

China mocking India over AUKUS has got a fitting reply from US

By Dr Seshadri Chari

Author is a commentator on foreign policy, strategy, and security affairs. He is Secretary General of the Forum for Integrated National Security (FINS) and former editor of English weekly Organiser.

Quad is currently the only regional outfit to deal with challenges posed by China's belligerence. The Indo-Pacific, therefore, needs to start working on various levels.

One year after his famous “America is back” speech, US President Joe Biden has unveiled his Indo-Pacific policy. The 12-page fact sheet on Indo-Pacific vision released by the White House promises to intensify the United States’ focus on the region with a strong India as a partner. The reason for this sudden love, respect and awe for India is mentioned in the document – “mounting challenges” posed by the rise of China. The foreign policy course correction comes after a tumultuous year, pandemic beaten economy and strategic decisions in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

In September 2021, Biden hosted the meeting of Quad leaders to signal his support to back the four-country partnership. But even as the work was in progress, the US announced the launching of yet another partnership, the AUKUS – Australia-UK-US – partnership wherein the US promised to equip Australia with nuclear powered submarines, ostensibly to match the Chinese naval might in the South China Sea.

While India and Japan publicly welcomed the announcement, both New Delhi and Tokyo were gingerly waiting for the new tripartite platform to unfold the operative part of the partnership. The French were upset at the loss of business.

Beijing registered a strong protest saying all this is a reflection of outdated Cold War zero-sum mentality and narrow-minded geopolitical perception that would intensify regional arms race. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian justified the views of Samoa and Kiribati and suggested that AUKUS will instigate confrontation and division in the region, accelerate arms race and undermine regional peace and security.

Beijing also raised the issue of violation of the spirit of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty. China continues to segregate the Indo-Pacific countries as Asian and South Pacific nations and deliberately evades any reference to the Indo-Pacific in order to avoid giving importance to India’s centrality to the region.

China also mockingly warned India and Japan that the US through AUKUS will favour Australia at the cost of Quad. The commitment by the US to strengthen its role in the Indo-Pacific for a longer and enduring engagement, and its recognition of the challenges posed by the hegemonic ambitions of China and India’s salience in the Indo-Pacific region, is a fitting reply to Beijing.

A new framework for Indo-Pacific

While the Donald Trump regime wore its anti-China policies on the sleeves, the Quad was apprehensive that the Biden dispensation would scale down Washington's antipathy to Beijing. As of now, Quad is the only regional outfit to deal with the issues arising out of the challenges posed by China's belligerence in economic, military, and strategic outreaches. The concept of Indo-Pacific, therefore, needs to emerge into an institutionalised framework and start working on as many verticals as possible and necessary in the present context.

There are three significant aspects that engage academic and strategic thinkers all over the world – the emerging new world order versus the Liberal International Order (LIO), military might versus economic strength, and the US-dominated liberal hegemony versus China-led authoritarian hegemonism.

The LIO, based on the template of respecting national sovereignty, rule of law, free trade, preserving global commons and above all providing a democratic dispensation, led by the US post-Second World War, faced mounting challenges during the Cold War. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union sought to modify the rules of America's engagement with the rest of the world, heralding a phase of liberal hegemony, albeit brief, in a world perceived as unipolar. The eastward expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in the background of diminished threat of Cold War-prompted Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) is now facing a challenge from Russia, which perceives this expansion as a security threat.

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Australia And India Partnering Up Within The QUAD

By Lisa Singh

Author is from Australia India Institute and University of Melbourne

Australia and India are increasingly aligned within the Quad grouping, and their bilateral agreements were a key feature on the sidelines of the Melbourne meeting

Hosting the first meeting this year of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) in Melbourne last week was a coup for Australia, but it also provided a key opportunity for strengthening its growing bilateral relationship with India.

Indeed, the meeting demonstrated that Australia and India are closely aligned on their views on the function of the Quad itself – an informal grouping that brings together the US, Japan, India and Australia.

Unlike US Secretary of State Antony Blinken who at the start of the meeting pushed the need to address the implications the looming crisis in Ukraine could have in the Indo-Pacific, Australia and India tended to focus on what the Quad, as a likeminded grouping, is for – rather than what the Quad is against, be it Russia or China.

When asked about comments made by China's Foreign Ministry, which has suggested that Mr Blinken's comments sought to "discredit, suppress and contain China's development", Minister Payne responded that the Quad has a positive agenda and that "we are not against anything; we're about building, about building confidence and resilience".

