



Consortium of Indo-Pacific  
Researchers

## **Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail May 6 - 12, 2024**

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Greetings Colleagues,

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

### **USS Halsey's 'Innocent Passage' Heightens Tensions in South China Sea?**



*Figure 1: USS Halsey in South China Sea /IMAGE/ U.S./navy.mil/Press-Office/*

The USS Halsey, a guided-missile destroyer of the United States Navy, recently [conducted a freedom of navigation operation \(FONOP\)](#) near the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. This operation, with its global implications, aimed to challenge China's excessive maritime claims and assert the right of all nations to sail through the disputed waters in accordance with international law. The FONOP was part of the annual Balikatan military exercise between the U.S. and the Philippines, which seeks to enhance interoperability and strengthen the alliance between the two countries. However, the USS Halsey's passage has raised tensions with China, and China's People's Liberation Army [claims](#) that it "drove away" USS Halsey.

It is crucial to note that China claims the territorial water in the entire South China Sea as its territory and has marked it with a Nine-Dash line, despite counterclaims from Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Philippines. This recent incident serves as a reminder of the continuous geopolitical tensions in the South China Sea. Additionally, the United States is committed to upholding the rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific. As per the U.S. DoD's Freedom of Navigation report "Excessive maritime claims are inconsistent with international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. They include a variety of restrictions on the exercise of navigation and overflight rights and other freedoms and lawful uses of the seas. Unlawful maritime claims pose a threat to global mobility and commerce, as well as the legal foundation of the rules-based international order. If left unchallenged, excessive

maritime claims could limit the rights and freedoms enjoyed by every nation.” [Read More](#)

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## **Maldives Foreign Minister Visits India**

Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zamir visited India for his first bilateral visit to deepen the relationship between two Indian Ocean countries. As per Ministry of External affairs (MEA) [release](#), “During his visit to New Delhi, Foreign Minister Zameer will meet the External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar for discussions on bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest. Maldives is India’s key maritime neighbor in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Foreign Minister Zameer’s visit is expected to lend further momentum to the bilateral cooperation between the two countries.”

However, it is important to note that the visit took place amid strained relations between the two countries. This was due to the Maldivian President Mzuzu’s order of withdrawal of Indian military personnel from the island nation, and a controversy that arose after Maldivian Ministers made [some remarks against](#) the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Modi.

Overall, the visit is seen as a positive step towards strengthening the ties between the two countries and addressing the recent challenges and strengthening the relationship. [Read More](#)

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## **U.S.-Singapore Hold Joint Communiqué**

United States of America and Singapore officials held meetings to review implementation of Chapter 18 (Environment) of the United States-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (FTA). In the meeting both countries highlight their shared commitment to environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources. The representatives from both sides reviewed progress in implementing obligations under the Environment Chapter of the FTA by exchanging information regarding their recent actions. [Read More](#)

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## **U.S.-China Climate Action Group Hold Talks**

The United States hosted in Washington, D.C., a meeting of the U.S.-China Working Group on Enhancing Climate Action, co-led by Senior Advisor to the President for International Climate Policy John Podesta and PRC Special Envoy for Climate Change Liu Zhenmin. The conversation revolves around various topics related to solving the climate crisis. These include energy transition, non-CO2 greenhouse gases such as methane, circular economy, resource efficiency, deforestation, and creating low-carbon and sustainable provinces, states, and cities. Both parties acknowledge the significance of developing a circular economy and resource efficiency in addressing the climate crisis. They also expect to conduct further technical exchanges

on the circular economy, which includes reducing food loss and waste, improving textile recycling, and setting up recycling standards. [Read More](#)

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## **World's Largest Democracy on Ballot-Phase 3**

The third phase of voting for India's parliamentary election took place on May 7, covering 93 constituencies spread across ten states and one Union Territory. The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\) reported a 65.68% voter turnout](#). Political campaigning has become increasingly divisive and polarizing as the election phases advance. Political leaders have a history of using the [Hindu-Muslim divide](#) as a tool to gain political advantage in their speeches, making it a central point of discussion during election periods. In recent developments, the [Delhi Chief Minister has granted bail](#) by the highest court in India until June 1 for election canvassing on behalf of their party. Both alliances, the *National Democratic Alliance* (NDA) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the *INDIA Alliance*, informally led by Rahul Gandhi, are actively campaigning, and claiming to form the government. With the election results out on June 4, the future of India's political landscape remains uncertain, and the world watches. [Read More](#)

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## **Indo-Pacific Quiz**

When did the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) come into force?

- a. 1992
- b. 1994
- c. 1993
- d. 1995

When will the results for India's General elections 2024 be declared?

- a. May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- b. June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- c. July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.
- d. November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

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## Consortium Highlights

- ❖ A Roundtable Discussion on ***Environmental Security in the Indo-Pacific: Collective Solutions for Sustainable Future***, May 15, 2024, at 9:00AM EST. Join at schedule here : [Zoom link](#)
- ❖ A View on ***East African Femicide: An Indo-Pacific Humanitarian Crisis***, from Consortium Fellow, Brendan H.J. Donnelly. [Read Here](#)

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