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China tries to Contain the Indo Pacific Strategy of the new Quad Alliance



China, Russia to Start Joint Air and Sea Drill in Sea of Japan
Photo Credit: Reuters

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Qing Gang holds talk with U.S Secretary of States Antony Blinken in Indonesia
Photo Credit: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China

Over the past few months, China and US have experienced some military frictions in the Southern China Sea. Just a few weeks before Blinken's visit, a Chinese destroyer CNS Suzhou cut off the routine of the U.S. warship Chung-Hoon during the Taiwan Strait. The closest distance between the two warships was about 150 yards. The act of intervention was considered intentional according to the U.S. Navy.¹ In May, a U.S. RC135 surveillance jet was unprofessionally intercepted by the PRC AirForce. The J-16 fighter was a few meters close with the RC135 and harassed it with the engine turbulence.² U.S. and China have a different recognition of the Southern China Sea. While the U.S. alleged that the southern China Sea is the international waters, China claimed that most of the Southern China Sea is its own territory. In the Jakarta meeting, Blinken informed that

¹ Sam LaGrone, "Video: Chinese Warship Harasses U.S. Destroyer in Taiwan Strait Transit," USNI News, June 5, 2023, <https://news.usni.org/2023/06/03/u-s-canadian-warships-transit-taiwan-strait>.

² 1. Oren Liebermann and Haley Britzky, "US Says Chinese Jet Conducted 'unnecessarily Aggressive Maneuver' Intercepting Us Spy Plane over South China Sea | CNN Politics," CNN, May 31, 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/30/politics/china-fighter-jet-south-china-sea/index.html>.

Washington would not waver on its commitment to fight for the rule of law and against coercive actions in the region.³



CIA director Bill Burns met counterparts in Beijing, Photo Credit: Bloomberg

China's aggressive actions in the Southern China Sea caught attention from some countries in this region. Actively developing infrastructures on the islands in the Southern Pacific represented China's determination of defending the islands' sovereignty. ASEAN countries showed huge concern of the regions' stability. It is obvious to conclude that China has its own political intention in the Southern China Sea. China also aimed to promote the economic and trade interactions. This is not contradicted to U.S. interest in the Indo-Pacific. But the U.S. priority was to affirm freedom of the seas and build shared regional support for open access to the South China Sea - a throughway for nearly two-thirds of global maritime trade and a quarter of all global trade.⁴ The U.S. hold the perspective that the freedom in this region is the prerequisite of enhancing economic development

³ 1. Edna Tarigan, David Rising, and Jim Gomez, "Blinken Meets Wang Yi in Indonesia. but the Region Remains Wary of the US-China Rivalry," AP News, July 14, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/blinken-wang-yi-asean-southeast-asia-50f50a223fb946899398d3dbd53bfeb6>.

⁴ Biden-Harris Administration's national security strategy - the white house, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

and trade cooperation with its ASEAN partners. The hosting state president of Indonesia called for solutions to regional and world problems instead of exacerbating them.⁵

In the U.S. National Security Strategy, the Biden Administration pointed out that the U.S. has maintained a strong and consistent defense presence, affirming the commitments to the Indo-Pacific treaty allies. The U.S. will continue to modernize alliances with Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand.⁶ U.S. foreign policy is demanding more in the Indo-Pacific than any period in the past. In 2007, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) was initiated under the support of Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Vice U.S. President Dick Cheney. The non-formal alliance composed of the U.S., Australia, India, and Japan, has intensified the security and economic ties as tensions with China rise.⁷ To restrain China's assertive behaviors in the region, a more constructive cooperation including military exercises was put on the agenda. In the 2020, navies from four countries participated in the first joint exercise in the South Pacific Sea. Both president Trump and Biden emphasized the importance of this alliance to restrain China's growing ambitions in the Southern Pacific.

U.S. in keep looking for allies in the Indo-Pacific region. On September 10, 2023, the U.S. elevated its relationship with Vietnam to a comprehensive strategic partnership.⁸ U.S. president Joe Biden visited Hanoi and met with Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Hanoi. The two leaders discussed details of cooperations in economic, trade, science & technology, education etc. Vietnam pursued a "multidirectional foreign policy" and had a comprehensive strategic partnership with both China and Russia. This unprecedented elevation in diplomatic relation with the U.S. is a signal to booster military-to-military ties which aimed to address China's increasing aggression in the Indo- Pacific Region.⁹

⁵ Edna Tarigan, David Rising, and Jim Gomez, "Blinken Meets Wang Yi in Indonesia. but the Region Remains Wary of the US-China Rivalry," AP News, July 14, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/blinken-wang-yi-asean-southeast-asia-50f50a223fb946899398d3dbd53bfeb6>.

