



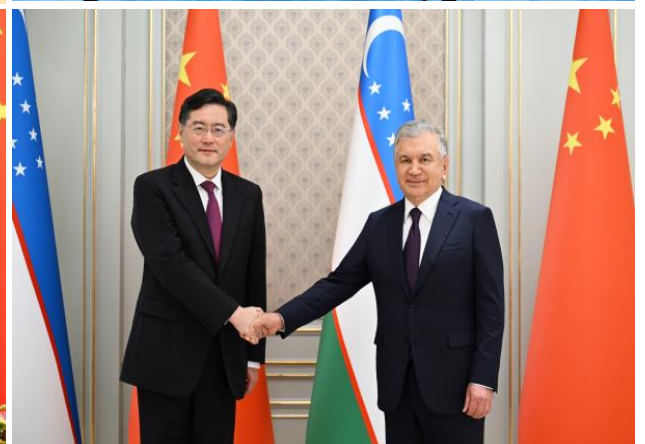
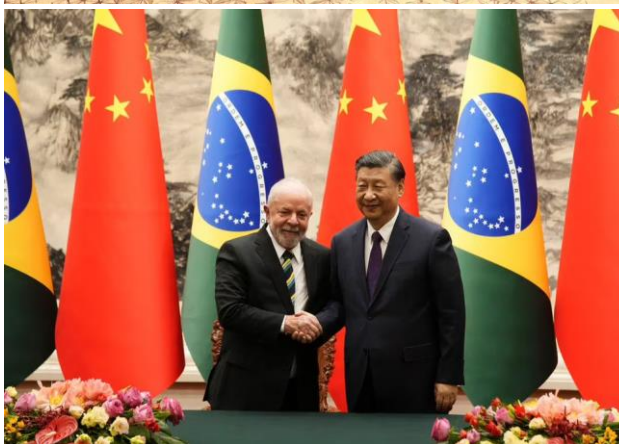
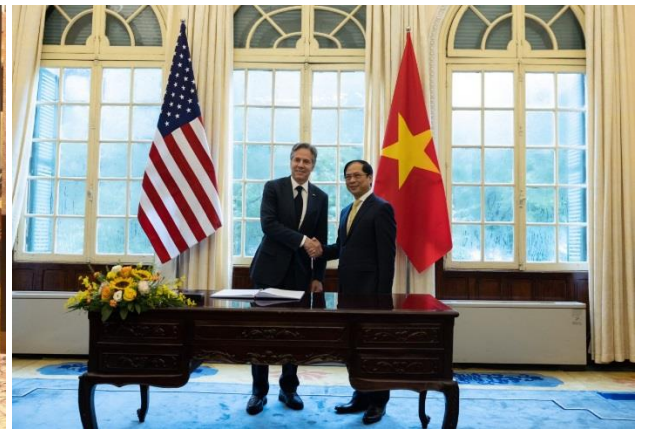
# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## India's Proximity Archives

### April 19, 2023



Volume I, Issue 16 | April 19, 2023



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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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Image:

**South Asia:** *The Fourth Foreign Ministers' Meeting of neighboring Countries of Afghanistan was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on April 13, 2023. Source: [Tehran Times](#)*

**Southeast Asia:** *U.S. Secretary of State visits Foreign Minister of Vietnam Bui Thanh Son in Hanoi on April 15, 2023. (Source: [Anthony Blinken/Official Twitter](#))*

**China:** *Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, left, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping after a signing ceremony held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, on April 14, 2023. Source: [El Pais](#)*

**Central Asia:** *President Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan met with State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Tashkent on April 12, 2023. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China](#).*

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## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The [Fourth Foreign Ministers' Meeting](#) of neighboring Countries of Afghanistan was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on April 13. Foreign ministers and senior officials from China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan attended. Apart from discussing the current situation in Afghanistan, the members supported the initiative of Uzbekistan to create an '[International Negotiation Group](#)' under the auspices of the UN, and Tajikistan's initiative on creating a 'security belt' around Afghanistan.

On the sidelines, the [second quadrilateral Informal Meeting](#) on Afghanistan between Foreign Ministers of China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran was held on April 13. The [Joint Statement](#) called on "Afghan authorities to promote inclusive governance, allowing all ethnic and political groups to participate substantively and cancel all restrictive measures against women and minorities." Earlier on April 12, China issued a [White Paper](#) to clarify its "(China's) Position on the Afghan Issue". Meanwhile, Taliban's Ministry of Mines and Petroleum on April 14 said that a Chinese Company, Gochin, expressed its interest in investing [USD 10 billion](#) in Afghanistan's lithium deposits.

