



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



INDIA STRATEGIC REVIEW

APRIL 2023

Author

Deependra Singh Hooda

Volume IV, Issue 4



Delhi Policy Group

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

India Strategic Review

Vol. IV, Issue 4

April 2023

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

Author

Lt. Gen. Deependra Singh Hooda (Retd.), PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM & Bar, Senior Fellow for Military Strategy, Delhi Policy Group

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Delhi Policy Group as an Institution.

INDIA STRATEGIC REVIEW

The DPG India Strategic Review (ISR) is a monthly survey of key developments, trends and policies pertaining to India's immediate and continental neighbourhood based on open-source reports and publications and is authored by Lt. Gen. Deependra Singh Hooda (Retd.) Senior Fellow for Military Strategy. The research team includes Shreyas Deshmukh, Research Associate. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to Shreyas Deshmukh at shreyas@dpg.org.in. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

Cover Image:

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs the National Security Committee meeting in Islamabad on April 3, 2023. Source: The Express Tribune

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held discussions with China's Defence Minister, General Li Shangfu in New Delhi on the sidelines of the SCO meeting on April 27, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@rajnathsingh](#)

Bangladesh Foreign Ministry officials while unveiling Indo-Pacific Outlook on April 24, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@DhakaPrasar](#)

© 2023 by the Delhi Policy Group

Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,

India Habitat Centre,

Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.

www.delhipolicygroup.org

India Strategic Review

Vol. IV, Issue 4

April 2023

Contents

AFGHANISTAN	1
Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid	1
Regional Engagements	2
PAKISTAN	3
Political and Constitutional Crisis	3
Internal Security	4
India-Pakistan Relations	5
STANDOFF AT THE INDIA-CHINA LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL (LAC)	6
Situation at the LAC	6
Defence Ministers' Meeting	7
BANGLADESH	8
Bangladesh and Indo-Pacific.....	8
NEPAL	9
Balancing India and China.....	9
SRI LANKA	10
Assisting Sri Lanka's Economic Recovery	10
BHUTAN	11

India's Strategic Neighbourhood

by

Lt. Gen. Deependra Singh Hooda (Retd.)

AFGHANISTAN

Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid

Despite international condemnation, the restrictions on women remain in place. On April 4, Taliban authorities in Afghanistan issued an order banning women nationals who are UN staff members from continuing to work. In response, the UN warned that it would pull out of Afghanistan in May if the Afghan Taliban did not allow its local women staff to return to work. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, issued a statement, declaring that the UN was launching an operational review to determine whether it can stay in the country despite the ban. The review period expires on May 5.¹

The European Union (EU) has also linked aid to Afghanistan with the removal of the ban imposed on Afghan working women by the Taliban regime. The EU said in a statement, "Activities cannot be continued in line with the EU's principled approach, i.e., providing aid in a non-discriminatory way, regardless of gender, support to those activities will be reconsidered."²

On April 27, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the decision of the Taliban to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan, saying that it undermines human rights and humanitarian principles. It also called on the Taliban to swiftly reverse its policies and practices restricting women and girls' enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms – including those related to their access to education, employment, freedom of movement, and participation in public life.³

A new study, "Afghanistan Socio-Economic Outlook 2023", released on April 18 in Kabul by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has warned that restrictions on women's rights will worsen the economic catastrophe in Afghanistan. The study notes, "There will be no sustainable recovery without the active participation of Afghan women in the economy and public life, which includes delivering on humanitarian and livelihoods-saving projects."⁴

The UNDP study analyzes the potential impact of a hypothetical aid cut on Afghanistan's economy. Using an indicative value of a 30 percent reduction in aid from \$3.7 billion to \$2.6 billion, UNDP projects that Afghanistan's GDP would further contract by 0.4 percent, a decline that would send the country hurtling to the bottom of the global poverty scale.

Despite these grim prospects, the Taliban remain unmoved. A female-run radio station in Afghanistan was shut down for allegedly violating the laws and regulations of the Islamic Emirate by playing music during the holy month of Ramadan. All education centers in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand that were funded by foreign NGOs have been closed.

