



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

May 3, 2023



Volume I, Issue 18 | May 3, 2023

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's Proximity Archives

Vol. I, Issue 18

May 3, 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.

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: Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih at the handover ceremony of naval vessels, on May 2, Maldives. Source: [PIB](#)

Southeast Asia: Philippine President Marcos Jr. meets U.S. President Joe Biden in the Oval Office in Washington D.C. on May 2. Source: [White House/Official Twitter](#)

West Asia: India's Minister of State for External Affairs, V. Muraleedharan met Saudi Vice Foreign Minister Waleed Elkhareiji in Riyadh on May 2, 2023. Source: [Twitter/@MOS MEA](#)

China: Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang during their meeting in Naypyidaw on May 2. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

© 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's Proximity Archives

Vol. I, Issue 18

May 3, 2023

Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 3

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 5

China

Angana Guha Roy 6

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 8

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On May 1-2, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [held a summit](#) to review the UN operation in Afghanistan and to decide whether to continue them due to the Taliban's decree banning women employees from going to the office. Special envoys and representatives of 23 countries and donor agencies participated in the conference. The meeting was also intended to achieve a [common understanding](#) within the international community on engaging with the Taliban on critical issues, such as human rights, inclusive governance, countering terrorism, and drug trafficking.

On April 27, [Pakistan's envoy in Washington](#) said, "It is important that the US restores – for Pakistan – Foreign Military Financing and Foreign Military Sales, suspended by the previous administration". Meanwhile, on May 2, Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif [held a meeting](#) with military leadership and the heads of other intelligence agencies to discuss security issues. The political impasse in Pakistan is easing down as the ruling coalition of PPP-PMLN and the opposition party PTI in a meeting held on May 2, [agreed to hold elections](#) to the national and provincial assemblies on a single date under the watch of caretaker setups, but it had yet to be decided what that date would be.

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh [visited Maldives](#) from May 1-3. During the visit, he held bilateral delegation-level talks with the Maldivian Defence Minister and also [handed over](#) a Fast patrol vessel along with an assault landing craft to Maldivian Coast Guard on May 2.

Bangladesh Army Chief General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed [visited India](#) from April 27-29. During the visit, he held meetings with his Indian counterpart and other civilian authorities and [discussed issues](#) pertaining to bilateral cooperation as part of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations.

Other Developments

[An international company has begun officially exporting natural gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan.](#)

[Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on May 1, said he is keen on settling the ethnic conflict with the minority Tamil community by the end of this year.](#)

[The World Bank on April 28 approved \\$500 million in budget support for Bangladesh, \\$250 million more than what was expected.](#)

[Bangladesh permits India's permanent access to Chattogram and Mongla ports for improved trade and connectivity.](#)

[Bhutan Government has approved the country's accession to the World Trade Organisation \(WTO\).](#)

[Indian Chief of the Air Staff \(CAS\), visited Sri Lanka on May 1-4.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. commenced his [five-day official visit](#) to Washington D.C. on May 1. On May 2, President Joe Biden met with the Philippine President and reiterated that the United States remains [ironclad in our commitment](#) to the defence of the Philippines, including the South China Sea, and we will continue to support the Philippines' military modernisation.

The Philippines stated that a [Chinese coast guard ship cut off a Philippine patrol vessel](#) carrying journalists off the Spratlys islands in the South China Sea on April 28. Officer Hernandez of the Philippines said the Chinese ship came within 45m of his boat, and only his quick actions prevented the steel-hulled vessels from crashing into each other. The [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China](#) retorted that the Philippines coastguard vessel "intruded into the waters without Chinese permission" and "made deliberate provocative moves" while the Chinese side was "professional and restrained". The [U.S. State Department](#), in its official statement, urged China to "desist from its provocative and unsafe conduct" in the South China Sea.

Mr [Thomas Andrews](#), the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, urged Japan to impose sanctions on the Myanmar junta. He stated, "I urge Japan to consider joining all other G-7 countries in imposing targeted economic sanctions on the Myanmar military and its key sources of revenue, just as it is doing in response to the crisis in Ukraine". Mr. Andrews has also criticised Japan for the ongoing training programme for Myanmar troops.

The foreign affairs, defence and trade ministers of Australia and Singapore met in Canberra for the [13th meeting of the Singapore-Australia Joint Ministerial Committee \(SAJMC\)](#) on May 1. The [joint communique](#) stated that the ministers "expressed serious concern over behaviour that increased the risk of miscalculation and unilateral actions, that had the potential to destabilise and challenge the status quo, such as the continued militarisation of disputed features". The sides noted good progress in areas of economics and trade, defence and security, science and innovation, people-to-people, digital economy and green economy.

Other Developments

[South China Sea: Beijing to talk fishing rights and Philippines not a military 'staging post', Marcos Jnr says](#)

[US, Philippines sink mock enemy ship in their largest South China Sea drills](#)

[Singapore rebukes UN over comments on drug trafficking execution](#)

[Thailand's election race heats up with Pheu Thai Party dominating poll](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On May 2, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, spoke with his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan. The two leaders reviewed the current global situation and ways to [strengthen bilateral relations](#) that would lay a strong foundation for international peace and security. Dr. Jaishankar thanked Saudi Arabia for its assistance in [India's "Operation Kaveri"](#). Meanwhile, India's Minister of State for External Affairs, V. Muraleedharan, embarked on a visit to [Saudi Arabia and Bahrain](#) from May 1-5.