Why Russia isn't about to invade Ukraine soon

Similarly, at an event hosted by the Australia India Institute (AII) last week, I asked India's visiting Minister of External Affairs, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar whether discussions on countering China would be a focus of Melbourne's Quad meeting.

He responded saying that “I think you do the Quad an injustice by suggesting that the focus is going to be on countering China.”

“The Quad is about the world, and I would not like to see it reduced to China.”

This Quad meeting not only saw Australia and India approach the dialogue with a similar strategy of building towards rather than containment of, but it also saw their shared perspectives, values and interests lead to favourable outcomes in the bilateral relationship

The momentum towards closer relations between Australia and India has been accelerating over the last decade, driven by a range of geopolitical and economic reasons.

And while the four foreign ministers came to the Quad meeting undoubtedly each with their own agendas, it was the bilateral meetings between Australia and India that occurred on the sidelines and their subsequent announcements that were a hallmark of the week.

In their joint press conference, Australia’s Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne and Minister Jaishankar publicly announced high-level initiatives that built on existing commitments made under the Australia-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

These included the new Maitri series of initiatives to help boost education and cultural ties between Australia and India, including \$A11.2 million towards the Maitri Scholars Program to encourage Indian students to study at Australian universities, \$A3.5 million towards the Maitri Fellowships Program to build links between future leaders, and \$A6.1 million towards the Maitri cultural partnerships, to support cultural exchanges and the role of creative industries in both countries.

Minister Jaishankar agreed at the All event at University of Melbourne that boosting education and strong ties to India was how the bilateral relationship was to really shift.

“At the end of the day, the relationships between countries are those of peoples,” he told the audience.

“So when I see a University like yours that has so many linkages with Indian Institutions, to me, this is really part of the change that is happening, and I would certainly hope that in the coming years, we see much stronger bonds and much broader engagement as all parts of society have to move, if the relationship is to change.”

Tourism, of course, links to international student mobility and a new Memorandum of Understanding was signed by both countries to promote travel between the two markets and advance cooperation on tourism policy, data sharing, training and industry engagement.

Australia India Institute CEO Lisa Singh with India’s External Affairs Minister Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Picture: Supplied.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, India was Australia’s fastest growing source of international visitors, with almost 400,000 visitors from India visiting Australia in 2019 and spending a combined total of \$A1.8 billion. Australian airline Qantas has responded with direct flights, not only into Delhi but soon into the technology capital in India, Bengaluru.

Both countries also agreed to build on their existing Joint Declaration on a Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, with Australia stepping up its engagement in the North East Indian Ocean.

Australia announced \$A36.5 million would go towards enhancing its engagement in the North East Indian Ocean by investing in maritime and disaster preparedness, as well as supporting opportunities of trade, investment and connectivity in the region.

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Germany's former Chancellor says we must not cut Russia off as he boasts of friendship with Putin

Schroeder is the Chairman of the Shareholders' Committee of Nord Stream, in which Russian energy corporation Gazprom international projects LLC holds a 51 per cent stake.



Gerhard Schroeder (second from left) with Vladimir Putin Reuters

Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has urged European countries not to cut their ties with Russia despite its launched attack on Ukraine.

Schroeder, who has described himself as a friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin, added that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine should end as soon as possible.

"There have been many mistakes - on both sides. But Russia's security interests do not justify the use of military means either," Schroeder said on LinkedIn.

"With the necessary sanctions, care must be taken not to completely cut the remaining political, economic and civil society ties that exist between Europe and Russia".

Western countries are continuing to draw up sanctions on Russia following the attack, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson announcing a raft of new measures in the House of Commons.

Meanwhile, the EU have revealed a second package that will "severely" hit Russia's economy, EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said.

Von der leyen said the measures would increase capital outflow, raise inflation and gradually erode Russia's industrial basis.

Ukraine has urged countries to seek the strongest possible sanctions on Russia, which include a halt on buying Russian gas and oil, as well as Russia being blocked from swift payments and disconnected from the Visa and Mastercard systems.

Courtesy www.gbnews.uk/news

France Will Not Vacate The Indo-Pacific Anytime Soon

By Philippe Le Corre

Author is a research fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School and a nonresident senior fellow with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Five months after the emergence of AUKUS, straining relations between Paris, London and Canberra, France is now chair of the European Union, putting President Emmanuel Macron in a position to guide key policy areas such as the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy.

