

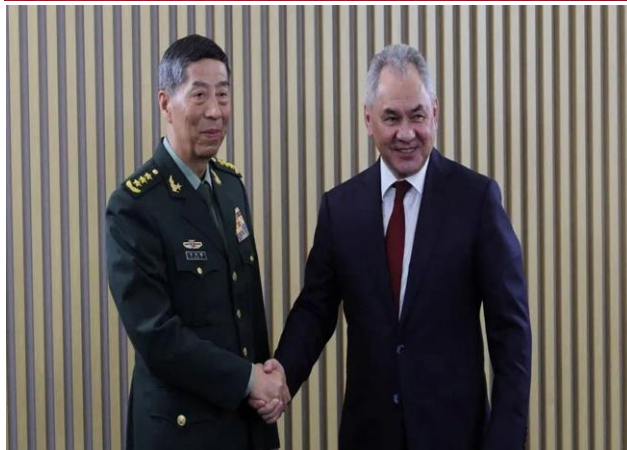


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives August 16, 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.

Cover Image:

South Asia: Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other parliamentarians after the dissolution of the assembly on August 9, 2023, in Islamabad. Source: [Mid Day](#)

Southeast Asia: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi paid a courtesy call to Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in Singapore on August 11, 2023. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore](#))

China: Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu met with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu on the sidelines of a security conference in Moscow on August 15, 2023. Source: [CNN](#)

Central Asia: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Murat Nurtleu had a meeting with OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani as part of his official visit to Kazakhstan on August 11. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 2

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 4

China

Angana Guha Roy 6

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 8

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

Following the dissolution of the Shehbaz Sharif-led government on August 9, Baluchistan Awami Party (BAP) Senator Anwarul Haq Kakar was [sworn in as the caretaker Prime Minister](#) of Pakistan on August 14. Mr. Kakar is considered to be a [pro-establishment](#) (Army) politician in social and political circles of Pakistan. [Sindh](#) and [Baluchistan](#) Provincial Assemblies were also dissolved on August 11 and 12 respectively, while [Punjab](#) and [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa](#) Assemblies were dissolved earlier in January 2023.

A military convoy escorting the Chinese workers was [attacked in Gwadar](#), Baluchistan on August 13. Troops foiled the attack killing two gunmen. Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack.

On August 15, the Taliban announced a public holiday to celebrate the second anniversary of the takeover of Kabul. The Taliban Spokesperson [Zabiullah Mujahid](#) said, "Now that overall security is ensured in the country, the entire territory of the country is managed under a single leadership, an Islamic system is in place and everything is explained from the angle of Sharia". Meanwhile, the Taliban has cancelled the licences of [216 aid organisations](#) in the last year while almost [30 million](#) people remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

Other Developments

[The Government of Japan has provided USD 547,443 as Humanitarian Assistance for Development of Northern Sri Lanka.](#)

[Sri Lanka's cabinet had approved the scrapping of an agreement with Hambantota Oil Refinery \(Pvt.\) Ltd, to lease 1,200 acres of land to build a refinery.](#)

[Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on August 14 called an emergency meeting following Supreme Court verdict which paved the way for two former Prime Ministers to be put under trial over allegations of corruption.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi commenced a [three-nation visit](#) to Singapore, Malaysia, and Cambodia on August 10 "to strengthen strategic communication". On August 11, [Wang Yi met with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong](#), Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Minister for Foreign Affairs Vivian Balakrishnan in Singapore. The two sides reaffirmed the countries' "[substantive and longstanding](#)" bilateral relations. Deputy Prime Minister Wong expressed in-principal support for China's interest to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

During [Wang Yi's visit to Malaysia](#), he paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister YAB Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim and held talks with Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs Zambry Abd Kadir in Penang. The Chinese Minister expressed Beijing's willingness "to deepen cooperation between the two countries in such areas as agricultural technology and food security and import more quality agricultural products from Malaysia."

The Chinese Foreign Minister capped off his three-nation [visit in Cambodia](#). During his visit, the Chinese Foreign Minister met with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Cambodian Prime Minister-designate Kitti Tesaphibal Pundit Hun Manet as well as Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn. Wang Yi congratulated the Cambodian People's Party for its overwhelming victory in the general elections. The Chinese minister has expressed Beijing's willingness "to work with the new Cambodian government to build a high-quality, high-level and high-standard China-Cambodia community with a shared future."

Amidst heightened tensions between China and the Philippines, the latter has announced that it will [send more supplies to a remote outpost](#) on Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea. This comes after the Philippines' last resupply mission to the outpost was blocked by Chinese coastguard vessels. On August 10, the Philippine military Chief of Staff General Romeo Brawner stated that "we have plans to deploy more ships, even our aircraft, to be able to guard our exclusive economic zone. We really have to establish our presence in the area, it's all about numbers".

Other Developments

[In effort to engage Asean members, US hosts new fellowship training programme](#)

[Indonesia delays opening of China-funded Jakarta-Bandung railway amid safety concerns](#)

[Cambodia's Hun Sen unveils new government with son as leader](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

A number of leaders, including those from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel, congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the [77th anniversary of India's Independence](#) on August 15. As a symbol of the "strong civilisational bond" between India and Israel, a cultural square dedicated to [Indian-Jewish relations](#) was unveiled in Eilat, Israel.

India and the United Arab Emirates have started settling bilateral [trade in their local currencies](#) with Indian Oil Corporation making payment in Indian Rupee for the purchase of a million barrels of crude from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC).