In the G-7 Foreign Ministers meeting held on April 17, Japan's foreign minister called for [direct engagement](#) with the interim Taliban administration in Afghanistan. India [signed an MOU](#) with the WFP, on April 13, for sending 10,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan.

Pakistan is mulling on its anti-terrorism policy. On April 14, COAS Gen Syed Asim Munir during an in-camera briefing to members of the National Assembly [acknowledged](#) that a strategy to engage with terrorists had allowed them to regroup in the tribal areas. The US Vice President Kamala Harris has been briefed on April 15, about the [current political situation](#) in Pakistan by a delegation of California legislators who recently visited Pakistan.

## Other Developments

[A Chinese national in Pakistan was taken into police custody on April 17 following the unrest, after labourers at the work site accused him of making blasphemous remarks.](#)

[The inaugural UK-Sri Lanka Strategic Dialogue at the Foreign Secretary level held on April 18, 2023 at the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\) in London.](#)

[The 4th Japan-Nepal Political Dialogue between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs was held in Tokyo on April 18, 2023.](#)

[Japan, India, and France on April 13 announced a common platform for talks among bilateral creditors to coordinate the restructuring of Sri Lanka's debt.](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

A military air strike on Pa Zi Gyi Village, Sagaing Region in Myanmar on April 11 was characterised as the deadliest ever with an estimated [death toll of 130 civilians](#). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) issued a strong condemnation. "All forms of violence must end immediately, particularly the use of force against civilians", read the [statement by the ASEAN](#) Chair. The ASEAN statement reinstated the group's commitment towards the full implementation of the Five-Point consensus.

The third [US- Philippines 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue](#) was convened in Washington D.C. on April 11 after a hiatus of seven years. The meeting was co-chaired by Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Manalo, and Senior Undersecretary and Officer in Charge (OIC) of National Defence Galvez. During the 2+2 discussion, the two sides agreed to complete a [road map on U.S. security assistance](#) to the Philippines in the next five to 10 years. Austin stated that the discussion also entailed the delivery of "priority defence platforms" including radars, drones, military transport aircraft and coastal and air defence systems to the Philippines. In a [press conference](#) later, Philippines Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo remarked that "our partnership will need to play a stronger role in preserving an international law-based international order."

During a public forum, China's Ambassador to the Philippines [Huang Xilian expressed the country's displeasure](#) with the growing defence relationship between Manila and Washington. He advised the Philippines "to unequivocally oppose Taiwan independence rather than stoking the fire by offering the US access to military bases near Taiwan". These were the first remarks made by a Chinese envoy regarding the additional bases granted to the US by the Philippines under Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US- Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership, US Secretary of State [Anthony Blinken arrived in Hanoi](#) to meet Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. Blinken stated that the bilateral relations between the two countries have observed "[extraordinary progress](#) in the past decade". He added that the U.S. hoped "to be able to take it to an even [higher, higher level](#)", without specifying what this would entail.

## Other Developments

[Thai PM Prayut lags rivals in opinion polls ahead of May election](#)

[Thailand's China-built high-speed rail, on track but delayed](#)

[Germany says Indonesia will join G-7 nations in climate club](#)

## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On April 18, India's Minister of [Commerce and Industry](#), Piyush Goyal met Israel's Minister of Economy and Industry, Nir Barkat in New Delhi. The two leaders discussed opportunities for greater collaboration between businesses of the two countries in new and emerging sectors.

On April 15, after weeks of tensions and a power struggle for control of the country, fighting erupted in [Sudan's capital Khartoum](#) between the country's army led by Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. In light of this, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar held a phone conversation with his counterparts from Saudi Arabia and UAE, exchanging views on the [situation in Sudan](#). Reportedly, [31 Indian nationals](#) remain stranded in Sudan.

Continuing China's outreach to the Middle East, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang expressed Beijing's willingness to help facilitate [peace talks between Israel and Palestine](#). Israeli Foreign Minister, Eli Cohen, on his part, called upon China to exert its influence on Iran and prevent Tehran from obtaining [nuclear weapons](#).

Meanwhile, continuing the rapprochement between [Syria and Saudi Arabia](#), Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan met Syria's President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus on April 18. Riyadh reiterated its "keenness to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis and preserve Syria's unity, security, stability, and Arab identity". Earlier, the [Foreign Ministers of GCC+3](#) (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan) held a meeting in Jeddah to discuss the Syrian crisis. The meeting emphasised the importance of Arab leadership in resolving the Syrian crisis, but, did not take any decision regarding Damascus's possible return to the Arab League.