Responding to the UN Security Council resolution, the Taliban Foreign Ministry said, "While taking note of the condemnation of the decision to restrict Afghan women from working with the UN, we stress that ... this is an internal social matter of Afghanistan that does not impact outside states."⁵

In his speech for Eid-ul-Fitr offered at the Kandahar Grand Congregational Mosque, the Islamic Emirate's Supreme Leader, Mawlawi Hibbatullah Akhundzada, is quoted as saying, "We pledged to Allah that no infidel laws would be allowed to take root in Afghanistan. We will definitely refrain from taking any action that endangers, undermines Islam, or is against Islamic principles."⁶

Taliban's intransigence could hurt the country. Last year, the UN received up to 73% of the \$4.4 billion requested as aid for Afghanistan, but this year so far, it has received only 5.4% of the \$4.6 billion appeal.⁷ Unless restrictions on women are lifted, donors could stay away.

Regional Engagements

On April 13, India signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the UN World Food Programme (WFP) for humanitarian food assistance of 10,000 tonnes of wheat for the people of Afghanistan. The MoU marks the fifth tranche, to be shipped through the Chabahar Port, of humanitarian food assistance that India has committed.⁸

The Fourth Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan's Neighboring States was held on April 13 in Samarkand, the Republic of Uzbekistan. The foreign ministers and senior officials of China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan attended the meeting. While expressing deep concern over the humanitarian situation and promising assistance, the ministers also noted that the terrorism-related security situation in Afghanistan was still severe. Furthermore, they pointed out that terrorist

organizations based in Afghanistan continue to pose a serious threat to regional and global security.⁹

According to a classified Pentagon assessment, Afghanistan has become a significant coordination site for the Islamic State as the terrorist group plans attacks across Europe and Asia and conducts "aspirational plotting" against the United States. The assessment, leaked on the Discord messaging platform, reveals specific efforts to target embassies, churches, business centers, and the FIFA World Cup soccer tournament.¹⁰

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid refuted the Pentagon assessment, calling it "fake" and part of an "ongoing propaganda campaign" against their government. Mujahid said that the Taliban government "has full control" over Afghanistan and does not allow anyone to use its soil for attacks against other countries.¹¹

While it is true that the Taliban are engaged in a battle against the Islamic State in Afghanistan and have recently killed the terrorist leader responsible for planning the attack on Abbey Gate during the evacuation from Kabul airport in August 2021. However, they have turned a blind eye toward other terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

PAKISTAN

Political and Constitutional Crisis

On March 1, the Supreme Court ruled that the elections to the dissolved Punjab and KP assemblies should be held within the stipulated period of 90 days. However, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) postponed the Punjab Assembly elections by more than five months to October 8, citing the "deteriorating security situation" in the country.

The matter was heard by the Supreme Court, which ruled on April 4 that the ECP's decision was "unconstitutional" and fixed May 14 as the date for polls in Punjab. The court also directed that the federal government should provide PKR21 billion in funds by April 10 to the ECP.¹²

Two days after the ruling, Pakistan's National Assembly adopted a resolution rejecting the Supreme Court order to hold elections and demanded a full court panel of all judges to hear the case.¹³ The National Assembly also rejected a motion seeking the release of PKR21 billion in supplementary grants for elections to the Punjab Assembly. In response, the Supreme Court warned the government of "serious consequences" if it failed to release the funds required.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the defence ministry has submitted a report to the Supreme Court along with an application to withdraw its election-date order. The report cites all kinds of security threats, including cross-border terrorism, instability in the country, threats from the TTP, Islamic State fighters returning to Pakistan from several countries, and the ill-designs of the Indian spy agency RAW. The report also states that India would continue with strategic coercion, including through terrorism in Pakistan, and exploit any opportunity at operational and tactical levels for limited military action to all-out war.¹⁵

On April 19, the Supreme Court said it was ready to show flexibility, provided political parties reached a consensus on elections. However, it also made clear it was difficult for the court to go back on its order fixing May 14 as the date for elections to the Punjab Assembly.¹⁶

In signs of growing confrontation between the Judiciary and the Executive, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, the country's foreign minister, said that political dialogue could not be held by pointing "[a] gun to our heads." He added, "This gun is a minority [SC] decision that is being forced upon us."¹⁷ Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also took a swipe at the Supreme Court, stating that it is not their job to arbitrate among political parties.

