



Delhi Policy Group

Foreign Affairs Review

Volume 2, Issue 2

FEBRUARY 2020



Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

www.delhipolicygroup.org



DPG Foreign Affairs Review

Volume 2, Issue 2

February 2020

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group is among India's oldest independent think tanks with its primary focus on international and strategic issues of critical national interest. Over the past decades, the Delhi Policy Group has established itself in both domestic and international circles, particularly in the area of national security.

In keeping with India's increasing global profile as a leading power and the accompanying dynamism of India's foreign and security policy, the Delhi Policy Group has expanded its focus areas to include India's broader regional and global role; India's initiatives to strengthen its strategic periphery; India's political, security and connectivity challenges and policies across the Indo-Pacific; and the strategic partnerships that advance India's rise. To support these goals, the DPG undertakes research, publishes policy reports and organises conferences on strategic and geo-political, geo-economic, and defence and security issues.

DPG Foreign Affairs Review

DPG Foreign Affairs Review is compiled by our research team from publicly available information and open source media to provide an overview of significant developments related to India's foreign affairs during the month. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Mohit Musaddi at mohit@dpg.org.in.

Cover Photographs:

(Photographs top to bottom)

Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi meets President of the United States Donald J. Trump at Hyderabad House, New Delhi on February 25, 2020. Source: MEA/Flickr

Ceremonial Welcome of the President of Myanmar U. Win Myint at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi on February 27, 2020. Source: MEA/ Flickr

Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and President of Portugal Marcelo Rebelo De Sousa witness the Exchange of Agreements in New Delhi on February 14, 2020. Source: MEA/Flickr

© 2020 by the Delhi Policy Group

Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.
www.delhipolicygroup.org



DPG Foreign Affairs Review
Volume 2, Issue 2
February 2020

Contents

I. Asia	1
II. North America	6
III. Europe	9
IV. West Asia	10
V. Africa	11
VI. Multilateral Fora	12
VII. Institutional Developments in the MEA	15

I. Asia

1. [Visit of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to India](#)

The Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa was on a State Visit to India from February 7-11. During his visit, he held [bilateral talks](#) with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The discussions focused on rethinking the strategic approach of the two countries in security, economic, social and cultural sectors. Given the Easter attacks, PM Modi and PM Rajapaksa discussed the potential to enhance capabilities in sharing intelligence and countering terrorism. In that regard, the Sri Lankan PM appreciated India's offer of a 50-million-dollar line of credit to help combat terrorism and a 400-million-dollar line of credit to enhance the Sri Lankan economy.

The Prime Minister called on the President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind and the two leaders discussed ties between India and Sri Lanka in politics, development, security, trade and cultural sectors. Further, PM Rajapaksa received a call by the EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar in which the discussions focused on expediting ongoing projects and cooperation in a number of sectors.

2. [Visit of the President of Myanmar to India](#)

His Excellency U. Win Myint, the President of Myanmar, was on a State visit to India from February 26-29. During his visit, he met his counterpart Shri Ram Nath Kovind, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and received a call from EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar. President Myint was accompanied by the First Lady of Myanmar Daw Cho Cho.

A [Joint Statement](#) was signed during the President's visit on February 27. The leaders discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. They welcomed the synergies between Myanmar's independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy and India's 'Act East' and 'Neighbourhood First' policies, and reaffirmed their commitments to further strengthen partnership and explore new avenues of cooperation in order to expand bilateral relations for the mutual benefit of the two countries. Both sides also expressed satisfaction at the success of the Myanmar-India Border Area Development Programme in providing infrastructure and socio-economic development in Chin State and Naga Self-Administered Region through Indian grant-in-aid projects.

Both sides agreed that cooperation on defence and security matters remain one of the key pillars of Myanmar-India bilateral relations and reiterated their commitment to peace and stability along border areas. They also welcomed enhanced maritime cooperation between the two countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed India's support for Myanmar's efforts towards national reconciliation, the peace process and democratic transition to establish a federal union, which is being pursued through a dialogue between the Government, Military and Ethnic Armed Groups under the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement framework.

Recognizing the threat posed by terrorism, both sides agreed to cooperate on countering terrorist groups and their actions. Both sides condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and emphasized the need for a stronger international partnership in countering terrorism and violent extremism through increased sharing of information and intelligence. In this regard, the two sides agreed to continue their close cooperation at international fora such as the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations and regional frameworks such as ASEAN, BIMSTEC and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC).