On Tuesday, up to 62 foreign ministers, including from all 27 EU nations and from across the vast Asia-Pacific region but not the U.S., will gather in the French capital to discuss issues ranging from climate change to global governance and maritime security, a reminder that France and the EU have no intention of fading away from the Indo-Pacific.

There is still resentment in Paris about the way Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. negotiated the AUKUS agreement without consulting other allies, especially after the Biden administration's commitment to work with "like-minded countries." Still, France may well have turned the crisis into an opportunity.

While some countries believe Paris overreacted, the general consensus remains that the U.S. should consult the EU on major strategic issues, including alliances between three of the bloc's close partners, especially on issues as central as the Indo-Pacific or how to deal with China.

Washington, including President Joe Biden himself, has tried to patch things up by welcoming various French diplomatic initiatives, as well as the EU-U.S.-China dialogue co-chaired by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and European External Action Service Secretary-General Stefano Sannino in December.

With France keen to use its EU presidency to show deliverables in key sectors such as digital connectivity, security and biodiversity, the multifaceted EU-Indo-Pacific format, unlike the rather limited scope of AUKUS, will aim at demonstrating engagement with the region, supported by the EU pillars of the rule of law and the fight against climate change.

China has not been invited to the Paris meeting, with the EU repeatedly stating that it does not wish to confront Beijing. Still, the EU has also started pivoting toward Asia.

The bloc also shares similar concerns with the U.S. when it comes to China's regional ambitions. The EU's 2019 Strategic Outlook described China as "a partner, an economic competitor and a systemic rival," an assessment that reflects the need to strike a balance between European values and interests.

The U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, which met last year, addressed common concerns with regard to investment screening, cybersecurity and market access. At the same time, Macron and Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz are keen to maintain a channel of communication with Beijing in a year that will likely see Xi Jinping's reappointment as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party.

Paris and Berlin had originally pushed for an EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, but Beijing's excessive sanctions over a large number of European officials, think tanks and academics have made it impossible for the European Parliament to ratify the agreement.

In addition, perceptions of China have evolved a great deal across Europe since COVID-19 exposed the risk of overdependence on Chinese supply chains, while the French public has grown increasingly negative on China.

Gone is the time when 78% of French citizens saw China's contribution to their economy as positive. It is also true that the roughly 2 million high-spending Chinese tourists who visited France in 2017 have faded away due to COVID travel restrictions. Chinese investment has also fallen dramatically.

From Beijing's viewpoint, this state of affairs may not appear satisfactory but will remain difficult to address this year given the full domestic agenda ahead of the CCP's 20th National Congress set for autumn. Relations with the EU are important, especially for Chinese exports, but not at the expense of the CCP's ongoing nationalist narrative.

This gives France a chance to push the Indo-Pacific initiative further. For all of Washington's ambitions to rally democracies, many Asian nations prefer to walk a fine line between the U.S. and China.

There is one caveat, though. In April, right in the middle of his EU presidency, Macron will face a highly contested presidential election, followed by crucial legislative elections.

Although Macron is currently the front-runner, another French president, especially from the far right, might be less inclined to lead the EU's external affairs policies as forcefully. Particularly in a region where many EU member states have a limited presence.

Paris has many reasons to continue to maintain its long-term presence in the Indo-Pacific. As a member of the U.N. Security Council, it needs to continue to be active in the region to keep its permanent seat.

[Read complete article on website asia.nikkei.com](https://asia.nikkei.com)

Lawmaker Warns Russian Cyberthreats Could Spill Over Ukraine's Borders

By Lindsay Wise

The chairman of the House Intelligence Committee warned that Russian cyberattacks on Ukraine might not stay within Ukraine.

"We have seen in the past Russia deploy cyberattacks at a particular target. But those tools get into the wild, and they cause global damage," said Rep. Adam Schiff, a California Democrat. "One pressing concern is that what the Kremlin is directing at Ukraine may not stay in Ukraine in terms of the cyberattack."

Mr. Schiff and Sen. Rob Portman (R., Ohio), co-chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, warned Russian President Vladimir Putin could turn cyberweapons on the U.S.

The Russian leader hasn't directly threatened the U.S., and senior U.S. officials, including Jen Easterly, director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, have said in recent weeks that there is no specific cyber threat to the U.S.

"As we have seen from Russia's cyberattacks on Ukraine, the threat is very real and we must be prepared if Russia attempts to turn these cyber weapons on the United States," Mr. Portman said.

