

Follow Us:

**The Indian EXPRESS**

Tuesday, June 28, 2022

[Home](#) [Explained](#) [Political Pulse](#) [India](#) [Cities](#) [Opinion](#) [Entertainment](#) [Sports](#) [Audio](#)[Home](#) / [Explained](#) / Explained: What is the US-led 'Partners in the Blue Pacific' initiative to counter China?

Explained: What is the US-led 'Partners in the Blue Pacific' initiative to counter China?

Amid China's aggressive push to increase its Pacific sphere of influence, the US and its allies have launched a new initiative called 'Partners in the Blue Pacific'. What is being done to counter China? Why is the Pacific region strategically important?

Written by **Saurabh Kapoor**, Edited by Explained Desk | New Delhi |

Updated: June 28, 2022 1:48:24 pm



US President Joe Biden waits for the start of a lunch with the Group of Seven leaders during the annual

G7 summit at the Schloss Elmau hotel in Elmau, Germany. (REUTERS)

Amid China's aggressive push to increase its Pacific sphere of influence, the US and its allies — Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United Kingdom — have launched a new initiative called 'Partners in the Blue Pacific' for "effective and efficient cooperation" with the region's small island nations.

The geostrategic competition in the region has intensified of late after China made the projected scope of its growing footprint clear by pushing for a sweeping, common cooperation agreement with 10 Pacific nations.

Best of Explained

[Maharashtra crisis: What is the 2/3rds rule in anti-defection law?](#)

[What has Niti Aayog recommended on India's gig economy?](#)

[Moosewala's 'SYL' removed: Why does YouTube remove content?](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

What is Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP) initiative?

The PBP is a five-nation "informal mechanism" to support Pacific islands and to boost diplomatic, economic ties in the region. Announced on June 24, it speaks of enhancing "prosperity, resilience, and security" in the Pacific through closer cooperation. It simply means that through the PBP, these counties — together and individually — will direct more resources here to counter China's aggressive outreach.

The initiative members have also declared that they will "elevate Pacific regionalism", and forge stronger ties with the Pacific Islands Forum.

BEST OF EXPRESS PREMIUM



Rationalisation, reforms may test Centre-state relations at GST meet



Clampdown and unclear policy prompt crypto exchange founders to leave India



Explained: What is the 2/3rds rule in anti-defection law?



UPSC Key-June 27, 2022: Know the relevance of 'Deputy Speaker' to 'Nation...'

[More Premium Stories >>](#)[Check your immigration eligibility](#)[Click here](#)Y **AXIS**

In a joint statement released to announce the initiative, the five member nations said that the forum remains open to cooperating with additional partners, adding that “at every stage, we will be led and guided by the Pacific Islands. We will seek Pacific guidance on the PBP’s selection of its lines of effort and its flagship projects”.

The areas where PBP aims to enhance cooperation include “climate crisis, connectivity and transportation, maritime security and protection, health, prosperity, and education”.

Also Explained | **What is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework?**

How is China trying to transform its ties in the Pacific?

As China signed a security pact with Solomon Islands in April, the deal flagged serious concerns about the Chinese military getting a base in the southern Pacific, close to the US island territory of Guam, and right next to Australia and New Zealand.

The deal, which boosted Beijing’s quest to dominate crucial shipping lanes criss-crossing the region, rattled the US and its allies. It also triggered urgent moves to counter China’s growing Pacific ambition amid a power vacuum fuelled by apparent lack of US attention.

But Beijing followed up on that win with its Foreign Minister Wang Yi undertaking a multi-nation tour to push 10 Pacific nations to endorse a “game-changing” agreement called the “Common Development Vision”.

The draft agreement, accessed by the Associated Press, spoke about China wanting to work with “traditional and non-traditional security,” and expand law enforcement cooperation with these countries.

The diplomatic blitz saw Wang Yi visit the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea, and hold virtual meetings with the Cook Islands, Niue, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

By the time he ended his tour, the deal ran aground amid warnings of the Pacific states becoming part of “Beijing’s orbit”. Despite that setback, China indicated that it would continue pursuing this goal.

This intention became even more clear on June 27, as the ABC reported that China was trying to arrange a virtual meeting between Wang Yi and the leaders of 10 Pacific Island states on the sidelines of the high-level Pacific Islands Forum gathering in Fiji in mid-July.

China and the US are among 21 PIF dialogue partners, but this year the regional forum had decided not to engage with the dialogue partners in-person during the Fiji meet.

Also read | **The significance of the Indo-Pacific for India**

What is being done by the US and its allies to counter China?

Before launching the PBP this month, the US and its partners started the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a trade-boosting play in the region with 13 nations — Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Fiji and Vietnam — as partners.

Away from the Pacific, the G7 on Monday (June 27) announced a plan — Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) — to rival China’s Belt and Road Initiative by promising to raise \$600 billion to fund development projects in low and middle-income countries.

Opinion | **India and Australia: Partners with shared interests and entwined destinies**

Why is the Pacific region strategically important?

In its 2019 strategy report, the US Department of Defence called the Indo-Pacific the “single most consequential region for America’s future”.

It said: “Spanning a vast stretch of the globe from the west coast of the United States to the western shores of India, the region is home to the world’s most populous

state (China), most populous democracy (India), and largest Muslim-majority state (Indonesia), and includes over half of the earth's population.

Newsletter | [Click to get the day's best explainers in your inbox](#)

“Among the 10 largest standing armies in the world, 7 reside in the Indo-Pacific; and 6 countries in the region possess nuclear weapons. Nine of the world's 10 busiest seaports are in the region, and 60 percent of global maritime trade transits through Asia, with roughly one-third of global shipping passing through the South China Sea alone.”

The US has long maintained a balance of power in the region with its hub-and-spoke system where America is the hub and its allies are spokes whose security is guaranteed by the US military power.

China, analysts believe, is trying to make its own version of the same system, even as it insists the sole aim of the US policy of having overwhelming influence in the region is to contain Beijing's rise.

Express Subscription Do not hit the wall, subscribe for the best coverage out of India starting at just \$5 per month

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)



Want to go beyond the news and understand the headlines? Subscribe to Explained by The Indian Express

[Subscribe](#)

 **Join our Telegram channel (The Indian Express) for the latest news and updates**

For all the latest [Explained News](#), download [Indian Express App](#).

 **NewsGuard**