[10 MoUs/Agreements](#) were signed during the visit. These included an agreement on Cooperation for Prevention of Trafficking; Agreement for construction projects and distribution of electricity in the Rakhine state; an MoU for Cooperation on Combating Timber Trafficking; an MoU for cooperation in the field of petroleum products; and an MoU for cooperation in the field of health research.



Ceremonial Welcome of the President of Myanmar U. Win Myint at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi on February 27, 2020. Source: MEA/ Flickr

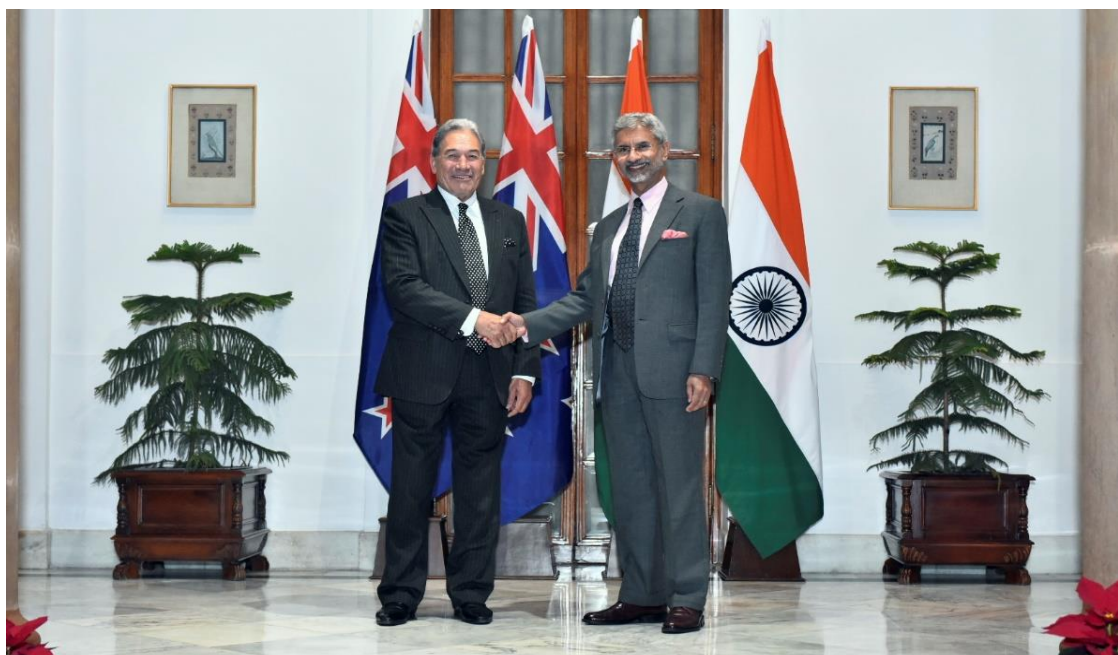
3. [Visit of the Vice President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to India](#)

The Vice-President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Mrs. Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh was on an official visit to India from February 11-13. During her visit, she held bilateral delegation level talks with the Vice-President of India, Shri Venkaiah Naidu on February 12. The two leaders discussed all aspects of bilateral relations and exchanged views on political, defence, economic and security issues of mutual interest. Further, the two sides agreed to continue their close coordination and mutual support at multilateral fora, especially on account of Vietnam becoming a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (2020-21) and Vietnam assuming the ASEAN Chair in 2020. The launch of direct flights between India and Vietnam was jointly inaugurated on February 12.

Vice President Thinh called on the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind on February 13. The President remarked that Vietnam is pivotal to India's Act East Policy and its Indo-Pacific Vision and that India looks forward to working with Vietnam to deepen its global partnership.

4. [Visit of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand to India](#)

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of New Zealand, Mr. Winston Peters visited India from February 25-28, 2020. He was accompanied by the Minister of Trade Mr. David Parker.



EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar meets Winston Peters, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand in New Delhi on February 26, 2020.