Internal Security

Pakistan continues to face a surge in terrorism activities. According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, April witnessed a 23% rise in terrorist attacks, a 17% rise in deaths, and a 35% rise in deaths among security personnel.

At least four people were killed and 21 others injured in two attacks targeting the police in Quetta on April 10. According to police, the target of the attack was SP Investigation Naseer Shah of Quetta police, whose vehicle was parked at the Kandahari Bazaar. The SP was not in the vehicle at the time of the attack.¹⁸ The responsibility for the attack was claimed by the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). A day later, at least four police were killed in a gunbattle with terrorists in Quetta when an intelligence-based operation went wrong.¹⁹

The TTP remains active in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On April 8, two soldiers died, and four others were injured when their vehicle was targeted by an improvised explosive device (IED) in Bara tehsil of Khyber tribal district. Three days earlier, eight terrorists and one soldier were killed in an operation in the Shinwarsak area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan district.²⁰

On April 7, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the National Security Committee (NSC) meeting that approved the launch of a multi-dimensional

and comprehensive operation to root out terrorism from the country. Along with the security aspect, the comprehensive operation would also involve efforts at political, economic, diplomatic, and social levels. The meeting expressed a unanimous view that the new wave of terrorism was the result of a soft policy adopted by the previous Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government with the banned outfit TTP.²¹

Despite facing a serious terrorism threat, there is no consensus among the political parties on dealing with this menace. After the NSC meeting, political parties, including allies of the federal government, however, have expressed their concerns over the possible military offensive against militants. The National Democratic Movement said that Pakhtuns had already suffered death, destruction, and displacement on a large scale, and "they are not going to put up with it now."²²

Aimal Wali Khan, provincial president of the Awami National Party, said that any operation against militants would face resistance until and unless those who brought the militants back were brought to justice. The Jamaat-e-Islami staged a protest against the possible resumption of military operations in the South Waziristan tribal district.²³

India-Pakistan Relations

In his address to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers in New Delhi on April 28, Rajnath Singh called for eliminating terrorism. In a pointed reference to Pakistan, Rajnath said, "If a nation shelters terrorists, it not only poses a threat to others, but for itself too."²⁴ These remarks came days after a terror attack in Poonch claimed the lives of five Army soldiers.

Earlier, the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued a press release expressing "strong indignation" at New Delhi's decision to hold the G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar on May 22-24. The scheduling of two other meetings of a consultative forum on youth affairs (Y20) in Leh and Srinagar was termed as "equally disconcerting."

New Delhi has invited Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari to attend the SCO foreign ministers' meeting in Goa in May, which he has accepted. However, no thaw in ties is expected as there is unlikely to be any bilateral meeting. Indian external affairs minister Dr. S. Jaishankar has said, "It is very difficult for us to engage with a neighbour who practices cross-border terrorism against us. We have always said that they have to deliver on the commitment not to encourage, sponsor and carry out cross-border terrorism. We continue to hope that one day we would reach that stage."²⁵

In an explosive interview with UK-based Pakistani media 'UK44', Pakistan journalist Hamid Mir made the startling revelation that the former army chief, General Javed Bajwa had admitted that Pakistan "cannot go to war with India." Citing Bajwa, Mir said that during a conference of commanders, Bajwa confessed that the "Pakistan Army is no match for the Indian Army."²⁶

In an attempt at damage control, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) director general, Maj-Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, briefed the media on April 25. He stated, "Pakistan's forces are prepared to defend every corner of the country. If need be, then we can take this battle into the enemy's territory. We are a battle-hardened army and are forces which are led from the front by the officers."²⁷

In his address at the Pakistan Military Academy on April 29, army chief General Syed Asim Munir stated, "We have the will, capability, and capacity to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we are well aware of the ways and means to do it." He also went on to say, "We will continue to provide political, moral, and diplomatic support to our Kashmiri brothers."²⁸

Currently, there does not appear to be any meeting ground, and relations between India and Pakistan are likely to remain frozen over the issue of terrorism and Kashmir.

