

Highlights from the region

1st May, 2023 | Volume - 02 - 01/05

Pushback against Chinese aggression across the Indo-Pacific region gained significant momentum last week with Australia launching a radical shakeup of its defense spending billed as the most significant review of its military preparedness since World War II, shifting its emphasis onto long-range strike capabilities and building munitions at home. Simultaneously, Australian PM also announced dates for the next Quad Summit that will be held in Sydney on May 24. Meanwhile, the USA hosted South Korean President for 6-days and gave him assurance of nuclear umbrella. Japanese PM will embark on 4-nation a trip meant to compete against China and Russia for influence in Africa. This is first such trip by a Japanese PM since 2014. Philippines continued to be at receiving end of Chinese belligerence as a Chinese coast guard ship cut off a Philippine patrol vessel carrying journalists in the disputed South China Sea, causing a near-collision. China, meanwhile, tried to pacify Europe with its President speaking to the Ukrainian leader and calling for peace. Biden seeks a “de-risking” but not decoupling with China, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has said in remarks reflecting a bid to align the US more closely with the EU on China.

[Australia unveils biggest defense overhaul in decades with wary eye on China](#)

CNN | 24th April 2023

Australia has unveiled a radical shakeup of its defense spending billed as the most significant review of its military preparedness since World War II, shifting its emphasis onto long-range strike capabilities and building munitions at home. Launching the Defense Strategic Review in Canberra, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government’s strategy was designed to make Australia more self reliant, more prepared and more secure. “We cannot fall back on old assumptions. We must build and strengthen our security by seeking to shape the future rather than waiting for the future to shape us,” Albanese said. The review examined billions of dollars committed by the previous government and reassessed their value against perceived threats, including from an increasingly muscular China under leader Xi Jinping.

[PM Modi to attend 2023 Quad Summit in Sydney on May 24](#)

The Economic Times | 27th April 2023

Sydney will host the 2023 Quad Leaders' Summit on May 24, which will see the leaders of India, Japan, Australia and the US discuss ways to promote stability in the Indo-Pacific region. It will also mark Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first visit to Australia after 2014. This will be the third in-person Quad Leaders' Summit and the first time Australia will be hosting the meeting. The announcement was made by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday. The first two Quad meetings were held in the US and Japan.

[US seeks to 'de-risk' its relationship with China, national security adviser says](#)

South China Morning Post | 28th April 2023

US President [Joe Biden](#) seeks a "de-risking" but not decoupling with China to forge a new consensus for the international economic order, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Thursday, in remarks reflecting a bid to align the US more closely with the [European Union](#) on China. "We converged with key European leaders in saying we are for de-risking, not for decoupling," he said during a speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "De-risking fundamentally means having resilient, effective supply chains and ensuring we cannot be subjected to the coercion of any other country," Sullivan added.

[South Korea comes under US nuclear umbrella in bid to 'restrain adventurism' by North's Kim Jong-un](#)

South China Morning Post | 28th April 2023

South Korea has set aside the consideration of pursuing its own nuclear arsenal in return for strengthened US commitment to protect Seoul under its nuclear umbrella against mounting threats by Pyongyang, analysts said. Thursday's "Washington Declaration", announced at the end of President Yoon Suk-yeol's [six-day visit](#) to Washington, reaffirmed South Korea's long-standing commitment to its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), in return for "regular visibility" of US strategic assets to the [Korean peninsula](#), including the upcoming visit of an American nuclear ballistic missile submarine to South Korea. The statement said the two allies would set up a Nuclear Consultative Group to discuss ways to cope with North Korea's threats, through which Seoul would be granted a greater voice in planning for the use of nuclear weapons in any conflict with Pyongyang.

[Japan steps up diplomacy to avoid 'losing' Global South to China](#)

Nikkei Asia | 28th April 2023

With the Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima just a month away, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is about to embark on a trip meant to compete against China and Russia for influence in Africa. Kishida departs next week on the first multicountry trip to Africa by a Japanese leader since 2014. His four stops - - Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique -- are all part of the Global South, a loosely defined collection of over 100 developing nations.

[Xi's call with Zelenskyy seen as attempt to blunt European criticism](#)

Nikkei Asia | 28th April 2023

Chinese President Xi Jinping's telephone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy marked an apparent course correction from a string of events that had suggested a pro-Russia stance by Beijing in

Western eyes. The official China Central Television reported Xi's words with unusual haste after Wednesday's conversation. Dialogue and negotiation are the only viable way out of the Ukraine crisis, and China will work toward an early cease-fire, he said, according to CCTV.

[Chinese, Philippine vessels in 'David and Goliath' near-crash](#)

Philippine Inquirer | 28th April 2023

A Chinese coast guard ship cut off a Philippine patrol vessel carrying journalists in the disputed South China Sea, causing a near-collision. The near-miss off the Spratly Islands on Sunday was the latest in a steady string of incidents between China and the Philippines in the contested waterway.

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ANANTA CENTRE

7 Jose Rizal Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021, India

Tel: +91 11 4754 1489, 40634897 | Email : admin@anantacentre.in

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