⁶ Biden-Harris Administration's national security strategy - the white house, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

⁷ "The Quad in the Indo-Pacific: What to Know," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed September 16, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/quad-indo-pacific-what-know>.

⁸ "Joint Leaders' Statement: Elevating United States-Vietnam Relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," The White House, September 11, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/09/11/joint-leaders-statement-elevating-united-states-vietnam-relations-to-a-comprehensive-strategic-partnership/>.

⁹ "Assessing the Bolstered US-Vietnam Relationship," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed September 16, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/assessing-bolstered-us-vietnam-relationship>.



U.S. President Joe Biden meets with Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Hanoi Vietnam, September 11, 2023, Photo Credit: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters, Council on Foreign Relations

As the U.S. actively engaged in the Indo-Pacific region to restrain China's aggression, Beijing decided not to create a head-to-head collision with the U.S. in the Southern Pacific. The tension was already and high and unpredictable. Beijing shifted its focus to the North and search for feasible cooperation with one of the most reliable allies, Russia.

Although China's political stance and attitude to the Russia-Ukraine war is quite opaque, the China Russia relation has gone through ups and down over the past few decades. The cooperation between China and Russia is widespread in various perspective including oils, economics & trade, infrastructures, military etc. Starting from June 2023, the Chinese and Russian Navy launched the joint exercise in the Pacific. This naval exercise aimed to safeguarding the security of strategic waterways according to China's defense ministry.¹⁰

The joint Navy crossed the Sea of Japan and came along the North Pacific Region and reached the nearshore of Alaska at the Aleutian Island in the end. This move was not targeted at

¹⁰ Yew Lun Tian, "China, Russia to Start Joint Air and Sea Drill in Sea of Japan," Reuters, July 16, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-russia-start-joint-air-sea-drill-sea-japan-2023-07-16/>.

Washington, according to one Chinese spokesman.¹¹ The routine China Russia Naval patrol had nothing to do with the current international and regional situations. This military exercise echoed President Xi's visit to Moscow in March 2023. During the meeting with Russian President Putin, Xi pointed out that the joint maritime exercise could enhance the naval cooperation and stabilize the regional security.



China, Russia to Start Joint Air and Sea Drill in Sea of Japan Photo Credit: Reuters

The joint exercise enhanced and deepened China and Russia naval cooperation. Experts believed this exercise is a very forceful respond to the trilateral drilled conducted by the U.S. and its allies because the Sea of Japan is a very crucial pathway for naval warships to go through the Pacific. According to military expert Lin Ying-yu, Beijing wanted to learn from Moscow's experience of countering attacks on their navy from land in the Ukraine war.¹² Some experts considered that this is an act of support to Russia in the Russia-Ukraine War.

¹¹ Al Jazeera Staff, "US Deployed Warships after China, Russia Naval Patrol near Alaska: WSJ," News | Al Jazeera, August 7, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/7/us-deployed-warships-after-china-russia-naval-patrol-near-alaska-wsj>.

¹² William Yang, "China-Russia Exercise Seen as Sign of Deepening Cooperation," VOA, July 21, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/analysts-see-china-russia-exercise-as-sign-of-deepening-cooperation/7188482.html>.

U.S. engagement with the Quad members and the new foreign relation with Vietnam has showed its determination of promoting a free & open Indo-Pacific and addressing & restraining China's aggression in the region. Beijing slowed down the steps and shifted the focus to the North, cooperation with Russia to avoiding straightforward collision with the U.S. China and U.S. have different recognitions in lot of international affairs including the Taiwan issue, South China Sea, Hong Kong etc. The Indo-Pacific Region is now one of the frontlines concentrating the U.S. and China together. Whether China and U.S. would keep this tension or reach consensus on some issues is unknown. The way of addressing the challenges for both U.S. and China will be a very crucial part for the future of the Indo-Pacific Region.

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