On May 1, [India and UAE](#) marked the first anniversary of implementing their 'Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement' (CEPA). CEPA has made a "significant impact on India's bilateral trade with the UAE, especially India's exports to the Emirates". In another development, India's Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Israel's Directorate of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D) signed an MoU to deepen [collaboration in innovation and startups](#).

Amidst the ongoing tensions between the US and Israel over Prime Minister Netanyahu's proposed judicial reforms, US Ambassador to Israel, Tom Nides, reiterated Washington's "rock-solid [support for the State of Israel](#)". In line with this, marking 75 years of Israel's independence, the US House of Representatives [Speaker Kevin McCarthy](#) addressed the Israeli Knesset (Parliament).

Other Developments

[Chinese President Xi Jinping 'personally intervened' to secure Saudi-Iran deal, senior diplomat says](#)

[Jordan says regional talks with Syria step toward ending Damascus isolation](#)

[Iran's President Raisi to visit Syria for the first time in over a decade](#)

[Iranian court orders the US to pay \\$313m for terror attacks](#)

[Egypt, Saudi, UAE, Algeria, Bahrain seek to join BRICS bloc](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

[China's military flew 38 fighter jets and other warplanes](#) near Taiwan on April 28. Naval vessels were also seen in the area. Taiwan's Defense Ministry said half the aircraft crossed the median line that serves as a de facto demarcation with mainland China across the roughly 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait. PLA's Eastern Theater Command said it scrambled fighter jets to monitor a United States Navy P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine patrol aircraft through the Taiwan Strait on April 27.

In the latest act of Beijing's aggression, a [Chinese Coast Guard ship blocked a Philippine patrol vessel](#) causing a near collision in the strategic South China Sea. The incident occurred a day after Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr met Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Manila (April 22) and expressed hope for open communication lines on the South China Sea dispute.

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met State Councillor and Minister of National Defence of China General Li Shangfu in New Delhi on April 27, 2023. [The two Ministers had frank discussions](#) about the developments in the India-China border areas as well as bilateral relations. Rajnath Singh categorically conveyed that the development of relations between India and China is premised on the prevalence of peace and tranquillity at the borders. He reiterated that violation of existing agreements has eroded the fundamental basis of bilateral relations and disengagement at the border will logically be followed with de-escalation.

Nepal Prime Minister [Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' voiced his appreciation to China](#) for its assistance and cooperation in the upgradation of the country's health sector at the launch of the China-aided Civil Service Hospital in Kathmandu. Pointing out the friendly relations between the two countries, Mr. Prachanda said, "Nepal and China cherish a long history of friendly, cordial, and cooperative relations. The history of economic, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges between Nepal and China dates back to time immemorial."

[China's foreign minister Qin Gang met Myanmar's coup leader](#) Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, on May 2 in Naypyidaw, hailing the friendship between the two nations and pledging to boost ties. Qin Gang's meeting with Myanmar's top general makes the diplomat the highest-ranking Chinese official to meet since he snatched power from the elected government in February 2021.

Other Developments

[Tibet's exiled government pushes China on sovereignty claims in bid for leverage](#)

[China's Xi calls Ukraine's Zelenskyy, after weeks of intensifying pressure to do so](#)

[Bhutan-China border resolution: What it holds for India](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

During the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\) Defence Ministers' Meeting](#) on April 28, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called upon its member states to collectively work towards eliminating terrorism in all its forms and hold nations who aid or fund such activities accountable. [Rajnath Singh asserted](#), "If a nation shelters terrorists, it not only poses a threat to others, but for itself too". He also argued "If we want to make the SCO a stronger and more credible international organisation, our top-most priority should be to effectively deal with terrorism".

On the sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on April 28, Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh held [bilateral meetings](#) with the Minister of Defence of Uzbekistan, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan. The entire gamut of defence cooperation between the four countries was reviewed during the meetings, focussing on identifying beneficial avenues for furthering bilateral ties.

On April 27, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang chaired the [Fourth China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting](#) with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan ministers. Minister Qin Gang said that China and Central Asian countries are "good neighbours, good friends, good partners and good brothers sharing weal and woe". [During the meeting](#), the Foreign Ministers expressed concerns over the complex situation and geopolitical conflicts and stressed "the need to build bridges rather than walls". They also reiterated that the Central Asia-China cooperation has played an essential role in consolidating bilateral strategic mutual trust, accelerating their respective development, promoting connectivity and safeguarding common security while setting an example for mutually beneficial cooperation.

[Government Representatives of the Zhambyl Region](#) of Kazakhstan signed seven agreements with large foreign companies worth \$700 million at the Zhambyl Economic and Investment Forum 2023 on April 26-27. According to the Governor of the Region, foreign investors from Germany, Hungary, India and Singapore plan to build ferroalloy and cement plants, launch the production of building materials, solar power plants and a food factory, and create an industrial and logistics park.

President Sadyr Japarov of Kyrgyzstan [endorsed a draft memorandum](#) on the obligations of Belarus to gain the status of SCO Member state. The

memorandum is an international treaty containing obligations Belarus undertake to become an SCO member state.

Other Developments

[Tajikistan and Kuwait Discuss Bilateral Ties](#)

[Ambassador of Uzbekistan present Credentials to the U.S. President](#)

[Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan discuss conjunction of State Borders](#)

[Kazakhstan Ratifies Agreement on State Border with Turkmenistan](#)

[Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Abstains in Voting on UN Resolution mentioned Russia's Aggression](#)

[Kazakhstan Discusses Children's Rights with Tik ToK](#)



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org