



## Oceans of churn: Australia's 2020 defence strategic update and the Indo-Pacific\*

Deekhit Bhattacharya<sup>a</sup> and Ashley Eadon<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Global Order, New Delhi, India; <sup>b</sup>Global Order, Bendigo, Australia

### ABSTRACT

Australia published a Strategic Update in 2020 to its 2016 Defence White Paper. The update represents a portentous shift in Australia's understanding and response to its strategic environment. China's increasingly belligerent stance, its use of grey-zone activities and an increasingly jittery United States have pushed Australia to actively seek robust anti-access/area denial (A2AD) capabilities. In addition, Australia intends to focus on its neighbourhood while shedding its anxieties regarding the Quad. The piece aims to briefly contextualise the ramifications of the update with its motivations. It also analyses Chinese behaviour on the world stage and argues for greater synergy in defence coordination between the Quad partners.

### KEYWORDS

Grey-zone activities; quad; anti-access/area denial (A2AD); rules-based order; strategic environment; neighbourhood

## Introduction

The Indian Ocean Region is a historic arena of competition and exchange between nations. Marked by transcontinental trade routes, sea lanes of communications, the presence of all major powers, along with straddling peoples of three continents, great power rivalry is a perpetual feature of the region.<sup>1</sup> The Pacific Ocean is simultaneously unfolding as a conjoined geography of contention between the triad of great powers on its shores – China, Russia and the United States (US).<sup>2</sup> These two oceans form a unitary continuum which brings together the bulk of humankind and power. Australia's location is marked by two transitions: that between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans; and between Western powers and others. This position has profited Australia immensely, while being the cause for much of its strategic complications. Australia is careful to maintain relationships with regional and global powers and is inextractible from broader regional vicissitudes. Further, it acts as a pillar of stability within the region, which is an increasingly arduous role to play.<sup>3</sup>

The 2020 Defence Strategic Update<sup>4</sup> underlines the reality of strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific and an acute deterioration in Australia's strategic environment. Principally, China's maritime recklessness, stretching from India to Japan, is articulated as not

---

**CONTACT** Deekhit Bhattacharya  [deekhitdb@gmail.com](mailto:deekhitdb@gmail.com)  Global Order, E-01, NIHFWS Campus, Munirka, South West Delhi, New Delhi 110067, India

\*Note: The authors had previously published a shorter commentary on this subject on [www.globalorder.live](http://www.globalorder.live) in September 2020.

only an intrinsic threat but an indication of foreseeable and consistent Chinese demeanour in the region.

### Motivations in a fluid context

Australia is exposed to several interplaying dynamics and players besides China, a few of which are briefly touched upon here.

- (1) *India*: The economic and military stature of India is rising, combined with its pole position between Southeast Asia and Africa. Also, India's non-aligned posture has undergone a metamorphosis, replaced by "multi-alignment",<sup>5</sup> marked by a holistic embrace of the West, its near neighbours in the East, along with partners, namely, Southeast Asia, Australia and Japan. India and China's tensions have spilled onto matters of trade and data, which were erstwhile compartmentalised.<sup>6</sup>
- (2) *The US*: The US' military reorientation to the Indo-Pacific as a part of the Obama-era "Pivot to Asia" has been subsumed into a multifaceted support and engagement strategy across the region, exemplified by the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act and the US Support for Economic Growth in Asia initiative. Trade relations have significantly deteriorated between the US and China; and the former is making preliminary moves to cement its position in strategic technology as a part of a greater economic decoupling.<sup>7</sup>
- (3) *Southeast Asia*: Southeast Asia, including Australia's foremost regional partners – Indonesia and Singapore – suffers from the same dichotomy which plagues the Australian economy. Global value chains in the region, whether small industry in the case of Southeast Asia or mineral resources in the case of Australia, have deep economic linkages with China. Thus, while these countries are at odds with China's strategic intentions, China's leveraging (even weaponisation) of these trade links to gain strategic concessions is an inescapable reality.<sup>8</sup>
- (4) *Extractive regimes*: The political tumult in countries such as Myanmar and Thailand have further enabled China to deal with similarly extractive regimes running on systems of patronage and clientelism.<sup>9</sup> The World Political Parties Summit held by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), in July 2021, is a prime execution of this vision.<sup>10</sup>
- (5) *Western Indian Ocean*: Chinese influence in Africa,<sup>11</sup> Iran<sup>12</sup> and Pakistan<sup>13</sup> has been on a consistent upswing, though signs of dissent against what is being seen as unfair or extractive involvement are visible. The latter two relations are key to China's Central Asian ambitions as they are points of access to the Western Indian Ocean, circumventing the vulnerable Malacca Strait, and essential to the evolving situation in Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup>
- (6) *Multilateral engagements*: Multilateral engagements, principal amongst them the Quad, are being forged and their agendas broadened to become multi-sectoral. A web of mutually interconnected initiatives between nations in the region is augmenting economic, data, military and developmental relationships. Examples that stand out are India's renewed push for free trade agreements (FTAs), including with Australia,<sup>15</sup> and the Blue Dot Network for infrastructural funding.<sup>16</sup>

