Prepared by the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra

Summary

- The inaugural Sydney Dialogue on emerging, critical and cyber technologies was held virtually 17-19 November. PM Scott Morrison used the Dialogue as a platform to announce AU$111 million worth of new initiatives for Australia's approach to quantum technologies and critical technology. The Dialogue and Australia's announcements align with the Morrison Government's ambitions for Australia to become one of the top 10 digital economies by 2030.
- India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi also gave a keynotes address, profiling India's approach to critical and cyber technologies, and his aspirations for a collaborative framework for democracies to work together on key areas of technology development.
- The panel discussions, and final keynote address from former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, brought the discussion back to the role of the QUAD and AUKUS in the region.

Report

The Sydney Dialogue was first announced in December 2020 by Minister of Foreign Affairs Marise Payne as a way of strengthening the global discussion on cyber and critical technology. The intention was to bring together political leaders, industry experts, academics and civil society representatives to meet and discuss the most pressing issues around cyber and critical technology.

The inaugural Dialogue was held virtually 17 - 19 November. The Australian Government provided AU$1.5 million dollars to support this Dialogue, which was hosted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. The two day dialogue included three key note speakers, four public panel discussions, and one members-only panel discussion. The full agenda and access to on demand videos of the sessions are available here.

Another multi-million dollar set of announcements from Australia…
Prime Minister Scott Morrison used his key note address to announce new initiatives and funding for critical and emerging technologies in Australia. This included a Blueprint for Critical Technology, which outlines an intention to balance economic opportunities with national security considerations and ensure that Australia takes the right approach both domestically and with likeminded partnerships. The Blueprint's four key goals include:

- Ensuring Australia has access to, and choice in, critical technologies and systems that are secure, reliable, and cost-effective.
- Promoting Australia as a trusted and secure partner for investment, research, innovation, collaboration, and adoption of critical technologies.
- Maintaining the integrity of Australian research, science, ideas, information and capabilities – to enable Australian industries to thrive and maximise sovereign intellectual property.
- Supporting regional resilience and shape an international environment that enables open, diverse and competitive markets and secure and trusted technological innovation.

PM Morrison also released an [Action Plan for Critical Technologies](#) (to support the Blueprint), which details how the government will protect and promote critical technologies. This includes a list of 63 technologies identified as having a significant impact on Australia's national interest (with 9 key technologies prioritised in the first instance). This is accompanied by a package of new initiatives to "protect and promote" critical technologies, from a Defence Innovation Hub investment on AI applications for Defence to imposing foreign investment restrictions for critical technologies, as well as bolstering existing initiatives, such as the [Telecommunications Security Review](#) or the [Supply Chain Resilience Initiative](#).

PM Morrison also announced [AU$111 million in funding](), towards developing Australia's quantum capabilities. This includes AU$70 million towards the creation of a Quantum Commercialisation Hub that will look to grow Australia's quantum industry and bolster international links, as well as the development of a new National Quantum Strategy (led by Chief Scientist Folly) to align industry and government efforts.

FM Marise Payne noted in a separate [statement]() that the announcements compliment the establishment of a new Consulate-General in Bengaluru and a Centre of Excellence for Critical and Emerging Technology Policy, also to be based in India. She said this "will expand our diplomatic presence in India to five diplomatic posts[1] … deepening our engagement with Indian governments at all levels." Payne stated that the announcements "will promote stronger investment opportunities and cutting-edge innovation in cyber, critical and emerging technologies. [They] will amplify Australia's and India's policy impact globally."