STANDOFF AT THE INDIA-CHINA LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL (LAC)

Situation at the LAC

The standoff continues at the LAC with no move forward on the disengagement from the areas of Depsang and Demchok. The 18th round of Corps Commander Level talks was held between India and China on Sunday at the Chushul-Moldo meeting point in Eastern Ladakh on April 23. The last round of talks had been held four months earlier, in December 2022.

A statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, "The two sides had a frank and in-depth discussion on the resolution of the relevant issues along the LAC in the Western Sector so as to restore peace and tranquility in the border areas, which will enable progress in bilateral relations. The two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest." In the interim, the two sides decided "to maintain security and stability on the ground in the Western Sector."²⁹

The wording of the MEA statement is almost exactly the same as the last meeting and indicates no progress on further disengagement.

Prior to the meeting, the atmosphere had been vitiated by China's renaming of 11 places in "Zangnam," which is the Chinese nomenclature for Arunachal Pradesh. The ministry of external affairs rejected the move. MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. Attempts to assign invented names will not alter this reality."³⁰

There was also a sharp exchange of words over home minister Amit Shah's visit to Kibithoo, approximately one kilometer from the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh. While addressing a gathering, Shah said, "We want peace with all; we don't want war. But no one can encroach on even an inch of our territory."

When questioned on the visit, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, "Zangnan is China's territory. The Indian official's visit to Zangnan violates China's territorial sovereignty and is not conducive to the peace and tranquillity of the border situation."³¹

The ongoing situation at the LAC also figured prominently in the meeting between the Indian and Chinese defence ministers in Delhi.

Defence Ministers' Meeting

On April 27, Rajnath Singh met State Councillor and Minister of National Defence of China General Li Shangfu in New Delhi on the sidelines of the SCO meeting. In a blunt statement, Rajnath reiterated that violation of existing agreements had eroded the entire basis of bilateral relations. He categorically conveyed that development of relations between India and China is premised on prevalence of peace and tranquillity at the borders and that all issues at the LAC need to be resolved in accordance with existing bilateral agreements and commitments.³²

According to a statement from the People's Liberation Army on the talks, the Chinese defence minister said, "the situation on the China-India border is generally stable," and they "should take a long-term view, place the border issue in an appropriate position in bilateral relations and promote the transition of the border situation to normalised management."³³

The Global Times quoted Qian Feng, director of the research department at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University, as saying that India constantly uses provocative and inflammatory statements on border issues

with China, partly to portray itself as a victim on the international stage; and partly to cater to domestic anti-China hawks.³⁴

China's attempts to move towards a normalised management of the LAC without further disengagement is in direct contrast to the Indian position that bilateral ties will remain strained till issues at the LAC are resolved. Therefore, it is now up to China to rethink its stance.

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh and Indo-Pacific

On April 24, Bangladesh formally announced its 'Indo-Pacific Outlook'. Dhaka considered four principles as the foundation of the Indo-Pacific Outlook that include Bangladesh's foreign policy dictum - "Friendship towards all, malice toward none", respect for national sovereignty and equality, political independence, and non-interference in internal affairs of other countries.³⁵

The outlook envisions a free, open, peaceful, secure, and inclusive Indo-Pacific for the shared prosperity for all. Among the 15 objectives, the first is to strengthen mutual trust and respect, forge partnerships and cooperation, and promote dialogue and understanding with the aim of ensuring peace, prosperity, security, and stability for all in the Indo-Pacific.

The outlook seeks to promote open, transparent, and rules-based multilateral systems, facilitate the movement of goods and connectivity, and promote dialogue and peace, along with sustainable use of maritime resources.

Bangladesh has attempted to focus on development and economic security and not get drawn into the US allies vs. China security competition. However, some experts feel that Bangladesh is "moving closer to a full embrace of the Indo-Pacific Strategy pursued by the United States and its partners in the region, which revolves around countering China."³⁶ The Bangladesh-Japan Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership issued after the talks between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio on April 26, states, "their commitment to realising a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law, where the rights, freedoms and sovereignty of all countries, regardless of size or power, are protected by international law, rules and norms."³⁷

Hasina is currently in the United States, and any joint references to the Indo-Pacific will be keenly watched.

