agrawal: Why Indian-born leaders dominate American tech's top ranks. <https://fortune.com/2021/12/03/twitter-ceo-tech-industry-microsoft-google-silicon-valley-indian-born-leaders/>

⁷⁹ New Generation of Indian Entrepreneurs Should Go Global, Look for Synergies, *The Economic Times*, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/new-generation-of-indian-entrepreneurs-should-go-global-look-for-synergies-kamal-nath/articleshow/2622204.cms>

⁸⁰ Globalization of Investment: How Indian Entrepreneurs' Approach Lured Global Funds, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/globalization-of-investment-how-indian-entrepreneurs-approach-lured-global-funds/>

⁸¹ Pakistanis, including officials, often lament that India gets better press in the world. That is the dividend coming India's way given the rising trajectory of that country. At the heart of it lies India's human resource.

⁸² See the following:

Hindutva Violence in India: Trends and Implications, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26918077?>

How Hindutva Hatred is Jeopardising India's Gulf Ties, <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/hindutva-india-gulf-ties>

How Hindu supremacists are tearing India apart, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/20/hindu-supremacists-nationalism-tearing-india-apart-modi-bjp-rss-jnu-attacks>

Christophe Jaffrelot, The Fate of Secularism in India, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/04/fate-of-secularism-in-india-pub-78689>

Eviane Leidig, Hindutva as a Variant of Right-Wing Extremism,

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0031322X.2020.1759861>

⁸³ "The deal, signed at the India-Russia bilateral summit recently, is for production of over 600,000 assault rifles over 10 years with complete transfer of Russian technology. In addition, there could be fresh orders from the paramilitary forces as well as export options." See:

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-jv-to-make-ak-203-assault-rifles-in-amethi-but-timely-delivery-hinges-on-localisation/articleshow/88329832.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

⁸⁴ "CAG report shows IAF wanted only Rafale, competitive bidding was just a charade", *The Print*,

<https://theprint.in/opinion/how-rafale-beat-competing-jets-and-remained-iafs-choice-until-modi-signed-deal-in-2015/195306/>

⁸⁵ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/united-states-offers-f-18-naval-fighter-jets-for-indian-navys-requirements/articleshow/78907580.cms>

The report says that at the 2+2 meeting, the US had "offered to provide their naval fighter aircraft F-18 for the Indian Navy under a government proposal." India has preferred the Rafale's naval version.

⁸⁶ <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-emerging-us-india-strategic-relationship>

⁸⁷ Latif, Amir S., *U.S.-India Defense Trade*, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/120703_Latif_usindiadefense_Web.pdf

⁸⁸ Ibid. This is how the report puts it: "What characterizes defense trade at a deeper level? Simply put, it is a relationship in which defense sales can be conducted with in-depth familiarity and knowledge about each other's sales and acquisition processes, a mutual understanding of governmental bureaucratic processes, interoperability between forces, and codevelopment efforts that produce military equipment usable by both countries, establishes India as a key supply chain location for U.S. defense production, and perhaps at a future point, sees India become a leading developer of defense research and technology. The strategic impact of deeper defense trade could lead to a more stable Asia-Pacific region where the United States and India could consistently and seamlessly work together on areas of common interest through common defense equipment to include disaster response, humanitarian assistance, counter-piracy, and peacekeeping."

⁸⁹ Tharoor notes that "India is also an enthusiastic partner in Chinese-led and regional financial and diplomatic associations like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and RIC (Russia, India, China) groupings. The New Development Bank (NDB), for example, is headquartered in Shanghai and has an Indian chief executive." See: <https://www.noemamag.com/india-should-constrain-not-contain-china/>

⁹⁰ Sreemoy Talukdar, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/aucus-has-opened-a-huge-strategic-opportunity-for-india-and-france-is-a-key-player-in-the-equation-9989041.html>

⁹¹ <https://theprint.in/opinion/Quad-tent-just-got-bigger-with-aucus-chinas-aggressive-behaviour-will-be-under-watch/735973/>

⁹² <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-dithered-over-projecting-naval-power-now-its-been-pushed-to-the-sidelines-of-the-indo-pacific-7530473/>

⁹³ <https://bharatkarnad.com/2021/09/27/a-post-aucus-world-and-indias-options/>

⁹⁴ The Lowy Institute article by Abhijit Singh, India remains divided about AUKUS, is a good summary of the debates within the Indian strategic community: "The jury in New Delhi is still out on AUKUS, the new trilateral security agreement between the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. Three months after its announcement, the issue continues to split India's security experts, with little consensus over whether it benefits New Delhi or is detrimental to Indian interests."

