

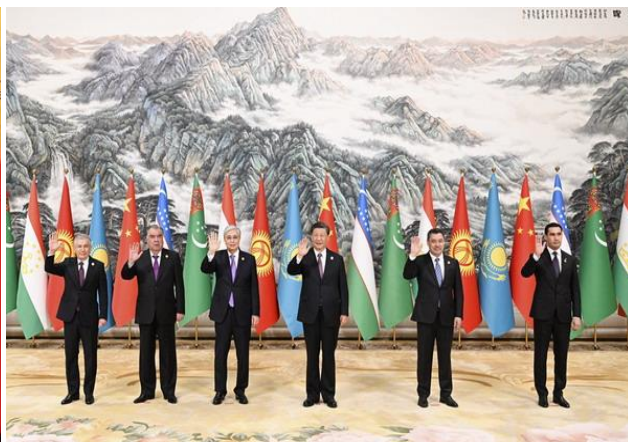
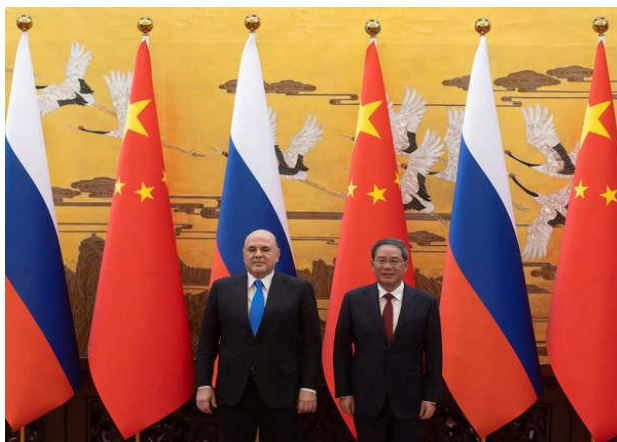


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

India's Proximity Archives

May 24, 2023



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Delhi Policy Group

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



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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:

Southeast Asia: The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, met Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Minh Chinh in Hiroshima on May 20, 2023. Source: [MEA India/Official Twitter](https://twitter.com/MEAIndia)

West Asia: India's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Suhel Khan, visited the ships participating in the second edition of India-Saudi Arabia naval exercise 'Al Mohed Al Hindi-23', May 21, 2023.
Source: [Twitter/@IndianEmbRiyadh](https://twitter.com/IndianEmbRiyadh)

China: Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Beijing, China, May 24, 2023.
Source: [The Economic Times](https://www.economictimes.com)

Central Asia: President Xi Jinping took a group photo with the Five Central Asian Nations after the first China-Central Asia Summit on May 19. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China](https://mfa.gov.cn)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On May 18, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi [warned](#) the Taliban government to abide by the [water-sharing agreement](#) of the Helmand River, signed between the two countries in 1973. The [Iranian Foreign Minister](#) urged the Taliban authorities to grant permission for an Iranian technical team to inspect a dam built on the Helmand River in Afghan territory. In response, the acting Foreign Minister of the Taliban, Amir Khan Muttaqi, said that [recent drought](#) is to be blamed for the reduction in river flow, and Kabul expects Iranian officials to make their demands based on the treaty.

In the aftermath of the May 9 riots in Pakistan, in which military installations were targeted by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activists, 24 PTI leaders [left the party](#). Imran Khan [blamed Military Agencies](#) for the riots and forcing senior leadership of his party to resign. Pakistan Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir on May 20, said the [legal process](#) of trial against the perpetrators involved in the May 9 riots has commenced under Pakistan Army Act and Official Secrets Act.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina [visited Qatar](#) from May 22-24, to attend Qatar Economic Forum 2023. During the visit, she held meetings with Qatar Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi and Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia Khalid A Al-Falih, among others. The Saudi Minister offered to make [large investments](#) in various sectors of Bangladesh.

Other Developments

- [The IMF on May 23, reaffirmed that Sri Lanka must achieve its debt restructuring process by September.](#)
- [Bangladesh is struggling to pay for imported fuel because of a dollar shortage. It owes more than USD300 million to six overseas companies.](#)
- [India hands over 20 Broad Gauge Diesel Locomotives to Bangladesh under grant assistance.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The Prime Minister of India, [Narendra Modi, met](#) with Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Minh Chinh on May 20, 2023, in Hiroshima on the sidelines of the G-7 Summit. During the meeting, leaders underscored the progress achieved in the bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The two [leaders discussed](#) expanding cooperation in the fields of trade and investment, defence, building resilient supply chains, energy, science and technology, human resource development, culture and people-to-people ties.

On May 18, Vietnam criticised China for its actions in the South China Sea as a Chinese [research ship](#) moved within Hanoi's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Vietnam's Foreign Ministry characterised the actions by the Chinese vessel as "[violating the sovereign rights](#) and jurisdictions of Vietnam", which was taking "appropriate measures" to defend its rights. China retaliated by stating that scientific research was a normal activity in areas under Chinese jurisdiction. The Chinese and Vietnamese vessels have confronted each other on several occasions in the disputed waters of the South China Sea.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Minh Chinh in Hiroshima on May 21. The two sides agreed to cooperate in tackling China's assertive actions in the East and South China seas. Japan pledged to provide official [development aid](#) worth around 60.98 billion yen (US\$440 million) to fund Vietnam's infrastructure projects, stated the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

During a three-day visit to Manila, Australian Foreign Minister [Penny Wong met with](#) Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo on May 18. The two leaders at the joint press conference announced that 'Australia will provide drones, training, and other related technology to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to strengthen its border protection capabilities'. "We want to work with the Philippines to support ASEAN's vital contribution to regional peace and security, including through maritime training" [stated Ms Penny Wong](#).