NEPAL

Balancing India and China

With a degree of political stability having come to Nepal, the country is looking to formulate a foreign policy that strikes a balance between India and China. In an interview *The Associated Press*, foreign minister Narayan Prakash Saud said that the government would continue to maintain good relationships with both countries and would not do anything to hamper ties with either of the neighbors. He stated, "We will never use the two nations against each other for our own benefit. We will not interfere with the internal matters of their countries, and we would also want that no other country should interfere with our internal issues."³⁸ He also confirmed that Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is set to make his first official trip abroad to India.

The increasing Chinese footprint in Nepal is evident from the data released by the Department of Labour and Occupational Safety on the foreign workforce in the country. Of the approximately 10,000 foreign workers, 7,500 are Chinese. No other country has more than 500 workers, and India has 230.³⁹ This gives an indication of the large number of Chinese-funded projects in Nepal.

On April 7, the Foreign Ministries of Nepal and China met in Beijing under the Bilateral Diplomatic Consultative Mechanism. According to a statement issued by Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the progress of different infrastructure development projects was reviewed under China's grant assistance as well as Chinese-contracted projects and agreed to expedite the implementation of the projects to complete them in time.⁴⁰

There was no mention of Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has seen little progress six years after the two countries signed the agreement. A Trade and Transit Agreement was signed with China in 2016, which gave Nepal access to seven Chinese ports for third-country trade. However, not a single shipment has moved between the two countries in the last seven years.⁴¹

In contrast, Nepal and India have completed several flagship projects in recent years. A petroleum products pipeline from Motihari in India to Amlekhgunj in Nepal was completed in 2019, and discussions are underway to extend the pipeline to Chitwan in central Nepal. India has assisted in the construction of 807 km out of the 1,024 km-long East-West Highway in Nepal. In June 2022, a Bharat Gaurav train was flagged off, connecting the holy city of Janakpur in Nepal with Ramayana circuit locations in India.⁴²

The impending visit of Dahal to India and the agenda of discussions could set the tone for India-Nepal relations.

SRI LANKA

Assisting Sri Lanka's Economic Recovery

The Asian Development Bank's annual flagship economic publication, the Asian Development Outlook April 2023, forecasts Sri Lanka's economy to contract further in 2023 before it begins a gradual recovery in 2024. The economy contracted by 7.8% in 2022 and is forecast to contract by 3% in 2023.⁴³

On 13 April, Japan, India, and France announced a common platform for talks among bilateral creditors to coordinate the restructuring of Sri Lanka's debt, a move they hope would serve as a model for solving the debt woes of middle-income economies.

Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki said in a briefing, "To be able to launch this negotiation process gathering such a broad-based group of creditors is a historical outcome." The committee is open to all creditors, but it remains uncertain whether Sri Lanka's biggest bilateral creditor - China - will join the initiative.⁴⁴

India and Japan are also looking at joint cooperation with Sri Lanka to enhance regional connectivity. At a function to mark the launch of the report compiled by the Pathfinder Foundation themed "A Medium and Long-term Strategy for Indo-Japanese Collaboration to Support the Economic Transformation of Sri Lanka," the Indian High Commissioner said India and Japan share wide-ranging interests in a peaceful, progressive and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Asserting that Sri Lanka is an important member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IROA) countries, he said there is a great deal of opportunity for India, Japan, and Sri Lanka to work together for the prosperity of people here and the benefit of all sides.⁴⁵

On April 11, The 5th round of China-Sri Lanka FTA negotiation was held in Colombo. Concerns have been raised about the nature of China's financial assistance and the motivations behind its debt restructuring efforts. Critics argue that China's financial assistance is part of a broader strategy to extend its economic and political influence in the region, with Sri Lanka serving as a key location for China's ambitious BRI.⁴⁶

BHUTAN

During a to Europe in March, Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering stirred a controversy with his remarks that China has an equal say in resolving the boundary dispute at Doklam. Against this backdrop, Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck visited India in the first week of April.