Source: MEA/Flickr

Dy. PM Peters [met](#) EAM Dr. S Jaishankar on Feb 26, 2020 and reviewed the state of bilateral relations between India and New Zealand and discussed steps to intensify political, economic, defence, security and people to people relations. India thanked New Zealand for its support for the Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative (IPOI) and on the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Both sides exchanged views on their respective approaches in the Indo-Pacific region and agreed to work together in various multilateral forums, including the East Asia Summit. They emphasized the importance of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and international law including UNCLOS for peace and stability in the region. They also emphasised that a stable international trading environment is essential and agreed to constructively engage in the WTO.

During his visit, the Deputy Prime Minister also held a meeting with Mr. Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of Delhi on February 27 and delivered a speech at the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in Mumbai on February 28.

5. [Visit of the Foreign Secretary of India to Afghanistan](#)

The Foreign Secretary of India, Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla visited Afghanistan on February 28-29 to meet the Afghan leadership. He called on the President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani and the two exchanged views on the expansion of bilateral relations, the peace process and the ongoing developments in the region. He also held talks with the acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Haroon Chakhansuri and apprised him about India's views on the peace deal as well as its commitment for all-round development of the country. He met Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, former President Mr. Hamid Karzai, First Vice President-elect Mr. Amrullah Saleh and NSA Dr. Hamdullah Mohib.

On February 29, the United States and the Taliban signed a peace accord in Doha which is aimed at ending the two-decade long conflict in Afghanistan. India's Ambassador to Qatar Mr. P. Kumaran represented India in the ceremony.

The Foreign Secretary also met Afghanistan's acting Finance Minister Abdul Habib Zadran and Deputy Minister of Transport Mohammad Zekria and witnessed signing of agreements for road projects in Bamyan and Mazar-e-Sharif provinces of Afghanistan, which are being carried out with India's assistance.

6. [Visit of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan to New Delhi](#)

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, Mr. Rashid Meredov made a transit visit to New Delhi on February 2, 2020. He had a brief meeting with EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar during which issues of bilateral interest were discussed.

7. [Amendment of the Agreement between India and Sri Lanka for avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion](#)

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the Signing and Ratification of the Protocol amending the Agreement between India and Sri Lanka for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income on February 12. The existing Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Sri Lanka was signed on January 22, 2013 and entered into force on October 22, 2013. It is expected that the update of preamble text and inclusion of Principal Purpose Test in the DTAA will result in curbing of tax planning strategies which exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules.

8. [Visit of South Korea's Minister of National Defence](#)

The Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Jeong Kyeongdoo visited India to participate in the Defence Expo 2020 which was held in Lucknow from February 5-9, 2020. On the sidelines of the Expo on February 4, Mr. Kyeongdoo and Shri Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister of India held bilateral discussions. During the meeting, both Ministers agreed to enhance the bilateral security cooperation and collaboration in defence industry and research and development between India and the Republic of Korea. They also exchanged views on regional security situation. A roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation between India and the RoK was exchanged after the meeting.

II. North America

1. [State visit of US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump](#)

The President of the United States of America His Excellency Donald Trump was on a state visit to India from February 24-25, 2020. He was accompanied by the First Lady Melania Trump and Senior Advisors to the President Mrs. Ivanka Trump and Mr. Jared Kushner. During the visit, the President and the First Lady met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind in New Delhi. Prior to that, the President addressed a large gathering at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad, Gujarat and also visited the Taj Mahal in Agra, Uttar Pradesh along with the First Lady. This was President Trump's first official visit to India.

During his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the two sides held intensive bilateral discussions across a wide range of issues including security and defence, energy, technology and trade, people to people contacts, and global and regional areas of common interest. The meeting was followed by [Exchanges of Agreements](#) and a [Joint Statement](#) to the Press. Three Agreements were signed; an MoU on Mental Health, an MoU on the Safety of Medical Products and a Letter of Cooperation between Indian Oil Cooperation Limited and ExxonMobil India LNG Limited.

The Joint Statement elevated the India-US partnership to a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership which is anchored in mutual trust, shared interests, goodwill and robust engagement of citizens. Prime Minister Modi and President Trump pledged to deepen defence and security cooperation, especially through greater maritime and space domain awareness and information sharing; joint cooperation; exchange of military liaison personnel; advanced training and expanded exercises between all services and special forces; closer collaboration on co-development and co-production of advanced defence components, equipment and platforms; and a partnership between their defence industries.

