



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

India's Proximity Archives

February 15, 2023



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Delhi Policy Group
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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.

India's Proximity Archives

India's Proximity Archives covers major developments in South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, China, and Central Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open-source media. The research team includes Angana Guha Roy, Ph.D., Shreyas Deshmukh, Sanket Joshi, Anshita Shukla and Jayantika Rao T.V, Research Associates. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

Cover Image:

South Asia: The Fifth Multilateral Consultations of National Security Advisors on Afghanistan was held in Moscow on February 8, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@ANI](https://twitter.com/ANI)

Southeast Asia: 3rd ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting (ADGMIN) was held in Boracay Island, Philippines on February 9-10, 2023. Source: [ASEAN Official Website](https://asean.org/)

West Asia: Head of Israel's SIBAT Brig. Gen. (Retd.) Yair Kulas met India's Deputy Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Narmadeshwar Tiwari at Aero India on February 13, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@Israel MOD](https://twitter.com/Israel_MOD)

China: US National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby confirmed that the Chinese spy balloon is linked to intelligence collection. Source: [AP News](https://apnews.com/)

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 3

West Asia

Sanket Joshi 5

China

Angana Guha Roy 7

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 9

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The [5th Multilateral Meeting](#) of National Security Advisers on Afghanistan (Moscow Format) was held on February 8 with participation from regional countries including India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. India's [National Security Advisor Ajit Doval](#), who attended the meeting in Moscow, emphasised that the territory of Afghanistan should not become a source of radicalisation and terrorism, regionally or globally, and called for intensifying intelligence and security cooperation to deal with terror outfits.

On the sideline, NSA Doval held meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev to discuss bilateral and regional issues. Pakistan [did not participate](#) in the meeting, probably with objections over Indian participation.

Meanwhile, according to the UN report ISIS-K has [threatened](#) to target the Embassies of China, India, and Iran in Afghanistan to isolate the Taliban.

Pakistan is still [discussing the terms](#) and conditions with IMF to get the next tranche of EFF USD 1.2 billion. The Government has decided to [implement tax and non-tax measures](#) from February 15 instead of March 1 for the early release of funds. The second round of the [US-Pakistan](#) mid-level defence dialogue was held on February 13-16 in Washington.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra visited [Nepal](#) on February 13-14, and [Bangladesh](#) on 15-16. FS Kwatra [held meetings](#) with his Nepali counterpart Bharat raj Paudyal, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and President Bidhya Devi Bhandari to discuss bilateral issues including connectivity, trade and transit, and power sector cooperation among others. In Bangladesh, Mr. Kwatra met counterpart [Masud bin Momen](#).

The political clashes between Awami League and BNP were reported in [multiple cities](#) of Bangladesh on February 11. Meanwhile, in Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks clashed with police near the parliament in Colombo during protests against the full implementation of the [13th Amendment](#).

Other Developments

[European Union's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Tomas Niklasson visited India on February 10-11.](#)

[2 terror suspects held by NIA who were planning to leave for Afghanistan to join AQ](#)

[Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee \(CJCSC\) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza visited Sri Lanka on February 10.](#)

[Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on February 13 interacted with Nepal and Sri Lanka Defence Ministers Hari Prasad Uprety and Premitha Bandara Tennakoon, respectively, on the sidelines of Aero India 2023 in Bengaluru.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The [4th ASEAN-India Youth Summit](#) themed "Strengthening ASEAN-India Partnership in the Indo-Pacific" was inaugurated on February 12 in Hyderabad. Addressing the summit virtually, the [Secretary-General of ASEAN](#), Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, highlighted the importance of the "youth playing a greater role with a passion to bring desirable changes to the Indo-Pacific region with an objective to achieve global peace." 100 youths from ASEAN member states gathered for the summit will explore ways to enhance physical, economic, digital, and socio-cultural connectivity between ASEAN and India, in order to strengthen the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

ASEAN convened the [3rd ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting](#) (ADGMIN) in the Philippines from February 6- 10. The theme of this year's meeting is "Synergy Towards a Sustainable Digital Future". During the ADGMIN meeting with India on February 10, the two sides approved the [India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2023](#). The workplan includes capacity building and knowledge sharing in emerging areas in the field of Information and Communication Technologies.