Briefing the media after the talks between Prime Minister Modi and the Bhutanese King, Indian foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra said that there were several deliverables from the King's visit. India would "step up" its support to Bhutan's forthcoming 13th Five-year plan and also "extend an additional standby credit facility." India would work to shape long-term sustainable arrangements for the export of agricultural commodities from Bhutan and develop long-term bilateral arrangements for a short supply of critical commodities to Bhutan, which would include petroleum, fertilizers, and coal.⁴⁷

On the Bhutanese Prime Minister's remarks on the boundary issue, Kwatra said, "As related to recent statements and commentary to them is concerned, I would say that India and Bhutan remain in close touch relating to our shared interests, including security interests. I would only reiterate earlier statements on this issue which very explicitly, clearly bring out our position on trijunction boundary points."

Although the King's visit has reaffirmed the strength of India-Bhutan ties, Doklam remains a security concern for India. The latest pictures accessed by India Today show the PLA's permanent habitation for its troops along with communication towers in the Amo Chu river valley adjoining the Doklam plateau. Close to 1,000 permanent military hutments, as well as multiple temporary sheds, have come up in recent months to house thousands of PLA troops.⁴⁸ This presence is meant to pressurize Bhutan during the boundary negotiations.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Iqbal, Anwar. "UN Warns of Exit from Afghanistan in May." DAWN.COM, 07:10:00+05:00. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1748409>.
- ² Firstpost. "EU Links Aid to Afghanistan with Removal of Taliban's Ban on Working Women," April 9, 2023. <https://www.firstpost.com/world/eu-links-aid-to-afghanistan-with-removal-of-talibans-ban-on-working-women-12430152.html>.
- ³ "Security Council Condemns Decision by Taliban to Ban Afghan Women from Working for United Nations in Afghanistan, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2681 (2023) | UN Press." Accessed May 1, 2023. <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15271.doc.htm>.
- ⁴ UNDP. "UNDP Warns That Restrictions on Women's Rights Will Worsen Economic Catastrophe in Afghanistan | United Nations Development Programme." Accessed May 1, 2023. <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/undp-warns-restrictions-womens-rights-will-worsen-economic-catastrophe-afghanistan>.
- ⁵ Gul, Ayaz. "Taliban Reject UN Resolution Against Curbs on Afghan Women." VOA, April 28, 2023. <https://www.voanews.com/a/taliban-reject-un-resolution-against-curbs-on-afghan-women/7070832.html>.
- ⁶ "Non-Islamic Laws Will Never Be Implemented in Afghanistan," Supreme Leader - The Kabul Times, Afghanistan Trustable News Agency., April 24, 2023. <https://thekabultimes.com/non-islamic-laws-will-never-be-implemented-in-afghanistan-supreme-leader/>.
- ⁷ Bloomberg.com. "Afghan Economy on Verge of Collapse If Aid Drops, UN Warns." April 18, 2023. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-04-18/afghan-economy-on-verge-of-collapse-if-aid-drops-un-warns>.
- ⁸ "India to Send 10,000 Tons of Wheat to Afghanistan | Ariana News," April 15, 2023. <https://www.ariananews.af/india-to-send-10000-tons-of-wheat-to-afghanistan/>.
- ⁹ "4th Afghanistan's Neighboring Countries Ministerial Meeting Stressed the Need to Develop Joint Actions to Assist the Country." News Central Asia (NCA) (blog), April 14, 2023. <https://www.newscentralasia.net/2023/04/14/4th-afghanistans-neighboring-countries-ministerial-meeting-stressed-the-need-to-develop-joint-actions-to-assist-the-country/>.
- ¹⁰ Washington Post. "Afghanistan Has Become a Terrorism Staging Ground Again, Leak Reveals," April 22, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/04/22/afghanistan-terrorism-leaked-documents/>.
- ¹¹ Gul, Ayaz. "Taliban Reject Leaked US Assessment IS Using Afghanistan as Terror Base." VOA, April 23, 2023. <https://www.voanews.com/a/taliban-reject-leaked-us-assessment-is-using-afghanistan-as-terror-base/7062845.html>.
- ¹² The Indian Express. "Pakistan Supreme Court Declares Election Commission's Decision Delaying Punjab Polls Null and Void," April 4, 2023. <https://indianexpress.com/article/pakistan/pakistan-sc-election-commission-polls-void-8537684/>.
- ¹³ "Pakistan Parliament Rejects Court Order for Snap Provincial Polls." Accessed April 27, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/6/pakistan-parliament-rejects-court-order-for-snap-provincial-polls>.
- ¹⁴ Standard, Business. "Pakistan SC Warns Govt of Serious Consequences If Poll Funds Not Released," April 19, 2023. https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/pakistan-sc-warns-govt-of-serious-consequences-if-poll-funds-not-released-123041900689_1.html.
- ¹⁵ Iqbal, Nasir. "Report to SC Warned of 'Cross-Border Terrorism, All-out War with India.'" DAWN.COM, 06:52:14+05:00. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1748620>.
- ¹⁶ Iqbal, Nasir. "SC Stays Firm but Leaves Room for Consensus." DAWN.COM, 07:52:43+05:00. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1748641>.
- ¹⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/author/398>. "Politicians Stick to Their Guns on Polls." The Express Tribune, April 21, 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2413014/politicians-stick-to-their-guns-on-polls>.
- ¹⁸ Shahid, Saleem. "Four Dead, 21 Injured in Twin Quetta Blasts." DAWN.COM, 07:48:25+05:00. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1747067>.
- ¹⁹ Zehri, Abdullah. "4 Policemen Dead in Gunbattle with Terrorists during Quetta Operation." DAWN.COM, 12:24:34+05:00. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1747089>.
- ²⁰ APP. "2 Soldiers Martyred in IED Blast in KP's Khyber District: ISPR." DAWN.COM, 22:57:51+05:00. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1746596>.
- ²¹ "Soft Policy on TTP Resulted in New Terror Wave: NSC." Accessed May 1, 2023. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1058332-soft-policy-on-ttp-resulted-in-new-terror-wave-nsc>.
- ²² Farooq, Umer. "Political Parties Concerned over New Military Operation." DAWN.COM, 07:55:00+05:00. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1746863>.
- ²³ Ibid