… a spotlight for India…
Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the Dialogue's [second key note address](). He talked about 'India's digital revolution' which he said was "rooted in our democracy, demography and the scale of economy" and explained that there are "five important transitions" taking place in India:

- Building the world's most extensive public information infrastructure: PM Modi explained that with over 1.3 billion Indians having a Unique Digital Identity, a programme to connect 600,000 villages with broadband, and the UPI [Unified Payments Interface] infrastructure, India are the largest consumers of data per capita.
- Transforming the lives of the people: PM Modi explained that digital; technology is being used for governance, inclusion, empowerment, connectivity, delivery of benefits and welfare. He used the examples of administering COVID vaccines across India's vast geography with the help of technology, and the 'One Nation, One Card' initiative.
- Growing the world's third largest and fastest growing start-up eco-system: "New unicorns are coming up every few weeks," he said adding that these are providing solutions to "everything from health and education to national security."
- India's industry and services sectors' digital transformation: PM Modi explained that India is getting digital technology for "clean energy transition, conversion of resources and protection of biodiversity."
- Prepare India for the future: Turning to new and emerging technologies, PM Modi said, "We are investing in developing indigenous capabilities in telecom technology such as 5G and 6G." He stated that India is one of the leading nations in artificial intelligence and machine learning, "especially in the human-centred and ethical use of artificial intelligence". He recognised cloud platforms and cloud computing as "key to resilience and digital sovereignty."
- Resilience and digital sovereignty appear to be motivating India's approach. Modi confirmed they are "preparing a package of incentives to become a key manufacturer of semi-conductors. Our production linked incentive schemes in electronics and telecom are already attracting local and global players to set up base in India".

On international actions, Modi envisions creating a collaborative framework that covers investment, development, information sharing, resilience, and creating norms and standards. He used the example of crypto-currency as an area where democracies especially should work together to ensure they "don't end up in the wrong hands".

PM Morrison also spoke at the at the [Bengaluru Tech Summit]() on 17 November, where he announced the establishment of the new Consulate-General, as well as an Australia-India Centre of Excellence for Critical and Emerging Technology Policy. The Centre intends to bring together Australian and Indian technologists, policy practitioners, academics, researchers and thought leaders.

… as well as on the QUAD and AUKUS initiatives.
Every panel discussion and key note address made connections with the AUKUS announcements and the QUAD partnership. In a session on *Democracies and Global Technology Governance* Foreign Minister Payne expected that "mini-lateral" initiatives, such as the QUAD, were key to establishing the principles and 'rules of the road' for critical and emerging technology in the Indo-Pacific.

Australian Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews said that the QUAD and AUKUS were considered an important part of Australia's critical technology strategy: from supply chains' assurances, to skills training. She expected that there will be

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[1] Existing Australian posts in India include the High Commission in New Delhi and Consulates-General in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

space for other trusted and likeminded partners to collaborate on the cyber, artificial intelligence and quantum technology parts of AUKUS.

During the third and final keynote address, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reflected on the concept of "a free and open Indo-Pacific" – which he championed during his time in office – and welcomed the AUKUS initiative. "It is extremely important to promote multi-layered efforts for peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region. I think that Japan should engage in the cooperation under AUKUS in such areas as cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies." Abe's view is in line with that of the Japanese ambassador to Australia, Shingo Yamagami, who has previously hinted Japan was looking for avenues to participate in AUKUS initiatives such as on AI and cyber.

Comment

The Dialogue and Australia's announcements align with its ambitions, including being at the centre of the Indo-Pacific's 'technology revolution'; Australia as one of the top 10 digital economies by 2030; and, digital technology to become Australia's third largest domestic sector (after mining and finance). In the same week as the Dialogue, Google announced a Digital Future Initiative investing in Australian infrastructure, research and partnerships. PM Morrison described this as a "$1 billion vote of confidence" in Australia's Digital Economy Strategy.

The Australian Government's ambition to grow its digital economy, supported by secure, critical technology is now being matched by significant investment to develop key sectors. At the same time, Australia is looking to likeminded international partners to ensure Australia has access to, and choice in, technologies and systems that are secure, reliable and cost-effective. This may provide an opportunity for New Zealand tech and services companies, which are able to operate in the Australian market and bid for government contracts alongside Australian firms thanks to our Closer Economic Relations (CER) Free Trade Agreement.

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