- (7) *Climate Change*: The threats borne of climate change, such as rising sea levels, migration and resource patterns, are a strategic challenge for all maritime states, including Australia.

### Challenges to a rules-based order

Australia's Foreign Minister, Marise Payne, underlined the importance of a rules-based global order<sup>17</sup> as she launched an audit report on multilateral institutions in 2020. Three fundamental parts of the multilateral system were identified, which outline Australian perceptions:<sup>18</sup>

- (1) rules which protect sovereignty, minimise coercion and enable international trade and investment;
- (2) international standards related to health, transport and telecommunications underpinning the global economy; and
- (3) norms that underpin universal human rights, gender equality and the rule of law.

Such articulation is not novel: Australia enacted the stringent National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act, 2018 with a view to check fast-proliferating Chinese influence.<sup>19</sup> What is worth noting is the rapid downturn in the Australian public's views of China, with the narrative of economic partnership giving way to that of a security threat.<sup>20</sup> The securitisation of public perception has the potential to shape relations between the two nations for years to come – a self-inflicted Chinese undoing.

The cornerstone of modern inter-state relations is the maxim *pacta sunt servanda*, that is, agreements must be honoured. However, Chinese praxis impoverishes the concept through a selective rationale. China upholds components of international law insofar as it allows the extraction of benefits from the global system; otherwise, its “flexible” notions come into play. Chinese revisionist arguments frame China as attempting to uphold “sovereignty” (read relativism) and correcting the “imperialist” “humiliations and sufferings” which international law written by “hegemon” inflicted upon China, harking back to its “Century of Humiliation”.<sup>21</sup> The overall strategy is not to destroy the written letter of the global rules-based order, but to sufficiently warp it to attain Chinese objectives without denuding the predictability and stability the said order provides, so as to ultimately attain a position to write these rules.<sup>22</sup> This is achieved using a multitude of tools, ranging from diplomatic reinterpretation to the use of state-supported non-state actors as foreign policy instruments. Following the doctrine of “unrestricted warfare”,<sup>23</sup> “lawfare” is also an explicitly recognised tool in the repertoire, with former CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin stating that Chinese cadres should “be adept at using international law as a ‘weapon’ to defend the interests of our state and maintain national pride”.<sup>24</sup>

China's brusque refusal to abide by the Permanent Court of Arbitration's 2016 verdict on the South China Sea<sup>25</sup> is emblematic of convenient denial. Such actions threaten to upend coexistence maintained through a rules-based order and heighten the possibility of snowballing into a conflict between states. It incentivises other revisionist or renegade

powers and reduces the collective stability of inter-state relations. The foremost example of such miscalculation is perhaps the Galwan Valley clashes in 2020. Even though Chinese transgressions are frequent on the de facto border, this escalation pushed the nations to the brink of war and is perhaps an inflexion point in India's outlook towards China.<sup>26</sup> The massive mobilisation on the Indian side, as also trade and data restrictions, clearly outlines the limits of Chinese expectations of wars "limited" across time, space and intensity.

All global commons face systemic Chinese subversion – seas, culture, cyberspace, space and the informational/data domain. It should thus not be surprising that the aforementioned audit report talks about developing new norms and rules in line with values and principles, with particular focus on critical technologies, including cyberspace, artificial intelligence and critical minerals.<sup>27</sup> These rules were evolved not just for global stability but also to manage inter-state competition without catastrophic breakdowns in state relations.<sup>28</sup> States acting with disregard and impunity when confronted with these rules are reminiscent of the League of Nations – an illustration of the worst-case scenario due to the breakage in a rules-based order.

The Strategic Update is a timely reminder that coercive actions, unregulated strategic competition and grey-zone activities in defiance of international law (such as China's infamous maritime militia, which finds an explicit mention in the update) are eroding international stability and trust, prerequisites for the twin goals of peace and prosperity.