- ²⁴ The Indian Express. "Pak Listening, Rajnath to SCO: End Terror, Fix Accountability," April 28, 2023. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/rajnath-singh-sco-defence-ministers-meeting-pakistan-8580418/>.
- ²⁵ The Wire. "Ahead of Bilawal's Visit Next Month, Jaishankar Says 'Very Difficult' To Engage With Pakistan." Accessed May 1, 2023. <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/jaishankar-bilawal-bhutto-visit-india-pakistan>.
- ²⁶ ANI. "Pakistan Army No Match for Indian Army... ' Pak Journalists Reveal Gen Bajwa's Remarks." ThePrint (blog), April 24, 2023. <https://theprint.in/world/pakistan-army-no-match-for-indian-army-pak-journalists-reveal-gen-bajwas-remarks/1536406/>.
- ²⁷ "Pak Army Is National Army, All Parties Are Respectable: DG ISPR." The Express Tribune, April 24, 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2413536/pak-army-is-national-army-all-political-parties-are-respectable-dg-ispr>.
- ²⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/author/1071>. "Bond with People to Be Solidified: COAS." The Express Tribune, April 29, 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2414245/passing-out-parade-held-at-pma>.
- ²⁹ India Today. "India, China Hold 18th Round of Military Talks on LAC Issues Ahead of SCO Defence Ministers' Meet." Accessed May 2, 2023. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-china-hold-18th-round-of-military-level-talks-to-resolve-eastern-ladakh-standoff-2363685-2023-04-23>.
- ³⁰ The Wire. "For the Third Time, China Renames Places in Arunachal Pradesh." Accessed May 2, 2023. <https://thewire.in/security/for-the-third-time-china-renames-places-in-arunachal-pradesh>.
- ³¹ News18. "No One Can Usurp Even An Inch of Indian Territory': Home Minister in Arunachal, China Sees Red," April 10, 2023. <https://www.news18.com/india/no-one-can-usurp-even-an-inch-of-indian-territory-home-minister-in-arunachal-china-sees-red-7512643.html>.
- ³² "Raksha Mantri Meets China's State Councillor & Minister of National Defence Ahead of SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi." Accessed May 2, 2023. <https://pib.gov.in/pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1920322>.
- ³³ The Indian Express. "Express View on India-China Defence Ministers' Talks: A Fragile Peace," April 29, 2023. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/express-view-on-india-china-defence-ministers-talks-a-fragile-peace-8581883/>.
- ³⁴ Times, Global. "Chinese Defense Minister Urges to Bring China-India Border Situation under Normalized Management in Meeting with Indian Defense Chief - Global Times." Accessed May 2, 2023. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202304/1289946.shtml>.
- ³⁵ Correspondent, Diplomatic. "Dhaka for 'Free, Inclusive' Indo-Pacific Region." The Daily Star, April 25, 2023. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/dhaka-free-inclusive-indo-pacific-region-3303716>.