The leaders recognized the increasing importance of trade and investment between India and the US and agreed to promptly conclude the ongoing negotiations in trade, which can ultimately lead to a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement between New Delhi and Washington.

On the space front, Prime Minister Modi and President Trump welcomed a joint endeavour by ISRO and NASA for the development and launch of a joint mission with the world's first dual-frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar satellite in 2022, and applauded discussions that advance cooperation in Earth observation, Mars and planetary exploration, heliophysics, human spaceflight, and commercial space cooperation. The two leaders also encouraged Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited and Westinghouse Electric Company to finalise the techno-commercial offer for the construction of six nuclear reactors in India at the earliest date.



Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi meets President of the United States Donald J. Trump at Hyderabad House, New Delhi on February 25, 2020. Source: MEA/Flickr

President Trump communicated that the United States is appreciative of India's role as a net provider of security, as well as in developmental and humanitarian assistance in the Indian Ocean Region. The Joint Statement laid emphasis on the need to remain committed to sustainable, transparent and quality infrastructure development in the region and in that regard, the two leaders looked forward to a new partnership between

USAID and India's Development Partnership Administration for cooperation in third countries.

President Trump and Prime Minister Modi committed to working together to strengthen and reform the United Nations and other international organisations and ensure their integrity. President Trump reaffirmed the support of the United States for India's permanent membership on a reformed U.N. Security Council. He also reaffirmed U.S. support for India's entry to the Nuclear Suppliers Group without any delay. Prime Minister Modi and President Trump expressed interest in the concept of the Blue Dot Network, a multi-stakeholder initiative that will bring governments, the private sector, and civil society together to promote high-quality trusted standards for global infrastructure development.

Finally, Prime Minister Modi and President Trump denounced the use of terrorist proxies and strongly condemned cross-border terrorism in all its forms. They called on Pakistan to ensure that no territory under its control is used to launch terrorist attacks, and to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators of past attacks, including 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot.

Overall, the [visit](#) provided an opportunity for the two leaders to review progress in bilateral ties and further strengthen the India-US partnership which has significantly evolved under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and President Trump, with significant progress in all areas including trade, defence, counter-terrorism, energy, coordination on regional and global issues as well as people-to-people ties.

III. Europe

1. [State visit of President of Portugal to India](#)

The President of Portugal, Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa paid a State visit to India from February 13 – 16. He was accompanied by Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Professor Augusto Santos Silva, Secretary of State for Internationalization, Professor Eurico Brilhante Dias and Secretary of State for National Defense, Mr. Jorge Seguro Sanches. This was the President Sousa's first visit to India and the first visit by a President of Portugal since 2007.

During the visit, the President called on his Indian counterpart President Ram Nath Kovind on February 14. President Kovind, in his [Press Statement](#) remarked that the Portugal-India global partnership "envision[s] a strong multi-polar world order underpinned by enhanced multilateralism". He thanked Portugal for its steadfast support in fighting terrorism as well as for India's permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. India and Portugal exchanged [14 MoUs/Agreements](#) which covered maritime heritage, maritime transport and port development, migration and mobility, Intellectual Property Rights, etc.

The visit provided an opportunity for the two sides to review progress in various sectors of bilateral relations and pursue new avenues of cooperation apart from exchanging views on international issues of common interest.



Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and President of Portugal Marcelo Rebelo De Sousa witness the Exchange of Agreements in New Delhi on February 14, 2020. Source: MEA/Flickr

IV. West Asia

1. [Visit of Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence](#)

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Defence Affairs of Qatar, Dr. Khalid bin Mohammad al-Attiyah visited New Delhi on February 4. During his visit, he held [delegation level talks](#) with the Defence Minister of India Shri Rajnath Singh. They reviewed the India-Qatar bilateral relations and reiterated their commitment to strengthen the bilateral defence cooperation, including the defence industry relationship. Dr. al-Attiyah also met EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and the two exchanged views on the evolving regional situation.

V. Africa

1. [First India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave held in Lucknow](#)

The 1st India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave (IADMC) was held in Lucknow in conjunction with Defence Expo on February 6, 2020. Participants of the Conclave included Defence Ministers and Heads of Delegation from African countries and Shri Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister of India. Recognizing that peace and security are key priorities for both India and the African countries, the [Lucknow Declaration](#) was signed.