See also Singh's article in *The Hindu*, India is not a bystander in AUKUS saga: "There is apprehension that the deal could eventually lead to a crowding of nuclear attack submarines (ssns/submersible ship nuclear) in the Eastern Indian Ocean, eroding India's regional pre-eminence. The Indian Navy presently dominates the space, but its conventional underwater capability has been shrinking. An Indian plan to develop a fleet of nuclear attack submarines has elicited no offer of help from the U.S. that does not share its prized nuclear submarine technology with even its closest allies; all except Australia, evidently." September 25, 2021, see: <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/india-remains-divided-about-aucus>

⁹⁵ <https://www.noemamag.com/india-should-constrain-not-contain-china/>

⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁹⁷ A Carnegie Endowment explainer, Who's In and Who's Out From Biden's Democracy Summit, said the Biden administration identified India as an "Electoral Autocracy", noting that "Four additional invitees prompt serious backsliding concerns due to heightened levels of autocratisation or big declines in freedom of expression over the past ten years: Brazil, India, the Philippines, and Poland."

⁹⁸ <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3098508/wiser-modi-put-every-effort-easing-tensions-china?>

⁹⁹ Pakistan's PM Urges US, China to Reduce Tensions; Voice of America, December 9, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-s-pm-urges-us-china-to-reduce-tensions/6346614.html>

See also:

Pakistani premier says he hopes to bring US, China together; Anadolu Agency; February 9, 2022

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistani-premier-says-he-hopes-to-bring-us-china-together/2497487>

¹⁰⁰ <https://mofa.gov.pk/transcript-of-the-press-briefing-by-spokesperson-on-thursday-23-september-2021/>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pakistan-united-states-and-imf>

¹⁰² Many analysts, including Indian, believe that deteriorating Sino-Indian relations since 2020 have pushed India closer to the US' objectives in the Quad grouping. According to Professor Mitter, "While India remains a reluctant power in Asia more broadly defined, it is concerned not just about LAC [Line of Actual Control] but also Chinese projection into the Indian Ocean. It will likely remain a more muted actor in the Quad, but it does seem that its commitment is firmer than

might have been the case a few years ago. India now sees Chinese power as a long-term reality in the region that has to be addressed. I suspect any Congress or Coalition government would take a similar view." Email exchange.

¹⁰³ The statement's origin remains suspect. The only statement that Wang seems to have made was to Xinhua on March 8, 2015 and it referred to BRI initiatives as not 'solo' but a 'symphony', see:

http://english.www.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/03/08/content_281475067737432.htm

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26403205>

¹⁰⁵ <https://tnsr.org/2021/11/not-at-any-price-lbj-pakistan-and-bargaining-in-an-asymmetric-intelligence-relationship/>

The other work that has some details with reference to US-Pakistan secret arrangements is Bruce Riedel's, JFK's Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and the Sino-Indian War.

¹⁰⁶ Jaffery Bader's article is a very good primer on what the elimination of the two-term limit for the offices of President and Vice President mean for China. See: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/02/27/7-things-you-need-to-know-about-lifting-term-limits-for-xi-jinping/>

¹⁰⁷ See:

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/12/13/pakistan-skipped-the-us-summit-for-democracy-why/>

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/southasiasource/3-reasons-why-pakistan-should-have-attended-the-democracy-summit/>

¹⁰⁸ See:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/07/china-attacks-us-diplomatic-boycott-of-winter-games-as-travesty-of-olympic-spirit>

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/china-says-us-diplomatic-boycott-winter-olympics-could-harm-co-operation-2021-12-07/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1662812/pakistan-desires-to-bridge-gaps-between-us-china-instead-of-joining-any-bloc-pm-imran>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pakistan-china-to-skip-nsa-level-meet-afghanistan-hosted-india-1874514-2021-11-09>

¹¹¹ <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/qmhd15n1wuxlskqrkrbupk/The-new-normal-after-Indias-surgical-strikes.html>

The talk about a "new normal" begot some discerning analysis too.

¹¹² See also:

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/08/how-different-is-new-normal-from-old-normal-in-south-asian-crises-pub-81746>

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/does-balakot-define-a-new-normal-49198/>

¹¹³ For the most comprehensive account of what happened, see <http://kaiser-aeronaut.blogspot.com/2019/06/pulwama-from-bluster-to-whimper.html>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-kashmir-crisis-insight-iduskcn1qy03t>

¹¹⁵ For an incisive account of how Modi used the Balakot strike to his advantage, despite Pakistan's retaliation, see: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/27725/how-modi-won-the-political-war-over-the-latest-india-pakistan-crisis>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/modi-india-no-longer-helpless-in-face-of-terror-after-crisis-with-pakistan/2019/03/01/31d6667c-3c20-11e9-b786-d6abcbcd212a_story.html

¹¹⁶ <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2021-Unclassified-Report.pdf>

¹¹⁷ Bhakto, Anando, "Frontline investigations into the Pulwama attack", <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/pulwama-attack-intelligence-inputs-ignored-national-security-leak-compromise-balakot-bjp-win-2019/article33889516.ece?>

See also, Sushant Singh: <https://cprindia.org/sites/default/files/The%20Hindu%20Sushanth%20Singh.pdf>

¹¹⁸ See:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explainspeaking-india-economy-consumer-demand-growth-7504911/>