### **Australian threat perception and response**

Australia believes that conventional conflict may break out lacking timely warning, and has therefore embraced a permanently raised level of preparedness. The implicit assumption appears to be that conflict will emerge from systemic instabilities borne of a sufficiently proximate rupture in the rules-based order and its norms. This points to a greater schema affecting the Indo-Pacific states. Warfare does not correlate completely with war; instead, employing all coercive means – violent or otherwise – of achieving objectives without surpassing the threshold of outright conventional war is a preferable substitute to war itself.<sup>29</sup> Comprehensive national power is finding creative and vociferous application, whereby no threat or response can be adequately addressed or compartmentalised in purely military, economic, etc., terms. All inter-state relations and realities are thus potential points of leverage.

The Strategic Update has a conspicuous context in the Sino-Australian economic relationship. Australia possesses large reserves of mineral resources and China's position as the global manufacturing hub with a resource-hungry, infrastructure-driven, exports-focused growth model has resulted in China becoming Australia's largest trading partner.<sup>30</sup> This relationship has fuelled Australian affluence since decades. That said, China has not shied away from weaponising interdependencies to arm-twist nations – Australia included. Australia's attempts at diversifying export baskets will remain overshadowed by the reality of China's massive commodity demands. As long as Australia exports goods (and certain services), of which the Chinese would simply be the biggest buyers, an uncomfortable strategic dichotomy will persist.

However, viewing the situation as a simplistic economy versus politics binary is misleading. Employing economic pressure points to extract political concessions is not new,

albeit aggressively anachronistic. Economic interdependence has been consistently used by China to disseminate influence, which can intensify into coercion when required. Economic competition with China is an uneven playing field for it includes rampant disregard of its international trade obligations – signified by its incessant breaches at the World Trade Organization (WTO).<sup>31</sup> The advancement of Chinese foreign policy objectives, technical progress and domestic imperatives are dependent upon a carefully and ruthlessly managed economic system, where all economic activity is subject to free use and stipulations of the CCP. Certain tools which one sees to this effect include shadow banking, off-the-books reserves, intellectual property (IP) theft, capital controls, compulsory “assistance” to its agencies, data theft, surveillance and the blurring of lines between the state and private economic activity.<sup>32</sup> Concerted trade relations with China, thus, come at the price of long-term strategic vulnerability.<sup>33</sup>

Extensive decoupling from China remains an elusive goal for Australia, considering its economic and geographic realities. Therefore, the Sino-Australian relationship becomes an exercise in risk management, counterbalancing and strategic autonomy. The Strategic Update recognises this situation holistically, where espionage, grey-zone activities, subversion, militarisation and coercion form an intermesh of threats. Accordingly, Australia retorts with multilateral cooperation, norms, innovation, robust academia–industry–military linkages, along with enhanced military capabilities, in the Strategic Update.

To this end stand the three principles of the Strategic Update, signifying the transition of Australia towards proactive, all-pervasive defence capabilities:

- (1) shape Australia’s strategic environment;
- (2) deter actions against Australia’s interests; and
- (3) respond with credible military force, when required.

### **Military goals: A2/AD, deterrence by punishment and innovation**

Australia’s threat perception can be deduced from the Strategic Update and its Force Restructuring Plan.<sup>34</sup> While it is no stranger to maintaining strike capabilities, Australia’s single-largest investment head in the plan comprises of long-range ballistic missiles, with high velocity (which may evolve into platform systems).<sup>35</sup> Closely related is “space control”, which may feasibly be interpreted as anti-satellite missiles and ballistic missile defence systems. These, along with the focus on sensors, logistics, specialised munitions and an industrial ecosystem to support it, point to substantial effort being expended in the domestic defence technology space. The explicit intention is clear: “to hold potential adversaries’ forces and infrastructure at risk from a greater distance”<sup>36</sup> – an unmistakable embrace of A2AD strategies. While Australia continues to welcome American presence (and its implicit security guarantee), the US war weariness is not lost on Australian thinking. Thus, it aims to augment its military capabilities across spheres, especially those comprising long-range and/or technological components. The formidable AU\$ 270 billion (US\$ 182 billion) investment, with bipartisan approval in defence as a part of an overall AU\$ 575 billion push throughout a decade, could prove to be a watershed moment.

The newfound focus on buttressing “Sovereign Industrial Capability Priorities”, which aims to generate a thriving domestic defence technologies innovation ecosystem, is

further indicative of new approaches. Such specific focus constructs a long-term, enduring industrial base for technological augmentation of the forces. Simultaneously, Australia's dependence on its allies (particularly the US, the United Kingdom and France) for key military technologies is being acknowledged as a potential limitation on Australian combat capabilities.