In the midst of ongoing tensions and indirect negotiations between Iran and the US, Tehran has agreed to [transfer five American detainees from prison to house arrest](#). According to reports, the US will unfreeze Iranian assets frozen in South Korea worth approximately USD 6 billion as part of the agreement. In light of this, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that any funds received by Iran will be used to [fund its militias throughout the Middle East](#). US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, stressed that Iran's decision to place American detainees under house arrest has nothing to do with the revival of the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#) (JCPOA).

Saudi Arabia has appointed its [first Ambassador to Palestine](#) as a gesture of support for the Palestinian people. Israeli officials informed that Saudi Ambassador to the Palestinian Authority can meet Palestinian leaders, but will not be permitted to establish a [diplomatic base in Jerusalem](#).

South Africa's Foreign Minister, Naledi Pandor, has informed that 23 countries, including eight Arab countries, have applied to join the ['BRICS' group](#) of developing countries. BRICS Summit will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, on August 22-24.



Other Developments

[India-Saudi ties a defining relationship of this century](#)

[US says no framework agreed yet for Israel-Saudi Arabia normalisation deal](#)

[US would welcome any Iranian steps to slow the nuclear program](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

In a joint statement released on August 15, a day after the conclusion of the [two-day military talks](#), India and China agreed to resolve remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh in an “expeditious manner” and to maintain peace and tranquility along the border. However, the readout of the 19th round of the India-China Corps Commander level meeting did not indicate any immediate breakthrough in the disengagement of troops at the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh.

It was for the first time, the high-level military talks on the lingering border row spanned two days, people familiar with the matter said, adding the duration of the discussions totalled around 17 hours over the two days. According to media reports, India pressed for access to all old patrolling points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) early disengagement at the remaining friction points including legacy ones such as Depsang Plains and Demchok in the meeting. An overall de-escalation of troops in the Ladakh region was also part of the agenda.

[China has lifted its outbound group travel ban to countries](#) including Australia, Japan, South Korea and the US, enacted in January 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. With China's reopening in January this year, the aforementioned nations are among the last remaining countries to see Chinese tourism return. According to reports, China's staggered approach to lifting the ban was influenced by geopolitics and trade.

[China's defense minister Li Shangfu warned against “playing with fire”](#) when it comes to Taiwan in a veiled jab at the United States as he addressed a security conference in Russia. Speaking at the Moscow Conference on International Security, Li said attempts to “use Taiwan to contain China,” would “surely end in failure,” according to state-run news agency Xinhua.

Other Developments

[China, Nepal to Sign Power Trading Agreement Next Month](#)

[Experts raise concern over volatile performance of China-backed projects in Bangladesh](#)

[China's vessel Shi Yan 6 prepares to dock at Colombo port raising doubts over Sri Lanka's promises to India](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

On August 12, Turkmenistan's state news agency (TDH) contacted Turkmen gas Deputy Chairman Myrad Archayev for comment on media reports [discussing potential gas unions and alliances with Russia](#). The request came in response to statements made by Dmitry Birichevsky, a Russian Foreign Ministry official, the previous day. Notably, this marks Turkmenistan's first public objection to other Central Asian countries joining Russia's existing "[gas union](#)" with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

[Turkmenistan's shifting stance](#) in energy export has explicitly emphasised Ashgabat's readiness to develop a Trans-Caspian pipeline that could potentially increase natural gas deliveries to the European Union (EU). The country has long remained ambiguous about the Trans-Caspian pipeline. However, recently Turkmen officials have been vocalising their views. [The Turkmen Foreign Ministry recently announced](#) that "Turkmenistan, being committed to the strategy of diversifying energy flows, express its readiness to continue cooperation with partners in the implementation of the Trans-Caspian pipeline project". A few days after this statement, a Turkmen envoy met with EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, expressing "Turkmenistan's readiness to develop effective cooperation between Turkmenistan and the EU".

The second stage of the [Kanzhar 2023 joint military exercises](#) of the Kazakh and Uzbek armed forces took place in Aktau, Kazakhstan, on August 12. Earlier this month, Uzbekistan conducted the exercise's first command and staff training stage with automated battle simulations. During the second stage, Kazakh Defence Minister Ruslan Zhaksylykov and Uzbek Defence Minister Bakhodir Kurbanov watched the escalation of the exercises aimed at developing interoperability and a response method in case of a terrorist threat and at ensuring military security in Central Asia. According to the exercise's scenario, international terrorist organisations have increased their regional presence, establishing base areas and burying arms and ammunition caches to provide drug trafficking routes. [Kazakhstan's and Uzbekistan's joint special forces detachment's objective](#) was "to detect, localise and liquidate the illegally armed groups".

[On August 11](#), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Murat Nurtleu had a meeting with OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani as part

of his official visit to Kazakhstan. They discussed the political situation in the OSCE space and the Organisation's prospects and also exchanged their views on possible ways to restore confidence and constructive dialogue between the participating states. Minister Osmani presented North Macedonia's priorities at the OSCE and shared the Chairmanship-in-Office's vision of the further development of the Organisation.

Other Developments

[More false starts in Azerbaijan-Karabakh talks](#)

[Azerbaijan: Authorities smash unionization efforts for gig workers](#)

[Saudi Company Installs Central Asia's Largest Wind Turbine in Uzbekistan](#)

[Panel discussion looks at Afghanistan two years after the return of the Taliban](#)

[Uranium and Nuclear Energy: Kazakhstan's Journey Towards Powerful Global Alliance](#)



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