<https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/understanding-india-s-economic-slowdown>

¹¹⁹ See:

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40142944/emerging-risks>

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40144515/outlook-for-2022>

¹²⁰ See:

<https://scroll.in/article/915271/modis-rafale-statement-ignores-iafs-huge-lead-over-pakistani-air-power-say-experts>

<https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-rafale-could-have-made-result-of-balakot-airstrike-better-iaf-chief-dhanoa/328793>

¹²¹ <https://zeenews.india.com/india/purpose-of-s-400-and-rafale-is-to-hit-pakistani-aircraft-inside-pakistani-air-space-says-former-iaf-chief-b-s-dhanoa-2300227.html>

¹²² Pakistan has recently acquired J10C fighter jets from China. Experts say this is to counter the Rafale threat. "The J-10C is a 4.5-generation medium-size fighter jet and is more powerful than the China-Pakistan jointly developed lightweight fighter jet, the JF-17, which is currently in service with the Pakistan Air Force," Shi Hong, Executive Chief

Editor of the Chinese magazine, Shipborne Weapons, told the Global Times.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202202/1252714.shtml>

¹²³ Moeed Yusuf, Brokering Peace in Nuclear Environments: U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia. Yusuf argues that "the world has moved away from the binational relationships that defined Cold War conflict". Drawing on three crises

since India and Pakistan went nuclear, he details the role of the United States to describe the potential for third-party intervention to manage crises and avert a spiral.

¹²⁴ The brief details bilateral exchanges and lists various areas covered by the dialogue architecture.

https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/foreignrelation/India_US_brief.pdf

¹²⁵ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-hindu-explains-how-will-the-basic-exchange-and-cooperation-agreement-deepen-india-us-military-ties/article32993733.ece>

¹²⁶ <https://www.brookings.edu/research/after-the-foundational-agreements-an-agenda-for-us-india-defense-and-security-cooperation/>

¹²⁷ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/04/27/well-begun-is-half-done-managing-u.s.-india-relations-pub-84360>

¹²⁸ China's Influence on Conflict Dynamics in South Asia; USIP Senior Study Group Final Report

¹²⁹ <https://www.congress.gov/bills/115/congress-house-bill/3364/text>

¹³⁰ The full report can be read at <https://www.stimson.org/2021/toward-a-mature-defense-partnership-insights-from-a-u-s-india-strategic-dialogue/>

¹³¹ See:

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-russia-s-400-air-defence-missile-system-punjab-sector-1890141-2021-12-21>

<https://www.news18.com/news/india/s-400s-1st-squadron-deployed-in-punjab-sector-will-help-india-thwart-aerial-threats-from-pak-china-4576571.html>

¹³² <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/s-400s-caatsa-complicate-india-us-ties/>

¹³³ https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?Dtl/34250/Joint_Statement_on_Inaugural_IndiaAustralia_22_Ministerial_Dialogue_11_September_2021_New_Delhi

¹³⁴ Recent developments with reference to Russian military build-up against Ukraine and deployment of Russian troops to Belarus for joint military exercises has created a major crisis between Russia on the one hand and US/NATO/EU and Ukraine on the other. President Putin's decision to recognise the breakaway regions of Luhansk and Donetsk has further exacerbated the situation.

¹³⁵ While the US understood the nature of India-Russia relations and India's legacy systems acquired from Russia, the S-400 deal falls outside the concept of legacy systems.

¹³⁶ The Stimson Centre report cites a number of analyses that point to "divergent Indian threat perceptions, priorities, strategy, and pacing, as well as the country's relationship with U.S. adversaries such as Russia and Iran." Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley J. Tellis, "The India Dividend: New Delhi Remains Washington's Best Hope in Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 5 (September/October 2019): 173-183; Sameer Lalwani and Heather Byrne, "Great Expectations: Asking Too Much of the US-India Strategic Partnership," *The Washington Quarterly*, 42, no. 3, (Fall 2019): 41-64.

¹³⁷ <https://www.stimson.org/2021/toward-a-mature-defense-partnership-insights-from-a-u-s-india-strategic-dialogue/>

¹³⁸ <https://southasianvoices.org/what-would-it-mean-for-pakistan-to-lose-major-non-nato-ally-status/>

¹³⁹ <http://cpec.gov.pk/vision-mission/3>

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-five>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-investment-climate-statements/pakistan/>

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ A February 4, 2022 report in Dawn, Pakistan's leading English-language newspaper, quoted US State Department spokesperson Ned Price as saying that "We've made the point all along that it is not a requirement for any country around the world to choose between the United States and China. It is our intention to provide choices to countries when it comes to what the relationship with the United States looks like." Price was responding to a question about China-Pakistan relations. In the same briefing, he also referred to US-Pakistan "strategic partnership".

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1673142>

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ For Japan's Official Development Assistance to Pakistan and the various sectors in which Pakistan has benefited from Japan's technical and financial assistance see https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/region/sw_asia/pakistan_o.pdf