Overall, a palpable shift to “deterrence by punishment” from “deterrence by denial”<sup>37</sup> seems to be on the cards for the Australian defence forces. Dependence is placed on the ability to inflict sharp punitive responses to any misadventures to desist adversaries from such acts. While it exacerbates chances of escalation, grey-zone tactics adopted by China necessitate such alterations in posture.

### Cooperative defence

Amidst Australia's increasing self-reliance in security, cooperative defence is recognised as a *sine qua non* for Australian security. Though Australia would continue to prioritise its near neighbourhood, it understands the deeply interwoven texture of threats in the region where the lines between far and near blur easily. Any disturbance from Madagascar to the Pacific Islands could cascade adversely, to deal with which convergent interests between partners would prove essential. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states, Pacific Island states and the Quad partners, all find mention in the Strategic Update, with emphasis placed on shared interests in shaping the region. The Quad grouping's vigorous revival stands testament to Australia's readiness towards fluid arrangements and close coordination. Importantly, Quad itself is transforming into an expansive strategic framework, with working groups being established for several issues, including critical and emergent technologies.<sup>38</sup>

Countering power asymmetries and limited reach vis-à-vis China through collectivisation of regional security is poised to be one of the foremost goals of Australian strategy. Hard power involvement, coordination and interoperability is a trend that is bound to strengthen for Australia, and regional peers such as India.

### A document of, and for, uncertainty

The Strategic Update has exonerated its utility within the short span since its existence. Australia's hardening commitment to its strategic autonomy and the global architecture has elicited a relentless spate of reactions. Chinese wrath has ranged from alleged cyber-attacks<sup>39</sup> to tariff escalations<sup>40</sup> in the wake of calls for investigating the origins of the coronavirus pandemic. This is on top of careful and profound investments made to sway public opinion, business interests and politics in Australia.<sup>41</sup> The Strategic Update had presaged the use of “unrestricted warfare”<sup>42</sup> and offers a glimpse into the Australian response. Increased Australian assertiveness was made apparent when the Australian Prime Minister revisited Australian silence upon Chinese encroachments in the South China Sea on 27 July 2020, repudiating Chinese claims and upholding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) following the US.<sup>43</sup>

Australia's 2020 Defence Strategic Update is ultimately a result of heightened uncertainties arising from a complex interaction of great power rivalries, with one of these powers being fundamentally revisionist. The US' demand from its allies to take a

greater burden amidst increasing domestic polarisation overshadows its collective security net. China's economic relationship with Australia is a comprehensive risk, and provides potent channels for influence and coercion which China will primarily depend upon. However, China has not refrained from using localised violence, or "limited wars", along its peripheries, as India can testify.<sup>44</sup> China's centralisation under Xi Jinping is a key source of risk, where external belligerence is matched by increasing threats to internal political stability.<sup>45</sup>

Within this uncertain global scenario, other local powers face their own issues, which may require Australian involvement. An example was Australian surveillance aircraft aiding the Philippines during military operations in Marawi against Islamist fundamentalists in 2017 – an emblematic representation of sorts for both regional cooperation as well as emergent turmoil in its vicinity. In the instant scheme of things, a policy such as Australia's is a call for action to all states in the region envisaging collective security within the Indo-Pacific. Japan is seized by outmoded hesitations in discarding the limitations of the MacArthur Constitution to develop offensive capabilities, and India's unclear maritime thinking continues to stymie its blue-water faculties. The time to dither is over, as Australia has grasped. Time, however, is of the essence for all in the region.