During the Philippines President Marcos' five-day visit to Tokyo, the two countries signed a [humanitarian assistance and disaster relief agreement](#). The agreement allowed the two nations to set Terms of Reference (TOR) allowing Japan to deploy troops to the Philippines for humanitarian and disaster relief operations. President Marcos Jr has expressed his [willingness to extend Visiting Forces Agreement \(VFA\)](#) to Japan to boost maritime security and ensure greater protection for Filipino fishermen. This comes a week after the Philippines granted the US access to additional bases under VFA.

The Philippines Coast Guard has accused China's Coast Guard of using a "[military grade](#)" laser to try to disrupt a resupply mission to troops in the South China Sea (SCS). The Philippines military spokesperson, [Medel Aguilar](#) urged the Chinese government to "restrain its forces so that it does not commit any provocative act". While the [spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) stated that "Chinese Coast Guard vessel exercised professional restraint during on-site operations, facing a Philippines Coast Guard vessel entering waters near the Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea on February 6 without permission".

Other Developments

[Myanmar junta to allow 'loyal' civilians to carry licensed arms, says leaked document](#)

[Malaysian PM Anwar seeks to revive idea of Asian Monetary Fund](#)

[Myanmar inaugurates Russia-led nuclear power information center](#)

[Vietnam PM Chinh seals green deals on Singapore visit](#)

[Thailand, Malaysia leaders agree to bolster bilateral trade](#)

[Indonesia, East Timor to expand economic ties at two border islands](#)

[Singapore-registered container vessel collides with Bahamian ship in Vietnam waters](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on February 8. The two leaders discussed ways to strengthen the [multifaceted India-Israel relationship](#), focusing on high-tech innovation, defence and security. Marking 30 years of [India-Israel defence cooperation](#), Israeli defence industries are exhibiting their innovative technologies at the "Aero India" exhibition in Bengaluru.

Addressing a defence minister's conclave at Aero India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reiterated the vision of ["Make in India, Make for the World"](#). To boost [defence exports](#), India is in talks with Egypt and Argentina for the sale of indigenously-built Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) 'Tejas'.

India continued its Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operation in [Turkey and Syria](#). The death toll from last week's earthquake in Turkey and Syria has crossed 35,000.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on February 14. The two leaders agreed to deepen [China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership](#) and oppose unilateralism, hegemony, and external forces that interfere in their domestic affairs. Earlier, marking the 44th anniversary of the [1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran](#), President Raisi reiterated that the "country's enemies have failed to stop its progress" and are "trying to sow chaos similar to Iraq and Afghanistan".

The United States and its Gulf allies, at a working group meeting, expressed concerns over [Iran's destabilising activities](#) in the Middle East. In light of this, Washington reiterated its intent to "integrate different air defence systems currently used in the Gulf". Amidst mounting tensions between Israel and Iran, the United States and Qatar reportedly held discussions over kickstarting the [stalled Iran nuclear deal \(JCPOA\) talks](#).

The foreign ministries of the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy issued a joint statement opposing Israel's [settlement activities in the West Bank](#) (Judea and Samaria). The five countries stated that Israel's settlements "exacerbate tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, undermining efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution". UN Secretary-

General Antonio Guterres, on his part, reiterated that “all of Israel’s settlements are [illegal under international law](#) and a substantial obstacle to peace”.