Courtesy The Wall Street Journal

China And The Ukrainian Crisis: Dragon Faces More Challenges Than Opportunities

By Srikanth Kondapalli

Author is a professor in Chinese Studies at JNU.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has not only provided a strategic opportunity for China, but also brought to the fore several challenges

The continuing Russian invasion of Ukraine and bombing of several cities have provided a strategic opportunity for China, but also several challenges to its foreign and security challenges — typically representing the meaning for its word weiji.

First, the opportunities for China. After the Soviet disintegration in 1991, the strategic target of the Western countries led by the United States gradually focused on China, despite their thriving economic and technological cooperation. Western attention on counter-terrorism in the wake of 9/11 events provided respite for China.

However, in the last decade, China's assertiveness in the neighbourhood and beyond has led the US to configure Beijing as a "pacing challenge" as the US Defence Secretary Lloyd Ashton stated. Russian invasion now tends to bring back the US-Russia confrontation to the forefront in the Trans-Atlantic region, providing China once again a strategic opportunity to expand its power in the Indo-Pacific. China's adventurism in the region now knows no bounds, except for the resistance posed by regional powers like Japan, Australia, Vietnam, India and others.

A second opportunity for China of Russian actions on Georgia, Crimea and Donbass region is the chance provided for attacks on Taiwan or its neighbours on "legitimate security interests" although no treaty or law exists on China's claims. At the 19th communist party congress in 2017, China unveiled its "six nos" policy and at its 100th anniversary in July last year threatened to "break heads" on the Taiwan issue. As a result, last year saw nearly 4,000 air force sorties flown by China in Taiwan Straits, including in the last two days. Potential Taiwan invasion by China is a major outcome of the Ukrainian developments, except that Taiwan's military could successfully withstand such pressures.

Also, as an armed stalemate prevails in the India-China border areas after the deadly clash of 15 June 2020 at Galwan that left 20 Indian soldiers killed, Beijing may be tempted to create another military adventure on the Indian border given the Indian stout standing up so far. The five-point proposals of the Moscow meeting in September 2020, nor the 10 February 2021 defence ministries agreement nor even the 14 corps commanders' meetings have not led to "disengagement and de-escalation" process at all friction points on the borders and China is exasperated with Indian effective resistance so far.

However, challenges galore for Beijing. To wade off Western unilateral policies and regime change, China and Russia have for the past two decades pushed through a multipolarity debate and criticised the US actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ironically, Russian actions in Ukraine — defended by China's foreign minister Wang Yi as "legitimate security concerns" threaten to upset the apple cart and take the sting away from any future western actions on China.

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Nation is Indebted to:

Naresh Kumar, Asst Commandant, CRPF

A gunslinger who creates terror among terrorists



Naresh Kumar (35), an Assistant Commandant of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), is a living inspiration for youths who wish to make their careers in the Indian Armed Forces.

Naresh was born in 1985 in a small village in Garhshankar sub-division in Hoshiarpur. His father was in Indian Army and retired as Hony Capt from Corp of Engineers. Naresh Kumar is an Engineering graduate from Punjabi University.

Naresh is the youngest and most decorated officer of the CRPF. He has been awarded seven Police Medals for Gallantry (PMG), besides the National Security Advisor's appreciation and DG Commendation Disc, among others.

He joined the CRPF in 2012 and won his Presidents Medal for Gallantry for the seventh time on Independence Day, He is a real-life gunslinger, who has killed around 50 terrorists along with his team in Jammu and Kashmir.

Naresh's wife Sheetal Rawat is also an Assistant Commandant in the CRPF.

He had received his 6th PMG on Republic Day for an operation conducted by his team in Chatarbal area in 2018. "Our team neutralised Lashkar-e-Taiba's (LeT's) top commander Shaukat Ahmed Tak, who was among the 10 most-wanted terrorists."

His first posting was in Jammu and Kashmir and he stayed there for five years. He carried out operations in coordination with the Indian Army and Jammu and Kashmir Police.

Naresh had received his first PMG in 2017 for neutralising two foreign terrorists in Srinagar in 2016. In 2018, he was awarded two PMGs for neutralising two Hizbul Mujahedeen commanders. He was awarded two PMGs on Republic Day and Independence Day in 2019.

He also has NSA Ajit Doval's appreciation for Chattabal operation in 2018 and Shaukat Ahmed Tak's elimination.

He has 11 DG CRPF Commendation Discs, two DG Medals by the DG of J&K Police and the NIA appreciations on several occasions.

On 14 August 2020 he was awarded his seventh police medal for gallantry, the most ever received by a single officer in the force's history.

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