## Notes

1. Sanjeev Sanyal, *The Ocean of Churn: How the Indian Ocean Shaped Human History* (India: Penguin Books Limited, 2016).
2. "Indo-Pacific Epicentre of 'Great Power Competition' with China: Esper," *Business Standard*, August 27, 2020, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/indo-pacific-epicentre-of-great-power-competition-with-china-esper-120082700534\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/indo-pacific-epicentre-of-great-power-competition-with-china-esper-120082700534_1.html) (accessed July 10, 2021).
3. Deekhit Bhattacharya and Ishan Dhar, "The Curse of the Custodian: Jordan's Fragile Stability & the Deal of the Century," *Global Order*, July 30, 2020, <https://www.globalorder.live/post/the-curse-of-the-custodian-jordan-s-fragile-stability-the-deal-of-the-century> (accessed July 10, 2021).
4. Department of Defence, "2020 Defence Strategic Update," July 1, 2020, p. 16, [https://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020\\_Defence\\_Strategic\\_Update.pdf](https://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020_Defence_Strategic_Update.pdf) (accessed July 10, 2021).
5. C. Raja Mohan, "Beyond Non-alignment: S Jaishankar's Reflections on Indian Foreign Policy," NUS-ISAS, National University of Singapore, November 25, 2019, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/beyond-non-alignment-s-jaishankars-reflections-on-indian-foreign-policy/> (accessed July 10, 2021).
6. Sankalp Phartiyal, "India Retains Ban on 59 Chinese Apps, including TikTok," *Reuters*, January 26, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-china-apps-idUSKBN29U2GJ> (accessed July 10, 2021).
7. Premesha Saha, "From 'Pivot to Asia' to Trump's ARIA: What Drives the US' Current Asia Policy?," ORF Occasional Paper No. 236, Observer Research Foundation, February 2020, (accessed July 10, 2021).
8. Jonathan Stromseth, "Competing with China in Southeast Asia: An Economic Imperative," Brookings Institution, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Jonathan-Stromseth.pdf> (accessed July 10, 2021).
9. Sumanth Samsani, "Understanding the Relations between Myanmar and China," *ORF Expert Speak*, April 26, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/understanding-the-relations-between-myanmar-and-china/> (accessed July 10, 2021).

10. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China (PRC), "Xi Jinping Attends and Addresses the CPC and World Political Parties Summit," July 6, 2021, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1890702.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1890702.shtml) (accessed July 10, 2021).
11. Hannah Ryder, "Where Is the Africa–China Relationship Headed in 2021?" Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), February 17, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/where-africa-china-relationship-headed-2021> (accessed July 10, 2021).
12. Kabir Taneja and Kalpit Mankikar, "\$400 bn Deal an Eye-catcher. But Iran Is Just a Square in China's Geopolitical Chessboard," *The Print*, April 2, 2021, <https://theprint.in/opinion/400-bn-deal-an-eye-catcher-but-iran-is-just-a-square-in-chinas-geopolitical-chessboard/632683/> (accessed July 10, 2021).
13. Madiha Afzal, "At All Costs: How Pakistan and China Control the Narrative on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor," Brookings Institution, June 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/at-all-costs-how-pakistan-and-china-control-the-narrative-on-the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/> (accessed July 10, 2021).
14. Stephanie Findley, Christian Shepherd, and James Kyngé, "China Watches Afghanistan Anxiously as the US Withdraws," *Financial Times*, July 6, 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/49d266c6-a6c2-4ab2-bf52-ed34d72b22c1> (accessed July 10, 2021).
15. Kirtika Suneja, "India, Australia likely to Resume FTA Talks Soon," *The Economic Times*, June 6, 2021, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-australia-likely-to-resume-fta-talks-soon/articleshow/83265110.cms> (accessed July 10, 2021).
16. US State Department, "Blue Dot Network," <https://www.state.gov/blue-dot-network/>.
17. Ben Scott, "But What Does 'Rules-based Order' Mean?" *The Interpreter*, November 2, 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/what-does-rules-based-order-mean#:~:text=Although%20the%20term%20%E2%80%9Crules%2Dbased,years%20of%20peace%20and%20security> (accessed July 12, 2021).
18. Marise Payne, "Australia and the World in the Time of COVID-19," Foreign Minister, Australian Government, June 16, 2020, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/speech/australia-and-world-time-covid-19> (accessed July 10, 2021).
19. The Parliament of Australia, "National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018 (Australia), Act No. 67 of 2018," Federal Register of Legislation, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018A00067> (accessed July 17, 2021).
20. Lowy Institute, "China, 2021," <https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/themes/china/> (accessed July 17, 2021).
21. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, "Wang Yi: China, a Staunch Defender and Builder of International Rule of Law," October 24, 2014, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/wjbz\\_663308/2461\\_663310/t1204247.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1204247.shtml), (accessed July 10, 2021).
22. Stephen M. Walt, "China Wants a 'Rules-based International Order,' too," *Foreign Policy*, March 31, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/31/china-wants-a-rules-based-international-order-too/> (accessed July 10, 2021).
23. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House Arts, 1999).
24. Dong Wang, *China's Unequal Treaties: Narrating National History* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 128.
25. "Beijing Rejects Tribunal's Ruling in South China Sea Case," *The Guardian*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12/philippines-wins-south-china-sea-case-against-china> (accessed July 10, 2021).
26. Shruti Pandalai, "Lessons for India after the Galwan Valley Clash," *The Diplomat*, July 31, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/lessons-for-india-after-the-galwan-valley-clash/> (accessed July 10, 2021).
27. Payne, "Australia and the World in the Time of COVID-19."
28. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
29. Lyle J. Morris, Michael J. Mazarr, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Stephanie Pezard, Anika Binnendijk, and Marta Kepe, *Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone: Response Options for*

