



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

April 12, 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: *US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a meeting with Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Washington, DC, US, April 10, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@SecBlinken](https://twitter.com/SecBlinken)*

Southeast Asia: The Minister of Public Security of Vietnam General to Lam pays a courtesy call to the Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankar on April 11, 2023. Source: [Ministry of Public Security Vietnam](https://www.mps.gov.vn/)

West Asia: Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang has a group meeting with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Beijing on April 6, 2023. Source: [Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Islamic Republic of Iran](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/)

Central Asia: President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev agreed to establish the Supreme Interstate Council on April 10, 2023. Source: [Akorda](https://www.akorda.gov.kz/)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On April 4, the Taliban circulated a decree banning all female staff members from working with the [UN agencies](#). In response, the UN Special Representative for Afghanistan has initiated an operational review period until May 5, 2023, to accelerate [contingency planning](#) and instructed all UN employees not to go to the office.

The summary of a classified [US report](#) on its withdrawal from Afghanistan published by the Biden administration on April 6 concluded that the chaotic exit from Kabul was due to a [lack of planning](#) and the withdrawal timeline agreed to by former President Trump with the Taliban. Following the release, Secretary of State [Antony Blinken](#) said that, "more could and should have been done" by the State Department to prepare for a worst-case scenario in Afghanistan.

As political chaos continues in Pakistan, Finance Minister [cancelled a scheduled trip](#) to Washington from April 10-16 to attend spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank. The higher judiciary of Pakistan is also divided into [political lines](#) adding to the disorder. Pakistan has responded to [India's notice](#) seeking modifications in the Indus Water Treaty, saying it is ready to listen to New Delhi's concerns.

A diplomatic spat has erupted between Bangladesh and the US, as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her parliament speech on April 10 [directly criticized](#) the latter for interfering in upcoming national elections. Meanwhile, on April 10, Bangladesh Foreign Minister, AK Abdul Momen, during his visit to the US, told Secretary Antony Blinken that his government is committed to holding [transparent and credible elections](#) and welcomed election observers from the US.

Other Developments

[The U.N. food agency on April 10 said it urgently needs \\$800 million for the next six months to help Afghanistan.](#)

[Adani Power has started exporting electricity to Bangladesh from its coal-fired power plant at Godda in Jharkhand, it is the first private energy deal between the two countries.](#)

[Two warships of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, JS Uruga and JS Awaji visited Chittagong Port from April 9-11.](#)

[Sri Lanka's election body on April 11 said the local body polls scheduled to be held on April 25 have now been postponed indefinitely due to an acute shortage of funds.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The ASEAN Secretary General, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, met with a [Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation](#) (BIMSTEC) delegation headed by the Secretary-General of BIMSTEC, Tenzin Lekphell on April 10. The BIMSTEC delegation is on a working visit to the ASEAN Secretariat from April 10-11 to learn about ASEAN mechanisms, experiences and best practices. The visit is intended to explore ways of potential future collaboration between ASEAN and BIMSTEC.

The Minister of Public Security of Vietnam, General To Lam, commenced an official visit to India on April 10. During his visit, Minister To Lam paid [a courtesy call](#) to the Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankar, and underscored the significance of strengthening the India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The Vietnamese Minister discussed [bilateral security cooperation](#) and exchanged views on some global and regional issues with Ajit Doval, the National Security Advisor of India.

Vietnam treads the line of balancing great power competition as Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh held [telephonic conversations](#) with his counterparts in China and the US. On April 4, Pham Minh Chinh spoke to Chinese Premier Li Qiang and discussed ways in which China could further promote imports, open up its market to Vietnamese farm goods and increase the quota on Vietnamese goods. This was a week after a phone call between Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and U.S. President Joe Biden to discuss the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, developments in the Indo-Pacific region, and the necessity of ensuring the freedom of navigation. The [US State Department](#) has announced Secretary of State Antony Blinken's official visit in the upcoming week to Vietnam "to advance key discussions with our Vietnamese partners as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Comprehensive Partnership".

The Philippines and the US commenced [the 38th annual Balikatan exercises](#) on April 11, a day after China concluded its exercises around Taiwan. The exercises will witness the [participation of 17,600 troops](#), double last year's levels, from both countries making it the biggest exercise in 30 years. This year Balikatan exercises aim to enhance interoperability in areas such as live-fire drills and maritime security between the two countries.

Other Developments

[Myanmar army, rebel fighting flares; thousands flee to Thailand](#)

[Indonesia court overturns controversial order to delay 2024 presidential election](#)

[Philippines will not let US access military sites for 'offensive action'](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On April 6, Chinese [Foreign Minister Qin Gang](#) hosted Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Beijing. After the meeting, Saudi Arabia and Iran signed a joint statement [resuming their diplomatic relations](#) with immediate effect. Beijing reiterated that improved relations between Riyadh and Tehran is a case of best practice of the 'Global Security Initiative' (GSI) providing "stronger safeguards for regional peace and stability" and setting an "example for countries to resolve conflicts through dialogue and consultation". Further, Saudi Arabia and the Houthi rebels are reportedly advancing toward a [long-term ceasefire in Yemen](#).

