



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives July 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: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of Sri Lanka at the Hyderabad House, New Delhi, India, on July 21, 2023. Source: [MEA Flickr](#)

Southeast Asia: Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. delivered his second State of the Nation address on July 24, 2023. Source: [Presidential Communications Office/Official Website](#)

China: India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval met with Wang Yi, Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee in South Africa on July 24. Source: [Xinhua/Zhang Yudong](#)

Central Asia: Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud chaired the first-ever Gulf Cooperation Council-Central Asia (GCC-C5) Summit in Jeddah on July 19. Source: [Saudi Press Agency \(Official\)](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe visited India on July 21. During the visit, he held “productive and outcome-oriented” bilateral [interaction](#) with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a press statement [PM Modi said](#) that both countries have decided to expedite work on ‘connecting the electricity grids, feasibility study for petroleum pipeline, feasibility study to build a land bridge and fintech connectivity to launch UPI in Sri Lanka.’ As an immediate outcome of the visit, India and Sri Lanka signed [five MoUs/agreements](#) including cooperation in the field of renewable energy and economic development projects in Trincomalee.

US CENTCOM Chief General Michael Erik Kurilla [held a meeting](#) with Pakistan Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir in Rawalpindi on July 24. In light of the fact that both leaders expressed a desire to further enhance bilateral relations in all fields, the developments in Afghanistan and the security situation in Pakistan could have also been discussed. On July 25, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [discussed](#) Pakistan's economy and Afghanistan-related issues with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in a telephonic call. Earlier, US State Department's [spokesperson](#) Matthew Miller said that the US retains the ability to conduct its own operations against terrorism in the Pak-Afghan region and does not depend on the Taliban's promises to keep terrorists out of Afghanistan.

In an effort to restructure its economy, on July 24, Pakistan gave [initial approval](#) for signing a framework agreement with the UAE to hand over two more Karachi port terminals, including the development of a new multipurpose cargo terminal. Pakistan and Azerbaijan signed an [agreement](#) on July 24 for the procurement of LNG. Under the agreement, Azerbaijan will offer 12 low-cost LNG cargoes to Pakistan on flexible terms for one year. Meanwhile, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Elizabeth Horst said that [there is no quick fix](#) to Pakistan's economic problems unless it follows the IMF programme, and the US continue to support this arrangement as it provides a breathing space to the country.

Other Developments

[Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan on July 18 signed a tripartite railway project connecting the three countries](#)

[Kabul refuses to take action against TTP, urges Pakistan to pursue dialogue](#)

[Second Meeting of Maldives-India Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, Countering Violent Extremism and De-radicalisation held on July 24](#)

[Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offered Nepal the use of its newly constructed Payra Port during a meeting with her Nepalese counterpart Pushpa Kamal Dahal on July 25](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

On July 24, Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. delivered his second [State of the Nation address](#). Amidst rising tensions with China in the South China Sea, in the address he stressed on upholding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Philippines. "We will protect our sovereign rights and preserve our territorial integrity, in defence of a rules-based international order", stated the President.

The [US has imposed sanctions](#) on individuals and cut aid to Cambodia after a landslide victory by Prime Minister Hun Sen's party. This comes after the spokesperson of the US State Department Matthew Miller characterised the results as "neither free nor fair." The US alleged a "pattern of threats and harassment against the political opposition" to undermine the electoral process of the country. The United States has taken steps "to impose visa restrictions on individuals who undermined democracy and implemented a pause of certain foreign assistance programs." However, the State Department has not specified the details of the targeted individuals and programs for the new sanctions.

A midlevel [Taliban delegation visited Indonesia](#) this week "to improve relations" with Afghanistan. The Indonesian Foreign Minister stated that the Taliban did not meet the foreign ministry and was in the country for "internal activities with their mission." It has been reported that the delegation is also scheduled to visit Malaysia in the upcoming weeks.

The Philippines is preparing a [contingency plan for a possible Taiwan invasion](#) in the future, as informed by Defence Secretary Gilbert Teodoro. Given its geographical proximity to Taiwan, Teodoro stated that "we continue to plan on all contingencies not merely any flashpoint between China and Taiwan, but any contingency within the theatre". While the Defence Secretary did not provide specific details about the contingency measures, he did state that a "multi-agency effort and not only a defence effort" is being planned.

Other Developments

[Indonesia's Jokowi to reaffirm support for Ganjar Pranowo as presidential election nears](#)

[Seah Kian Peng to be nominated as Singapore's new parliament speaker amid political scandals](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

The Israeli Knesset (Parliament) passed the 'Reasonableness Bill' as part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's [judicial reforms](#) on July 24, sparking protests across Israel. It would prevent the Israeli Supreme Court from [striking down government decisions](#) on the basis that they are "unreasonable". As the bill was passed with the slimmest possible majority, the [US criticised it as "unfortunate"](#).

