



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.

G-7 Foreign Ministers meet in France



Figure 1: G-7 Foreign Ministers assemble in Paris / March 26, 2026

Amid the growing conflicts in the Middle East and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, and the High Representative of the European Union, met at Abbaye des Vaux-de-Cernay, France. In a joint statement on Iran, leaders call for an immediate cessation of attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and reiterated the absolute necessity to permanently restore safe and toll-free freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, consistent with UNSC Resolution 2817 and the Law of the Sea.

US [Secretary of State Marco Rubio](#) told reporters that the "US is ahead of schedule in that operation in Iran and expects to conclude it at the appropriate time here, in a matter of weeks, not months." He further stated that as the US objectives in Iran are achieved, countries from the G-7 and Asia, which are heavily dependent on the Strait of Hormuz, should not allow it to be controlled or tolled by Iran.

This meeting occurs at a time when President Trump has criticized European allies for not taking action to unblock the Strait of Hormuz from Iran. He specifically called out the leaders of the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. The situation with Iran has further exacerbated transatlantic relations, which were already under strain due to tariffs and President Trump's and his administration's admonishments to European countries on immigration and other volatile political matters.

In the joint statement, the G7 partners reaffirm their support for Ukraine, focusing on energy assistance and military capabilities, while also increasing pressure on Russia, particularly concerning its shadow fleet. Additionally, the ministers will discuss various regional situations, including the Indo-Pacific, Sudan, Haiti, Gaza, Venezuela, and Cuba, and consider developments since the beginning of 2026. [Read More](#)

Australia and EU Sign Free Trade Pact

Australia and the [European Union \(EU\)](#) have reached a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) after eight years of negotiations. Australia's Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, and European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, announced that the agreement will remove over 99% of tariffs on exports and will allow greater market access for products and services.

According to reports, the deal will create new opportunities for companies, consumers, and farmers in one of the world's fastest-growing developed economies. It will enhance resilience against economic shocks and strengthen ties with a like-minded ally amid intense geopolitical stress. Additionally, it promotes stronger supply chains, particularly for critical raw materials. The leaders also announced a new defense partnership that will deepen military cooperation across the defense industry, maritime security, and cybersecurity operations.

The European Union (EU) economy is the world's second-largest by nominal GDP, estimated at \$22.52 trillion, whereas Australia's GDP is \$1.83 trillion, making it the 14th-largest economy in the world.

The agreement comes at a time when both Australia and the European Union are facing the uncertainty of Trump's tariffs and are seeking to reduce their reliance on China.

Ursula von der Leyen said, "Today we are telling an important story to a world that is deeply changing. A world where great powers are using tariffs as leverage and supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited, ... In our story, open rules-based trade delivers positive-sum outcomes. Trust matters more than transactions." [Read More](#)

Vietnam and Russia Deepen Bilateral Cooperation

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's visit to Moscow to seek a warm relationship with President Putin. Both leaders agree to extend their bilateral relations and expand cooperation in various areas, including trade and energy. Both sides signed agreements on oil, gas, and nuclear power investment. As per reports, Russia will invest in building nuclear power plants in Vietnam.

It is worth mentioning that due to the conflict between the US, Israel, and Iran, which resulted in the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, oil and gas prices are skyrocketing in Asian countries that heavily rely on Gulf

nations for their energy supply. Vietnam, a manufacturing and tourism hub in Southeast Asia, has almost doubled the prices of oil, gas, and diesel and is seeking Russian oil to power its growing economy.

Vietnam is the only Southeast Asian country visited by Presidents of Russia six times (in 2001, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2024).

Diplomacy in Pakistan: The Future of Peace in Middle East?

Pakistan has taken on a mediator role to help resolve the conflict in the Middle East. Islamabad is hosting diplomats from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye. Additionally, Pakistan has received messages from both the United States and Iran calling for dialogue between the conflicting parties. US President Trump has also paused attacks on Iranian energy facilities for ten days to support ongoing peace talks.

Pakistan, a neighboring country of Iran and a US ally since its inception, has been significantly impacted by war both politically and economically. Islamabad also maintains good relations with Gulf countries. Recently, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have established a defense pact, which stipulates that an attack on one country will be considered an attack on the other. Iran previously presented five demands in response to the US proposal for a 15-point peace plan, which includes sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which country is hosting G-7 Summit in 2026?

- a. Italy
- b. Canada
- c. Japan
- d. France

Who has sworn Nepal's New Prime Minister?

- a. KP Sharma Oli
- b. Sher Bahadur Deuba
- c. Balendra Shah
- d. Pushpa Kamal Dahal

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ [Web Recording](#) **Dynasty, Power, and Stability: Post Election Bangladesh and Nepal**, March 19, 2026, 10:00 AM EST
- ❖ Upcoming podcast on **Meiji Japan and what it teaches about rising Asian powers**

Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for March 22 Newsletter Quiz

Q. Which country initiated the Polar Silk Road?

- c. China

Q. Who was the first American envoy in Japan?

d. Townsend Harris

Contributions: Indu Saxena