Other Developments

[OPEC raises forecast for China-led oil demand growth in 2023](#)

[Russia, Saudi Arabia step-up military-technical cooperation](#)

[Iran smuggles advanced drones to Russian forces using boats, airlines](#)

[Suspected Iranian weapons seized by U.S. Navy may go to Ukraine](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

After downing the Chinese 'spy balloon', US fighter jets also shot down three unidentified objects that traversed the US airspace. The White House spokesperson [John Kirby](#) stressed that the intelligence community thinks that the three objects shot down "could just be balloons tied to some commercial or benign purpose." However, Kirby confirmed that China has a high-altitude [balloon programme](#) for intelligence gathering that is connected to the PLA, and that the balloons have "limited capabilities" but could become more valuable as technology advances.

Fueling a new debate on Beijing's [nuclear buildup](#), the US military has notified Congress that China now has more land-based intercontinental-range missile launchers than the US. The notification comes as the U.S. faces the challenge of deterring Russian and Chinese nuclear forces.

China has started working on a new [railway line](#) between Xinjiang and Tibet that is expected to enable faster deployment of the PLA. It will run through the disputed Aksai Chin region close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India.

[Amitabh Kant](#), India's G20 Sherpa called on China to be willing to take losses on loans to struggling economies and avoid taking positions that would block relief for nations such as Zambia and Sri Lanka.

According to a report published by a magazine in Nepal, China's major investments in Nepal for boosting its economy may be aimed at asserting its influence. The report emphasised that these [infrastructure investments](#) will result in major imports and fewer exports. China's significant investment in Nepal is in projects that include building highways, tunnels, dams, and railway lines, with the most significant being Nepal-China trans-Himalayan multi-dimensional connectivity system.

According to a [report](#) published by Maldives Voice, the domestic political rivalry between Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, the current President of Maldives and Mohamed Nasheed, both belonging to the same party is benefitting China. The report claims that, China's interference in Maldives domestic politics became rampant under the Yameen regime. The FTA signed between the two countries

under Yameen who acted as a proxy for China, led to Maldives' heavy debt to China, the report added.

Other Developments

[Sri Lanka Chamber urges IMF to proceed, China to give full debt assurances](#)

[Sri Lanka expects more tourists and cooperation from China – Consul General in Shanghai](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

India and Kazakhstan held the [8th Foreign Office Consultations](#) (FOCs) on February 13 and reiterated their commitment to strengthen India-Kazakhstan relations and deepen strategic partnership. The Indian side was led by Mr. Sanjay Verma, Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs and the Kazakh side by Deputy Foreign Minister Kanat Tumysh. During the FOCs, the two sides reviewed all bilateral cooperation agreements within the framework of their Strategic Partnership, and expressed satisfaction at the present level of engagement.

The Afghan Railway Administration and Sogdiana Trans (a subsidiary of Uzbekistan Temir Yollari) [signed an agreement on February 12 to continue operating the Hairatan-Mazar-i-Sharif railway](#). Per the new contract, Sogdiana Trans will service this section for another two years. The parties agreed to accelerate the [joint restoration of the Mazar-i-Sharif terminal station](#) and to train specialists from the Afghan Railway Administration. The announcement comes a few weeks after the Uzbeki side announced a [suspension of cargo transportation along the Hairatan line](#). Later the Uzbeki side clarified that as the Afghan Railway Authorities did not issue the new agreement with Sogdiana Trans, it lapsed, which has now been resolved.

During a meeting between [Iran's Ambassador to Tajikistan](#), Mohammad Taghi Saberi, and the Tajik Foreign Minister, Sirojiddin Muhriddin, the two sides discussed bilateral cooperation in different fields, including culture. Both sides called to further expand the Iran-Tajikistan bilateral relations and cooperation. The Tajik authorities have been hoping to strengthen its alliance with Iran which could be an additional security guarantor amidst Russia's war with Ukraine since last year.

Other Developments

[Armenia pushes for Infrastructure Talks with India](#)

[Kazakhstan delivers urgent humanitarian aid to earthquake-struck Syria.](#)

[Azerbaijan's President visits Turkish Embassy, pledges support amidst quake disaster.](#)

[Sanctioned Russian buys into Kazakh airport in border region.](#)

[Uzbekistan to set up Special Industrial Zone for Hungarian firms near Tashkent.](#)



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