The Declaration called for deeper cooperation in the defence industry; and recognised common security challenges such as terrorism, piracy and organised crime, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, weapon smuggling and others. It called for strengthening the UN Counter-Terrorism mechanisms and strict compliance with the UN Security Council sanctions regime on terrorism. Further, the Lucknow Declaration recognised the importance of Maritime Security for the development of the Blue Economy. In that regard, the defence ministers sought to significantly increase maritime security through mutual cooperation. Finally, enhanced cooperation between India and Africa on the evolving concept of the Indo-Pacific was encouraged and leaders welcomed the African Union's vision for peace and security in the continent which also coincides with India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

On the sidelines of the DefExpo, Shri Rajnath Singh also held bilateral meetings with the Defence Ministers of UAE, UK, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan and Oman.

VI. Multilateral Fora

1. [Munich Security Conference 2020](#)

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar participated in the Munich Security Conference 2020 held in Munich, Germany from February 14-16. In the Conference, Dr. Jaishankar spoke about multilateralism wherein he made a case for greater Western flexibility amidst the ongoing global rebalancing. He argued that multilateralism can be strengthened through plurilateral understanding and creative diplomacy. He also spoke on the Indo-Pacific, underlining its importance in a changing world. The EAM further highlighted India's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region.

During his visit he met Foreign Ministers of Georgia, Lithuania, Armenia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Oman apart from Defence Ministers of Portugal, Singapore and Australia. He also interacted with the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Ms. Nancy Pelosi, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a US Congressional delegation led by Senator Jim Inhofe and the US Special Representative for Afghan peace Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad.



EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar at the panel of the Munich Security Conference 2020 in Germany on February 15, 2020. Source: Dr. S. Jaishankar/Twitter

2. [Visit of the External Affairs Minister to the European Union for a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council](#)

At the invitation of H.E. Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles, European Union's High Representative/Vice President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, visited Brussels on February 17, for a discussion with the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) of the European Union. This was the EAM's first visit to the EU after the assumption of office by the new Commission in December 2019.

EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar shared with the FAC, India's foreign policy priorities and regional and global perspectives. The focus of the exchange was on the common values of India and the European Union and their shared commitment to democracy, multilateralism, a rules-based international order, rules-based international trade with WTO at its core and sustainable development. Both sides expect to deepen their engagement, particularly on common priorities such as addressing climate change, safeguarding multilateralism, cooperation in defence, security, connectivity, digital economy, trade and investment as also in the field of defence, security and addressing the menace of terrorism.

During his visit, the EAM held meetings with Mr. Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President for European Green Deal, Mr. Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Trade, and Mme Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnership. The EAM also called on Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council of Heads of Government of the 27 member states of the European Union and apprised President Michel of his discussions with the FAC. Dr. Jaishankar also met his Belgian counterpart, H.E. Mr Philippe Goffin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Defence of Belgium and exchanged views with a group of Members of the European Parliament.

3. [New World Bank Project to Improve Groundwater Management in Select States of India](#)

On February 17, the Government of India and the World Bank signed a \$450 million loan agreement to support the national programme in combatting India's depleting groundwater levels and strengthen groundwater institutions.

The World Bank-supported Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) – National Groundwater Management Improvement Programme will be implemented in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Karnataka,

Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh and cover 78 districts. The programme will, among others, enhance the recharge of aquifers and introduce water conservation practices; promote activities related to water harvesting, water management, and crop alignment; create an institutional structure for sustainable groundwater management; and equip communities and stakeholders to sustainably manage groundwater.

VII. Institutional Developments in the MEA

1. [Foreign Secretary announces opening of new Embassies in Africa](#)

On February 12, the Foreign Secretary of India, Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla announced that India is opening 18 new embassies in Africa, to take the total number of Indian missions to 47, out of a total of 54 countries in the continent. He further announced that nine of the 18 new missions have already opened. Speaking at the valedictory session of the conference on "Understanding Africa: Continuity and Change" on February 12, 2020, the Foreign Secretary remarked that there was not a single African country that had not been visited by at least one Indian Union Minister. India-Africa trade has also witnessed a 12 percent annual increase and is currently valued at around USD 69 billion.



Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi - 110003
India

www.delhipolicygroup.org