



Consortium of Indo-Pacific
Researchers

Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail August 10-August 16, 2026

Greetings Colleagues,

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

**From Gandhi's Charkha to the Strategic Pinwheel: India @ 80,
Aspire to be a Superpower**



Figure 1: India celebrates its Independence day on August 15.

India celebrated its 80th Independence Day on August 15. The story of a painful colonial past, partition, and self-reliance is an unfinished ascent for India, which aspires to stand with developed nations (Viksit Bharat) within two decades — by its centennial in 2047. [Mahatma Gandhi](#), the Father of the Nation, called upon his fellow citizens to adopt self-reliance and initiated the [spinning wheel](#) to lay the foundation of “Swadeshi” — Make in India — in the freedom movement. From a struggling agrarian economy at independence to the [world's fifth-largest economy](#) today, India's trajectory has been nothing short of remarkable. While India is on its way to rise, it has not yet arrived at the status of a major power.

Post-independence, India embarked on a global diplomatic engagement with [non-alignment](#), in the atmosphere of the Cold War. It has reached its most consequential strategic achievement today by pursuing a multi-alignment model of engagement with the world. India has pursued strategic autonomy while simultaneously deepening substantive partnerships across the world's most important power centers-US, Europe, Japan, Global South, ASEAN, and Russia. It is a founding member of the [Quad](#) alongside the United States, Japan, and Australia, conducting joint naval exercises and building critical technology supply chains. It is simultaneously a founding member of BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization alongside China and Russia. It hosts the G20, leads the Global South, and being invited in G-7. It buys

Russian oil and American fighter jet engines. It builds semiconductors with Taiwan and solar panels with the Gulf states.

However, India's most formidable and enduring challenge at 80 remains its neighbors — China and Pakistan. China is a rival that is larger, wealthier, and militarily more powerful. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) remains unresolved, despite the disengagement agreements reached after the 2020 Galwan Valley clash that killed twenty Indian soldiers. China's infrastructure buildup along the LAC — roads, airfields, and villages — could possibly alter the strategic geography of the Himalayan frontier in ways that cannot be reversed by diplomacy alone. With Pakistan, India has a historical border dispute along the Radcliffe Line — the Line of Control (LOC). Four wars, Operation Sindoor in 2025, and still there is heightened rivalry between the two neighbors.

Apart from the external fault lines, India has internal challenges that could obstruct the dream of Viksit Bharat — unemployment among educated youth, corruption, regionalism, and communal violence.

India has to endure the external and internal challenges only when the strategic pinwheel gains momentum. This piece applied the concept of the "Strategic Pinwheel" (introduced by the author) — a metaphor that captures the important elements of national power: economic, military, diplomatic, technological, democratic, and cultural. It is not any single element that drives

a nation's rise, but the simultaneous, coordinated movement of multiple elements.

While India looks toward major-power status on the global stage, it needs to get all the blades of the *strategic pinwheel* spinning together — properly aligned and moving in the same direction. Remove one blade, or bend another out of shape, and the entire wheel loses balance and slows.

At 80, the pinwheel is turning. The question for the next quarter-century is whether every blade spins with equal strength, equal speed, and equal direction — because only then does India truly arrive. [Read More](#)

Putin Visits Disputed Kuril's Island in East Asia

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the disputed Kuril Islands. Russian President toured a fish processing complex, a hospital, and a school before holding a meeting with the regional governor of Sakhalin while visiting the island of Iturup, where Russia operates its strategically important military base.

The Kuril Islands archipelago extends for 750 miles (1,200 km) from the southern tip of the Kamchatka Peninsula (Russia) to the northeastern corner of Hokkaido Island (Japan), separating the Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean.

Japan's Prime Minister and other top officials strongly criticized Putin's first-ever visit to the Kuril Islands, claiming them as Japan's "inherent" territory.

It is worth mentioning that after World War 2, Japan and Russia signed a joint declaration to end the war but did not conclude a peace treaty. Both countries have a claim to the Kuril Islands.

Japan's defense white paper 2026 mentions, "Russia is continuing active military activities in the Northern Territories, which are inherent territories of Japan, under illegal occupation." [Read More](#)

US Defense Official Colby Visits Southeast Asia

US Under Secretary of War for Policy Elbridge Colby is on his first official trip to Southeast Asia. He visited the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia. He reaffirmed Washington's commitment to the Indo-Pacific amid China's increasingly assertive military activity in the South China Sea. He also backlashed against the misinformation on US stockpiles stretched in the conflict with Iran. He said, "The United States military, and especially including those [maritime and aerospace] capabilities, are ready and capable of filling the priority missions that the president has given to them."

Furthermore, he emphasized "flexible realism" and prioritized defense cooperation and deterrence. He stressed building a strong denial defense with

Southeast Asian allies and the readiness of forces to defeat coercion. [Read More](#)

Afghanistan Marks Five Year Under the Taliban Rule

It has been five years since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan — and the country they govern remains one of the world's most acute humanitarian, economic, and governance crises. Since taking power, the Taliban have been confronting severe and compounding challenges across every dimension of national life: a collapsing economy, mass unemployment, a deteriorating public health system, and an education & Job crisis. The Taliban has been condemned for imposing an indefinite ban on girls' education beyond the sixth grade and higher.

The Taliban has not been recognized by the United Nations and International community. And five years on, only Russia has formally extended diplomatic recognition to the regime.

The Taliban took control of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, as U.S. and NATO troops withdrew after two decades of war. This led to chaos at Kabul's airport, with thousands trying to flee the country. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which Southeast Asian country was hit by earthquake this week?

- a. Malaysia
- b. Thailand
- c. Indonesia
- d. Philippines

Which two countries are geographically connected and separated by the Kuril Islands chain?

- a. Russia & Ukraine
- b. Russia & North Korea
- c. Russia & China
- d. Russia & Japan

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ New Read: [Japan's Strategic Shift: From Pacifist to Provider](#)
 - ❖ [Podcast Recording](#): Saudi-Türkiye-Pakistan Defense Pact and regional Implications
 - ❖ CIPR announces the availability of Fall Internship 2026
-

Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for August 9, 2026, Newsletter Quiz

Q. Recently, the US has intervened to prop up which country's currency?

- a. Japan

Q. What was the name of the atomic bomb the US dropped on Nagasaki on August 9th, 1945?

c. Fat man

Contributions: Indu Saxena