- Coercive Aggression below the Threshold of Major War* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), 124, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2942.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2942.html) (accessed July 10, 2021).
30. Frances Mao, “How Reliant Is Australia on China?,” *BBC News*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-52915879> (accessed July 17, 2020).
  31. United States Trade Representative to the WTO, “2019 Report on China’s WTO Compliance,” 2020, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/reports-and-publications/2019/2019-report-chinas-wto-compliance> (accessed July 17, 2020).
  32. Deekhit Bhattacharya, “Heavenly Manipulation of the Threads: China’s Civilisational Thought Is Key to Its Behaviour – And an Antidote,” *Global Order*, June 27, 2020, <https://www.globalorder.live/post/heavenly-manipulation-of-the-threads> (accessed July 10, 2021).
  33. Mao, “How Reliant Is Australia on China?”
  34. Department of Defence, “2020 Force Restructuring Plan,” July 1, 2020, <https://apo.org.au/node/306577> (accessed July 10, 2021).
  35. Rob Harris, “Australia to Invest in New Long-range Missile Technology for Naval Fleet,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/australia-to-invest-in-new-long-range-missile-technology-for-naval-fleet-20210124-p56wg b.html> (accessed July 10, 2021).
  36. Department of Defence, “2020 Defence Strategic Update,” 27.
  37. M.J. Mazarr, “Understanding Deterrence,” RAND Corporation, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE200/PE295/RAND\\_PE295.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE200/PE295/RAND_PE295.pdf) (accessed July 17, 2020).
  38. Australian Government, “Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group,” International Cyber Technology, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, April 16, 2021, <https://www.internationalcybertech.gov.au/node/137> (accessed July 10, 2021).
  39. “Australia Cyber Attacks: PM Morrison Warns of ‘Sophisticated’ State Hack,” *BBC*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-46096768> (accessed July 15, 2020).
  40. “China Punishes Australia for Promoting an Inquiry into Covid-19,” *The Economist*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2020/05/21/china-punishes-australia-for-promoting-an-inquiry-into-covid-19> (accessed July 15, 2020).
  41. Mahima Duggal, “Australia’s Looming Cloud: The China Challenge,” *WION News*, July 14, 2020, <https://www.wionews.com/opinions-blogs/australias-looming-cloud-the-china-challenge-313204> (accessed July 10, 2021).
  42. Bhattacharya, “Heavenly Manipulation of the Threads.”
  43. Carl Thayer, “Australia Abandons Its Neutrality on the South China Sea Maritime Disputes,” *The Diplomat*, July 27, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/australia-abandons-its-neutrality-on-the-south-china-sea-maritime-disputes/> (accessed July 15, 2021).
  44. “China Denies Burial to Its Soldiers Killed in Galwan Clash to Cover Up Its Blunder – Report,” *The Times of India*, July 14, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/china-denies-burial-to-its-soldiers-killed-in-galwan-clash-to-cover-up-its-blunder-report/articleshow/76951732.cms> (accessed July 17, 2020).
  45. Bhattacharya, “Heavenly Manipulation of the Threads.”

## Notes on contributors

*Deekhit Bhattacharya* is Research Associate at Global Order ([www.globalorder.live](http://www.globalorder.live)) where he works on State Stability, International Economics, Technology, and Foreign Affairs. His key interests include China, Gilgit-Baltistan, Indian foreign policy, trade relations, the Indo-Pacific, and the impact of Artificial Intelligence. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Laws at the University of Delhi, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics (with Honours) from the same University. (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/deekhit-bhattacharya/>).

*Ashley Eadon* is an Intern at Global Order ([www.globalorder.live](http://www.globalorder.live)) where she works on International Law, Social Justice, and Foreign Affairs. Her key interests include Human Rights,

Gender Issues, Australian foreign policy and the Indo- Pacific. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Laws and Psychological Science with a Diploma of Languages (Hindi) at La Trobe University. She is a New Colombo Plan Scholar for India and a Top 100 Future Leaders in Law awardee from GradConnection. (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ashleyeadon/>).