



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

April 26, 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: Bangladesh Foreign Ministry officials unveil Indo-Pacific Outlook on April 24, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@DhakaPrasar](https://twitter.com/DhakaPrasar)

Southeast Asia: Philippines President Marcos Jr. met Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Manila on April 23, 2023. (Source: [Bongbong Marcos/Official Twitter](https://twitter.com/BongbongMarcos))

West Asia: Operation Kaveri gets underway to bring back Indian citizens stranded in Sudan, April 24, 2023.

Source: [Twitter/@DrSJaishankar](https://twitter.com/DrSJaishankar)

Central Asia: Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Integration Serik Zhumangarin during the C+C5 online meeting on April 20, 2023. Source: [The Astana Times](https://www.astanatimes.com)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Bangladesh unveiled its '[Indo-Pacific Outlook](#)' on April 24. The document emphasises a free, open, peaceful, secure and inclusive Indo-Pacific region for the shared prosperity of all. On April 25, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina embarked on a 15-day visit to Japan, the US and the UK. The World Bank has decided to lend [USD 8 billion to Bangladesh](#) over the next four years under the Country Partnership Framework (CPF). The agreement will be finalised during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Washington DC.

In his [Eid message](#), the Taliban leader Mawlawi Hibbatullah Akhundzada said that no non-Islamic law would be allowed to be implemented in the country. After the Taliban banned local women from [working for the UN](#) and other international NGOs, the U.N. is considering pulling out its operations from Afghanistan. To discuss this issue U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will be hosting a [close-door meeting](#) of special envoys on Afghanistan from various countries, in Doha on May 1-2. India's External Affairs Minister [Dr S Jaishankar](#) said that India is looking "positively" at this UN initiative.

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson [John Kirby](#) on April 25, confirmed that, the terrorist leader responsible for planning the attack during the evacuation from Kabul airport that killed 13 American troops, was eliminated in a Taliban operation in Afghanistan.

Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir started his [four-day official visit](#) to China on April 24. According to the ISPR, the visit is aimed at enhancing bilateral military relations between the two countries. [Pakistan Foreign Office confirmed](#) that FM Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in India, on May 4-5, while, [Defence Minister Khawaja Asif](#) will attend the meeting of SCO defence ministers virtually on April 27.

Other Developments

[Mohammed Shahabuddin was sworn in as the 22nd president of Bangladesh, on April 24](#)

[Pakistan has placed its first order for discounted Russian crude oil under a deal struck between Islamabad and Moscow](#)

[A blast due to an electrical short circuit in a munitions warehouse of a counter-terrorism facility at Kabal town of Swat, Pakistan, killed 17 troops, on April 24](#)

[Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Ali Sabry thanked India for offering its support in safely evacuating its citizens from Sudan](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

On April 23, Philippines President Marcos Jr. met Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang during the latter's three-day official visit to Manila. The two sides agreed to establish [more communication lines](#) to avoid miscalculation and enable resolution regarding contested areas in the South China Sea. Post the meeting, Qin remarked, "amid the 'fluid' and turbulent regional situation, a healthy and stable China-Philippines relationship is not only meeting the aspirations of our two peoples but also in line with the common aspirations of regional countries". This meeting coincided with the [largest joint military exercises](#) being held between the US and the Philippines.

The White House has announced that Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr is [scheduled to meet US President Joe Biden](#) on May 1 in Washington. The meeting is intended to review opportunities to deepen economic ties and tackle issues such as clean energy transition, climate change and human rights. [White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre](#) stated "during the visit, President Biden will reaffirm the United States' iron-clad commitment to the defence of the Philippines, and the leaders will discuss efforts to strengthen the longstanding US-Philippines alliance".

During his upcoming meeting with US President Biden, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr will push for [clarity on the extent of Washington's commitment](#) to protect the Philippines under a 1951 defence treaty. President Marcos stated "the treaty needs to adjust because of the changes in the situation we are facing in the South China Sea, Taiwan, and North Korea. The situation is heating up." The Philippines has also clarified that Washington would not be permitted to conduct activities that were not stipulated in the 2014 deal, as stated by [Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo](#).

After a hiatus of two years, Singapore and China are set to launch [joint military exercises](#) on April 28. The exercises, intended to last till May 1, will witness the deployment of a Chinese missile-bearing frigate, the Yulin and a minehunting ship, the Chibi. From Singapore, the Ministry of Defence will send RSN's Formidable-class frigate RSS Intrepid and Bedok-class Mine Countermeasure Vessel RSS Punggol. "The exercise underscores the warm and friendly bilateral defence relations between Singapore and China, and enhances mutual trust, understanding and people-to-people ties between the SAF (Singapore Armed Forces) and PLA (People's Liberation Army)," [MINDEF](#) said.

Other Developments

[Indonesia ruling party backs Gov. Ganjar for 2024 presidency](#)

[Thai opposition maintains lead in election race, latest polls find](#)

[Asian Monetary Fund idea revived amid U.S.-China row](#)

[Vietnam eyes Czech military supplies as Hanoi tries to pivot away from reliance on Russian arms](#)

[Former UN chief Ban Ki-moon in Myanmar: State media](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On April 24, India launched "[Operation Kaveri](#)" to evacuate close to 3,000 Indian citizens stranded in Sudan. Even as the US-brokered 72-hour ceasefire came into effect on April 25, the UN expressed concerns about further [displacement of people](#) as thousands crossed into neighbouring Chad and South Sudan.