## Other Developments

[Saudi Officials, Hamas Leaders Set to Meet in Jeddah to Discuss Re-Establishing Ties](#)

[Palestinian President Abbas arrives in Saudi Arabia for talks](#)

[Iran Invites Saudi Arabia's King to visit as bitter rivalry recedes](#)

[Diplomat: Iran, Saudi Arabia to reopen embassies by 9 May](#)

[Israeli judicial reforms still on hold, PM Netanyahu says](#)

## China

by

Angana Guha Roy

Brazilian President [Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva](#) concluded his four-day visit to China on April 16 by urging the United States to stop “encouraging” war in Ukraine. The two countries deepened their comprehensive strategic partnership, signing 15 agreements involving trade, scientific research, technology, renewable energy, even the joint development of satellites and space cooperation, etc. China pledged investments estimated at around 50 billion Brazilian reais. Lula’s meeting with President Xi Jinping in Beijing came just weeks after China and Brazil reached a deal to use their local currencies in bilateral trade, excluding the US dollar.

Bangladesh will settle its pending payments to Russia in [Chinese yuan](#) instead of dollar. Dhaka will settle repayments worth \$110 million to Moscow for the currently under construction Rooppur power plant in the Chinese currency, it was reported. Bangladesh made the deal after other countries recently indicated that they would opt for Chinese currency [yuan payments](#) to avoid the need to use dollars.

China’s military wrapped up three days of [exercises around Taiwan](#) saying it gained experience coordinating its different forces. The Eastern Theater Command of the People’s Liberation Army launched the exercises after Taiwan’s president returned from a visit to the US that Beijing had opposed.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy [Josep Borrell](#), in a remote address at the start of the meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) said the relationship between China and Europe will be determined by Beijing’s behaviour, including what happens with Taiwan.

Kong Xianhua, Consul General, Consulate-General of the People’s Republic of China urged India to create awareness about its local brands in the [Chinese market](#). In a statement he stressed China is keen to promote a balanced trade with India. He said, “I invite Indian entrepreneurs to visit China and identify potential buyers for their products”.

The construction of a military facility on [Coco Islands](#) in Myanmar (located very close to India’s Andaman and Nicobar island chain) and a proposed remote satellite receiving ground station system in Sri Lanka to be built with

Chinese help, have raised concerns in India of possible surveillance across the region.

### **Other developments**

[India, China and Bhutan triologue can bring clarity on borders](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

During the first [India-Central Asia Joint Working Group](#) (JWG) meeting on April 12-13, the landlocked countries were encouraged to utilise the Indian Ocean Region via the strategically placed Chabahar Port. The meeting was chaired by the Secretary (Economic Relations), Rahul Chhabra and attended by the Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, the Consul General of Afghanistan, and the UN World Food Program (UNWFP) representative were special invitees to the event.

At the same time, the Foreign Ministers and high-level officials of China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the [Fourth Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan's Neighbouring Countries](#) on April 13 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The parties emphasised that all the terrorist organisations entrenched in Afghanistan, including the 'Islamic State', Al Qaeda, Eastern Iraqi Movement, Pakistan Taliban, Balochi Liberation Army, and Uyghur Movement, continue to pose severe regional and global security threats. The parties affirmed the regional and international concerted efforts to ensure regional stability, such as the Tashkent International Conference on Security and Economic Development in Afghanistan and the 'Moscow Model'. After the meeting, Qin Gang and the other parties attended the "[Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan plus Afghanistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue](#)".

Before the meeting, China's Foreign Minister [Qin Gang met President Mirziyoyev](#) of Uzbekistan. Qin Gang invited President Mirziyoyev for the first [China-Central Asia Summit](#) (scheduled for May ) and the third Belt and Road International Cooperation Summit Forum. The two sides agreed to implement the five-year plan for economic, trade and investment cooperation while continuously attempting to complete the US\$10 Billion trade volume target set earlier. The Ministers also agreed to strive for the early start of the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Ukraine Railway, that will help regional connectivity. Qin Gang reaffirmed that China highly appreciates Uzbekistan's valuable support of China's core interests. Qin Gang agreed to cooperate jointly with Uzbekistan to combat the "three evil forces" and jointly maintain peace and tranquillity between the two countries and the region. Additionally, [Qin Gang emphasised](#) that he "encourages more Chinese enterprises to invest in

Uzbekistan and is willing to expand the import of high-quality products from the country”.

## **Other Developments**

[Kazakhstan and Singapore Agree to Expand Cooperation In Investment Projects](#)

[Uzbekistan And Slovakia Discuss Inter-Parliamentary Relations](#)

[Border Issues with Tajikistan Being Solved But Slowly- President Japarov](#)

[China's Grand Designs In Resource Rich Central Asia Face Local Ire](#)



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