On the other hand, [CIA Director William Burns](#) reportedly expressed Washington's displeasure at Saudi Arabia's reconciliation with Iran. The US deployed [guided-missile submarine](#) to the Middle East in light of the continuing tensions with Iran.

On April 8, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, extended ['Ramadan' greetings](#) during an Iftar hosted by UAE's Embassy in New Delhi. UAE's Ambassador to India, Abdalnasser Alshaali, expressed Abu Dhabi's appreciation toward India's efforts in organising the forthcoming [G20 Summit](#).

Amidst clashes between the Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem, the Israeli military targeted [Hamas sites in Lebanon and Gaza](#) in response to more than 30 rockets fired into Israel from Lebanon. Further, seven people were injured and an Italian tourist was killed in a [terror attack in Tel Aviv](#).

Other Developments

[Legal process for former Indian Navy sailors in Qatar started: MEA](#)

[GCC condemns Israeli escalations and violation of Al-Aqsa Mosque's sanctity](#)

[Hundreds of Jews visit Temple Mount after Palestinian riots in al-Aqsa](#)

[Israel's Mossad denies role in protests against the judicial overhaul](#)

[Saudi-U.S. Relations Sour Further on Huge OPEC+ production cut](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

India's Home Minister, Amit Shah, launched the [Vibrant Village Programme \(VVP\)](#) in Kibithoo, Arunachal Pradesh, on April 10. Issuing a strong warning to China, Mr. Amit Shah stressed that "ITBP and Indian soldiers at the borders would thwart all attempts to acquire Indian territory", adding, "nobody can even touch a minuscule piece of our land". India rejected [China's condemnation](#) of the Home Minister's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, saying it did not stand to reason and was not going to change the reality that this north-eastern state was and will remain an integral part of India.

Massive Chinese construction in the [Amo Chu river valley](#) in Bhutan has elicited concern in Indian military. Amo Chu abuts the strategic Doklam plateau, from where India's Siliguri corridor is in the direct line of sight of People's Liberation Army.

After concluding three days of live-fire drills near Taiwan, China has warned that peace and stability in the [Taiwan Strait](#) and independence for Taiwan are "mutually exclusive". Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that "If we want to protect peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, we must firmly oppose any form of Taiwan independence separatism."

Officials from Nepal and China held the [15th meeting of the Bilateral Diplomatic Consultation Mechanism](#) meeting on April 7 to discuss existing bilateral ties and cooperation and deliberated on the ways to further expand and consolidate cooperation in various areas such as trade promotion, investment and connectivity. The meeting also reviewed the progress of various infrastructure development projects under China's grant assistance, as well as Chinese-contracted projects and agreed to expedite the implementation of the projects so as to complete them in time.

China is considering setting up a [radar base](#) in Sri Lanka to monitor India's presence in the Indian Ocean Region and the activities of the Indian Navy, besides strategic assets in the Southern part of the country, including Kudankulam and Kalpakkam nuclear power plants. The proposed radar will also be able to track US military activities in Diego Garcia. The Aerospace Information Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences could be involved in this project in the jungles near Dondra Bay of Sri Lanka.

Other Developments

[China's arms game with Bangladesh getting dangerous. BNS Sheikh Hasina is just a start](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On April 10, the Russian government sent the agreement between Russia and Kyrgyzstan to create the regional [united air defence system](#) to President Vladimir Putin for submission to the State Duma for ratification. Despite not having a common border, the two countries had agreed to create a shared regional air defence system in Moscow on August 16, 2022.

[On April 10](#), President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev signed the 'Protocol on the establishment of the Supreme Interstate Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Kazakhstan' and a joint statement. [During the meeting](#), the heads of state discussed avenues to strengthen political, trade, economic, transport and transit, and cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries.

The [India Central Foundation](#) organised an international 3-day seminar titled "Understanding Central Asian Perspectives on Eurasia" from April 11-13. The conference will discuss contemporary and historical perspectives driving today's geopolitical, economic and diplomatic issues and how they impact India. According to the statement, as Central Asia is caught between two conflict zones, the region has been experiencing a sense of vulnerability regarding security and the absence of economic interaction. The [statement questioned](#) how the strengthened strategic partnership between Russia and China would impact Central Asia.

In an [interview with Al-Jazeera](#), Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko emphasised that the nation has opted for a "multivector foreign policy", allowing the country to build normal relations with Russia, China and even the West. Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko also argued that the Russia-Ukraine War has made it "obvious that the world doesn't have a plan B"; hence, we must "if not reinvent the UN, somehow strengthen the UN and strengthen the international system".

Other Developments

[Naval Forces of Kazakhstan Mark 30th Anniversary](#)

[Swiss Ambassador Completes Mission in Kazakhstan](#)

[Russia's Parallel Imports Hindered by Central Asia's Bottleneck](#)

[World Bank says Ukraine, Russia boost Eastern Europe, Central Asia Growth Outlook](#)

[Ambassador-at-Large Murat Mukushev Appointed as Kazakhstan's National Coordinator for SCO](#)



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