- ³⁶ Financialexpress. "Bangladesh Unveils Indo-Pacific Strategy; Expert Says It Is Still Trying to Placate China," April 25, 2023. <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/defence-bangladesh-unveils-indo-pacific-strategy-expert-says-it-is-still-trying-to-placate-china-3062557/>.
- ³⁷ Ahmed, Kamal. "How Different Is Dhaka's Outlook from the US Indo-Pacific Strategy?" Asia News Network, May 2, 2023. <https://asianews.network/how-different-is-dhakas-outlook-from-the-us-indo-pacific-strategy/>.
- ³⁸ News18. "Nepal to Give Priority to Relations with India and China, Says Foreign Minister," April 27, 2023. <https://www.news18.com/world/nepal-to-give-priority-to-relations-with-india-and-china-says-foreign-minister-7655101.html>.
- ³⁹ Samiti, Rastriya Samachar. "Ten Thousand Foreign Workers in Nepal, Highest from China." The Himalayan Times, April 3, 2023. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/ten-thousand-foreign-workers-in-nepal-highest-from-china>.
- ⁴⁰ Bhattacharjee, Dwaipayan. "Sino-Nepali Officials Discuss Bilateral Cooperation," April 8, 2023. <https://www.bizzbuzz.news/economy/sino-nepali-officials-discuss-bilateral-cooperation-1210181>.
- ⁴¹ ANI. "Nepal: Seven Years since Transit Deal with China, No Shipment Has Moved." ThePrint (blog), April 22, 2023. <https://theprint.in/world/nepal-seven-years-since-transit-deal-with-china-no-shipment-has-moved/1534364/>.
- ⁴² The Annapurna Express. "Nepal-India Connectivity Projects Gaining Momentum." Accessed May 3, 2023. <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/news/nepal-india-connectivity-projects-gaining-momentum-40649>.
- ⁴³ "Sri Lanka : Sri Lanka's Journey to Recovery Has Just Started." Accessed May 3, 2023. http://www.colombopage.com/archive_23A/Apr05_1680645563CH.php.
- ⁴⁴ "Japan, India and France Announce Common Platform for Sri Lanka Creditors - Breaking News | Daily Mirror." Accessed May 4, 2023. https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Japan-India-and-France-announce-common-platform-for-Sri-Lanka-creditors/108-257597.
- ⁴⁵ "India, Japan Announces Joint Interest in Cooperation with Sri Lanka for Free, Open Indo-Pacific - Breaking News | Daily Mirror." Accessed May 4, 2023. https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/India-Japan-announces-joint-interest-in-co-operation-with-Sri-Lanka-for-free-open-Indo-Pacific/108-256914.
- ⁴⁶ ANI. "China Pushes Sri Lanka to Sign FTA in Guise of Debt Restructuring." ThePrint (blog), April 11, 2023. <https://theprint.in/world/china-pushes-sri-lanka-to-sign-fta-in-guise-of-debt-restructuring/1512782/>.
- ⁴⁷ The Wire. "During Bhutan King's Visit, India Reaffirms Earlier Stance on Trijunction Boundary Points." Accessed May 4, 2023. <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/bhutan-king-india-trijunction-boundary-points>.

⁴⁸ India Today. "Massive Chinese Build-up near Doklam Rings Alarm Bells in Indian Military." Accessed May 4, 2023. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/massive-chinese-build-up-near-doklam-rings-alarm-bells-in-indian-military-2358366-2023-04-11>.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org