



Consortium of Indo-Pacific

Researchers

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Greetings Colleagues,

The Consortium is pleased to share its latest newsletter for the Indo-Pacific. Press the reply button for your feedback and comments.

Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meet without US and China



Figure 1: Pacific Island Leaders gathers in in Honiara, Solomon Islands for the 54th PIF Summit

The Pacific Island Forum leaders met in Honiara, Solomon Islands, for their shared vision of this year's theme of "Integrated Blue Pacific Continent." PIF Leaders acknowledged the relevance of the theme in addressing the changing geostrategic landscape, highlighting the pivotal role of Pacific regionalism and the Forum community in managing new challenges and opportunities. During the discussion of regionalism over the past fifty years, leaders reiterated the significance of regional cooperation towards more robust regional integration. Forum leaders emphasized the resilience of regionalism in the face of geopolitical competition, heightened global attention, and economic fragility worldwide.

The Leaders stressed the need for regionally led economic growth and called for increased integration in areas of trade, fisheries, labor mobility, digital connectivity, and sectoral cooperation while continuing the partnership aligned to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Pacific Island countries are increasingly concerned about the impact of climate change, but they are also cautious about navigating the geopolitical competition between the US and China in the region. To strengthen regional unity and avoid the rivalry between the two superpowers, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) countries [excluded the US and China from the summit](#) this year. However, China has a significant influence on the PIC with its massive investment and infrastructure projects going on there and defense agreements, particularly with the Solomon Islands. China hosted the [third China-Pacific Island Foreign Ministers summit in Beijing](#) in May 2025.

Notably, the United States is reinforcing its ongoing partnership by sending Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau to Port Moresby. He participated in the celebrations for Papua New Guinea's 50th Anniversary of Independence and its 50 years of diplomatic relations with the United States, as well as met with leaders from the Pacific Island nations. While Trump 2.0's foreign policy centers on an "America First" approach, and Secretary of State Rubio has outlined a clear framework based on three priorities: Does it make America stronger? Does it make America safer? Does it make America more prosperous? [Read More](#)

US Lawmakers Visit China to Improve Relations

A bipartisan delegation led by Democratic Rep. Adam Smith met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The aim of a rare visit by the US lawmakers after a gap of five years is to stabilize the bilateral ties between the two largest economies in the world.

The bipartisan trip was announced following a phone conversation between Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping. The delegation referred to the visit as an "icebreaker," as both countries aim to increase engagement amidst ongoing challenges, including trade tensions, US restrictions on semiconductor chips, and the ownership of TikTok. Furthermore, China's aggressive maneuvering in the South China Sea, as well as the Taiwan issue, which Beijing considers a breakaway province, are the main irritants between the US and China.

US President Trump and President Xi Jinping of China are anticipated to meet in South Korea in October. It will be interesting to see what progress they make in stabilizing the region and working towards peace in the Indo-Pacific.

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US Kicks off Joint Operation Freedom Edge 25

The US commence trilateral air and naval exercise with Japan and Republic of Korea, Freedom Edge 25, the third iteration of trilateral exercise, built on prior drills to strengthen multidomain capabilities supporting security, freedom, and prosperity in the Korean Peninsula and Indo-Pacific.

U.S. Air Force Col. Craig, chief planner for Freedom Edge, described it as a trilateral field exercise designed to build trust, enhance understanding, share insights, and strengthen combined warfighting capabilities among three nations. According to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Public Affairs, the exercise is intended to enhance defense readiness for U.S. interests in response to shared security challenges and improve deterrence in the Asia-Pacific region by supporting operational forces within the First Island Chain.

The five-day exercise seamlessly incorporated air and maritime training with cyber warfare and special operations capabilities to further enhance multi-domain capabilities, as the defense forces execute ballistic missile defense; defensive counter-air; anti-surface warfare; maritime interdiction

operations; visit, board, search and seizure; counter-piracy, medical evacuation; and replenishment-at-sea operations. [Read More](#)

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Sign Defense Pact

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA). The deal was signed with the presence of Pakistan Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Army Chief Asim Munir in Riyadh with Saudi de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (MbS). Strategic observer states that Israel's unprecedented airstrike in Qatar prompted the deal to deter any aggression from Israel. According to the joint statement issued after the meeting, "the agreement states that any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both."

It is important to note that Saudi Arabia has maintained a longstanding association with Pakistan's nuclear program. The Kingdom has provided significant financial assistance, which has facilitated the continuation of this program, particularly during periods when Pakistan faced international sanctions. Over the years, Pakistan has encountered US sanctions due to its nuclear development efforts, with additional restrictions imposed at the conclusion of the Biden administration in response to its advancements in ballistic missile technology. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which US allies recognized the Palestinian State this week?

- a. Japan, South Korea, UK
- b. UK, Australia, Canada
- c. Australia, Japan, UK
- d. Philippines, Japan, UK

US President Trump aims to regain control of Bagram Air Base, which is located in country?

- a. Pakistan
- b. Iraq
- c. Afghanistan
- d. Qatar

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Event Highlight: CIPR hosted the Report Discussion Event for the project, ***U.S.-Japan Alliance: Strengthening Defense and Security in the Indo-Pacific***, in Washington D.C., on August 22nd, 2025. [Watch Video Here.](#)
- ❖ Roundtable Discussion: South Asia Quagmire: Striving for Peace [Watch Video Here](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for Sept. 14 Newsletter Quiz

Q. What anniversary of the terrorist attack on the US does September 11, 2025, mark?

d. 24th

Q. Which U.S. city is set to host the G-20 Summit in 2026?

a. Miami

Contributions: Indu Saxena