Other Developments

- [Sara Duterte quits Philippine political party backing Marcos](#)
- [Asia's internet cable projects delayed by South China Sea tensions](#)
- [UN expert says Myanmar military imported US\\$1 billion in weapons from China, Russia and others since coup](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

India-Saudi Arabia [joint naval exercise](#) 'Al Mohed Al Hindi 23' began on May 21 with the arrival of the Indian Naval Ships INS Tarkash and INS Subhadra at port of Al Jubail. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia reportedly did not participate in the [G20 Tourism Working Group Meeting](#) hosted by India in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The 32nd [Arab League Summit](#) was held in Jeddah on May 19, where leaders affirmed the importance of "promoting joint Arab action" based on shared values, interests, and destiny. Major issues touched in the meeting included the "centrality of the Palestinian issue for regional stability", "the need for de-escalation, dialogue, and unity in Sudan", "intensifying pan-Arab efforts at helping Syria overcome its internal crisis", and "supporting all efforts that could guarantee security and stability in the Republic of Yemen".

[Syrian President Bashar al-Assad](#), who attended the Arab League Summit after more than a decade of suspension, called it a "historic opportunity" for greater solidarity among Arab nations. Ukraine's President [Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#) also attended the Arab League Summit seeking support for his 10-point peace initiative aimed at ending Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

Continuing the deepening of Iran-Russia ties, on May 17, the two countries signed an agreement worth USD 1.6 billion to build the [Rasht-Astara railway](#) in northern Iran that will be key to the transit of cargo through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Other Developments

- [How important is Captagon in al-Assad's return to the Arab fold?](#)
- [2 Saudi astronauts head to the International Space Station](#)
- [Iran's latest subterranean nuclear site likely impenetrable to US bunker busters](#)
- [NSA chief: Even Iran's bunker-buster-bomb-proof nuke sites can 'be reached'](#)
- [Israel: normalisation with Saudi Arabia a 'matter of time'](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

[China's new Ambassador to the United States, Xie Feng](#), has indicated that he aims to enhance US-China relations at a time of "serious difficulties and challenges". "We hope that the United States will work together with China to increase dialogue, to manage differences, and also to expand our cooperation so that our relationship gets back on the right track," Xie said.

During the 18th round of corps commander talks between India and China last month, the [Chinese army demanded](#) the creation of a 15-20 km buffer zone inside India-claimed lines on the strategic Depsang Plains as a precondition for disengagement, refusing India's offer of a 3-4 km demilitarised strip. A defence ministry official said India had rejected China's "unjust" demand and that negotiations were on to resolve the standoff.

President Xi Jinping called for building a prosperous, harmonious, and ["new socialist Tibet"](#) underpinned by unity and civility, days after Group of Seven (G7) nations expressed concern over human rights in the region. Xi said the region should step up efforts to promote high-quality development after overcoming "centuries" of extreme poverty.

During his visit to China, Russian [Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said](#) that ties with China are at an "unprecedented" high level, characterized by mutual respect for each other's interests and the desire to jointly respond to challenges. Russia and China are set to sign a series of deals on infrastructure and trade.

Bangladesh is going to approach the [China-led New Development Bank \(NDB\)](#) to seek greater financial support for the country's infrastructure development. A Bangladeshi delegation is scheduled to leave Dhaka for Shanghai on May 28 to attend the meeting. The board of governors will meet on May 30-31 at the NDB headquarters in Shanghai under the theme "Shaping a New Era for Global Development".

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal said that Chinese Ambassador Chen Song had advised him not to participate in the [Boao Forum for Asia](#) in March-end in China owing to a difficult political situation in Kathmandu. "The Chinese ambassador, after sensing the evolving political situation in Kathmandu including presidential elections and shifting alliances, advised me to postpone

the China visit," Dahal told Parliament. "I thanked him for understanding my compulsion."

Other Development

[Crisis-Hit Sri Lanka Signs Deal With Chinese Oil Company](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The first China-Central Asia Summit concluded in Xi'an, China on May 19 after two days of high-level meetings and discussions. The leaders signed and released a [Xi'an Declaration](#), which outlined ways for mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields and highlighted the direction for future collaboration. The participating countries also agreed to make the summit biennial, with the second China-Central Asia Summit to be held in Kazakhstan in 2025.

[President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech](#) on May 19 entitled "Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security and Everlasting Friendship". In his speech, President Xi emphasised that the world needs a stable Central Asia; thus, the "sovereignty, security, independence and territorial integrity of Central Asian countries must be maintained".

During the [Kazakhstan-China investment roundtable](#) before the summit, Kazakhstan and China signed 47 bilateral agreements worth USD 22 billion on May 18. President Tokayev discussed plans to expand the "Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline, increase gas processing capacity, expand the gas transmission system and build a gas processing plant at the Kashagan oilfield".

According to the [European Union \(EU\) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development \(EBRD\) Study](#) on Sustainable Transport Connections between Europe and Central Asia identified that the Central Trans-Caspian Network, traversing through southern Kazakhstan, is the most sustainable option for forging the links between Central Asia and Europe, increasing container volume from 18,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) in 2022 to 130,000 TEUs by 2040.

Other Developments

- [Kazakhstan and Singapore Sign USD 275 Million in Commercial Documents](#)
- [Trade Between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan Reaches USD 438 Million in 2022 Amid Dynamic Growth](#)
- [President Tokayev's Visit to China Expands Economic and Trade Ties Ahead of China-Central Asia Summit](#)



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