In order to deter Iranian attacks on commercial ships in the Gulf, the US has deployed more [warships and marines to the Middle East](#). In the meantime, the Iranian Navy and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have received deliveries of the '[Abu Mahdi' cruise missile](#) with a range of 1000 kilometers. The missile is named after [Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis](#), who was killed in a US drone strike in January 2020 alongside General Qassem Soleimani.

Iraq's Shia religious and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr's supporters stormed the [Swedish embassy in Baghdad](#) on July 20, angered by the burning of the Quran in Sweden. A copy of the Quran was also burned outside the [Iraqi embassy in Denmark](#). In light of these developments, Iraq called upon the European Union to "reconsider the so-called [freedom of expression](#) and the right to demonstrate". The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has [suspended Sweden's Special Envoy status](#) to the organisation.

Other Developments

[Is China's Greater Bay Area 'the future of Asia'? Saudi diplomat says investors can bet on it](#)

[Iran helping Russia build drone stockpile that is expected to be 'orders of magnitude larger' than previous arsenal, US says](#)

[Turkiye working against end of Black Sea grain deal and resulting fallout: President](#)

[PM Netanyahu to meet President Erdogan in Türkiye, a first visit for Israel PM in 15 years](#)

[US says Russian plane hit American drone with flare over Syria](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

On July 25, China removed its [foreign minister Qin Gang](#) after less than a year in office, following a month-long absence from public view. He has been replaced by his predecessor Wang Yi, following weeks of speculation that Qin Gang had suddenly fallen out of favour with the CPC. China's National People's Congress (NPC) did not provide any explanation for Qin Gang's removal.

China's top leaders in a meeting of the CPC Politburo on July 22 said [the country's economy was facing "new difficulties and challenges"](#). "The meeting pointed out that the current economic operation is facing new difficulties and challenges, mainly due to insufficient domestic demand, operational difficulties for some enterprises, high risks and hidden dangers in key areas, and a complex and severe external environment".

India's [National Security Advisor Ajit Doval](#) met top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi, and discussed bilateral ties between India and China on the sidelines of the Friends of BRICS meeting on July 22, in South Africa. Talking about the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), NSA Doval said that the strategic trust between the two countries has been "eroded" since 2020. "The situation along the LAC in the Western Sector of the India-China boundary since 2020 has eroded strategic trust and the public and political basis of the relationship," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) quoted NSA Doval as saying.

[China has pledged to provide 8 million Yuan grant assistance to Nepal](#) for the agricultural sector. The decision was taken during a meeting between House of Representatives Speaker Devraj Ghimire and Yuan Jiajun, a politburo member of the Communist Party of China (CPC), on July 22. Yuan arrived on a three-day visit to Nepal, leading a 26-member delegation. Visiting Chinese leader Yuan pledged to provide 8 million Yuan (NRs 14.5 million/INR 9.16 crore) assistance to Nepal for the promotion of the agriculture sector in all the seven provinces across the country.

Other Developments

[US Dismisses China's Rejection of UN Accusations of Arms Transfers to Myanmar](#)

[Bangladesh, Brahmaputra serve as proxy for Sino-Indian conflict](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The first-ever [Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\) – Central Asia Summit](#) took place in Jeddah on July 19. The leaders announced the action plan adopted by the GCC and the Central Asian countries for the period of 2023-2027, which included political and security dialogue, economic cooperation and investment opportunities, and the establishment of effective partnerships between the business sectors.

Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, [Mohammed bin Salman stated](#), "the challenges facing our world today require that we exert all efforts to strengthen cooperation among our countries to achieve regional security and stability", stressing the importance of "sovereignty, independence and values of each country and the principle of non-interference in the international affairs of any".

President of Kazakhstan, [Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, noted](#) "Synergy of Central Asia's potential and the enormous opportunities of the Gulf countries can set a higher level to our multifaceted partnership. While President Tokayev commended the dynamic trade between Central Asia and the GCC, he stated that the trade figures have yet to demonstrate the real potential. Therefore, emphasised on the need to increase the range of goods to boost mutual trade, expressing Kazakhstan's readiness to step up exports to the Gulf countries in 100 commodities worth USD 400 million in the shortest possible time. Furthermore, he also reiterated his proposal at the recent SCO Summit to host an international energy forum in Kazakhstan, inviting oil and gas exporters of the Gulf member states to participate.

[The theme of the Rock 2023 drills](#), which will be held in the Minsk Region from September 1-6 under the aegis of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), will be a "clean-up operation following an accident at a nuclear facility with the engagement". Belarusian Emergencies Minister Vadim Sinyavsky said that the drills are to manage "the process, the defence plans, internal and external, which will be worked out in training in the event of such accidents".

Other Developments

[Azerbaijan Hosts Shusha Global Media Forum](#)

[Swiss Initiative Promotes Water Cooperation in Central Asia](#)

[Ministries of Labour of Kyrgyzstan and South Korea sign memorandum of Cooperation](#)

[Kazakhstan adopts visa-free entry system for GCC countries at GCC-Central Asia Summit](#)

[Deputy Head of the Cabinet of Ministers and Head of State National Security Kamchybek Tashiev says no border incidents with Tajikistan occurred in the past six months](#)



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