On April 26, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar extended [Independence Day](#) greetings to Israel's Foreign Minister Eli Cohen. India and Israel are likely to hold the 4th Joint Steering Committee (JSC) meeting on [Homeland and Public Security](#) in May 2023, focusing on modernising police forces and border management.

On April 19, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, met Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Jeddah. Saudi Arabia reiterated its "support for the [legitimate rights of the Palestinian people](#) to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant international legal resolutions". Further, the Saudi Crown Prince, in a phone conversation with Russia's President Vladimir Putin, expressed satisfaction at the level of cooperation between the two countries aimed at bringing stability to the [global oil market](#).

On April 25, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu hosted four-way talks with his counterparts from Syria, Iran, and Turkey. The four countries discussed "practical steps to [strengthen Syria's security](#)" and "normalising Syria-Turkey relations". Meanwhile, Iran reportedly continues to aid Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, by ferrying large quantities of [artillery shells and other ammunition](#) across the Caspian Sea.

Following the China-mediated détente between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Israeli [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) reminded Riyadh that "those who partner with Iran partner with misery" and that "95 percent of the problems in the Middle East emanate from Iran". PM Netanyahu called for greater engagement of the US in the Middle East.

Other Developments

[India, Israel, US, UAE announce the creation of 'I2U2' joint business coalition](#)

[Israel offers to host warring Sudanese generals for talks](#)

[Palestine is an Islamic and human issue: Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei](#)

[Houthis will take war inside Saudi Arabia and its allies if ceasefire talks violated, group warns](#)

[Kevin McCarthy to visit Israel, become 2nd US House speaker to address Knesset plenum](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

China's Ambassador to France, [Lu Shaye's remarks](#) that the countries that had emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union lacked "effective status" under international law prompted a furious reaction from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which denounced the words as "completely unacceptable" and demanded an immediate retraction. China's spokesperson has [distanced](#) the Foreign Ministry from Ambassador Lu Shaye's remarks.

On April 22, the [18th round of Corps Commander talks](#) was held by India and China at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the LAC in eastern Ladakh. The two sides discussed proposals for a mutual withdrawal of frontline troops from Depsang and Demchok, as well as other friction points along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. The latest round of negotiations failed to yield any breakthrough.

India's Defence Minister [Rajnath Singh](#) is likely to hold a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu on the sidelines of an upcoming meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on April 28.

On April 17, in her remarks on [US-China economic relations](#), US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen stressed that the US will safeguard its national security, even if it comes at an economic cost to its relationship with China. "Even though these policies may have economic impacts, they're driven by straightforward national security considerations, and we will not compromise on these concerns even when they make those tradeoffs with our economic interests," Yellen said.

According to a leaked US intelligence report, China is building sophisticated [cyber weapons](#) to "seize control" of enemy satellites, rendering them useless for data signals or surveillance during wartime. The US assesses that China's push to develop capabilities to "deny, exploit or hijack" enemy satellites is a core part of its goal to control information, which Beijing considers to be a key "war-fighting domain".

Other Developments

[Nepal: Seven years since the transit deal with China, no shipment has moved](#)

[Bangladesh unveils Indo-Pacific Strategy; expert says it is still trying to placate China](#)

[France, Japan, India team up to rescue Sri Lanka from China debt trap](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of [Trade and Integration](#) Serik Zhumangarin announced that the trade turnover between Central Asian countries and China grew by 31.9 percent over the year and exceeded USD 32 billion in 2022. Minister Zhumangarin announced the increase in trade during an online meeting to address the upcoming China+Central Asia (C+C5) Summit scheduled for May. He proposed organising a joint promotion of products by Central Asian countries given their competitive position.

In a move to [strengthen ties with Tehran's neighbours](#), Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen inaugurated a permanent embassy in Turkmenistan on April 20, establishing Israel's closest diplomatic presence to Iran. Despite establishing diplomatic ties 30 years ago, there was only a temporary embassy in Ashgabat, while the predominately Muslim Turkmenistan still has no embassy in Israel.

In a [video statement](#) after meeting with Turkmen President, Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen called his visit "historic" and said Israel's ties with Central Asia's "energy superpower" were strategically important. Moreover, he affirmed that the countries would "widen economic relations to include agriculture, water, technology and border defence", benefiting both countries.

A meeting was held between the delegation of the [Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan](#) and the representative of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Germany on April 20. The parties discussed current issues of bilateral cooperation and prospects for the development of interaction between the business circle of both countries at the meeting.

[The Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan](#), Bakhtiyor Saidov, held talks with European Union Special Representative for Central Asia Terhi Hakala and Human Rights Eamon Gilmore. The parties discussed various issues on the current relations between Uzbekistan and the European Union, including political, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian issues. The two sides agreed on the importance of the early signing of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Uzbekistan and the EU.



Other Developments

[New Deputy Foreign Minister appointed in Uzbekistan](#)

[President of Iraq Receives Ambassador of Tajikistan](#)

[Lawyer Calls On Uzbek President To Stop 'Torturing Political Prisoner' Tajimuratov](#)

[Turkmen Delegation Takes Part in Meetings with International Organisations in Geneva](#)



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