



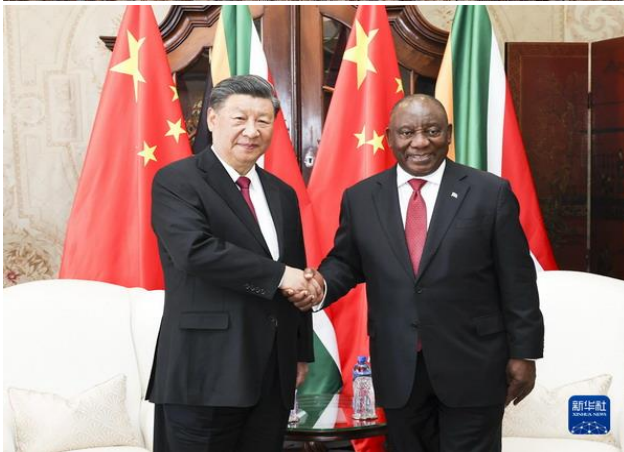
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

August 23, 2023



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Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003
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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: President of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe met with Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong on August 22, 2023. Source: [PMO Singapore](#)

West Asia: Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Jeddah on August 18, 2023. Source: [Official X Handle of Saudi Press Agency](#)

China: Chinese President, Xi Jinping met with South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, in Pretoria, South Africa, on August 22, 2023. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China](#)

Central Asia: President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, met the President of Vietnam, Vo Van Thuong to bolster bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Vietnam on August 21. Source: [President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#).

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

The Taliban celebrated the second anniversary of their return to power [on August 15](#). During the week, multiple international organisations published reports on Afghanistan's present state. A UN report released on August 22 reveals that over [200 extrajudicial killings](#) of former Afghan government officials and security forces have occurred since the Taliban's takeover. Additionally, UNICEF report noted that [1.6 million Afghan citizens](#) have relocated to neighbouring countries since August 2021. A WHO report from August 18 indicates that [28.8 million people](#) in Afghanistan require immediate assistance. Meanwhile, the International Federation of Red Cross reported that 15.5 million people in the country face severe food insecurity, and 2.7 million are [facing famine](#).

Meanwhile, the Taliban, on August 16, banned all [political parties](#) in Afghanistan, stating that such activities are against Islamic law.

Pakistan Election Commission released a [directive](#) on August 17 regarding the Schedule for carrying out the Delimitation of Constituencies under the Population Census-2023. According to the Schedule, the process will end on December 14, delaying the [general elections](#) beyond the constitutionally-mandated deadline.

A violent mob in [Blasphemy riots](#) vandalised 19 churches and 80 Christian homes on August 16 in Faisalabad district, Pakistan. Police arrested at least [140 alleged miscreants](#) following the incident.

President of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe [visited Singapore](#) on August 21-22. He held a meeting with Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong, in which they discussed trade and food security issues and signed an MOU on carbon credits collaboration. Singapore's [Minister for Defense](#), Dr. Ng Eng Hen, also called on President Wickremesinghe. The meeting focused on amplifying security and defence collaboration between the two nations as they underscored the importance of strengthening security partnerships in the South Asian region.

Other Developments

[Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen appreciated the Indian government as "mature," saying any decision Delhi took would be "helpful" for the region.](#)

[More than 200 people were injured in clashes between law enforcers and BNP activists in Habiganj, Barguna, and Narayanganj, Bangladesh on August 19.](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The [20th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers' Meeting](#) was convened in Semarang, Indonesia, on August 21, 2023. The meeting was co-chaired by Rajesh Agrawal, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Dr Zulkifli Hasan, Minister of Trade, Indonesia. The two sides identified the following as priority areas of cooperation - resilient supply chains, food security, energy security, health, and financial stability. The Ministers endorsed the roadmap for reviewing the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA), finalising the Term of Reference and the Work Plan of the Review Negotiations.

The [55th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting \(AEM\)](#) was held in Semarang, Indonesia, 'to promote regional economic integration' on August 19 – 20, 2023. The AEM concluded negotiations on the ASEAN Services Facilitation Framework (ASFF), on upgrading the ASEAN, Australia, and New Zealand Framework (AANZFTA), endorsed the Final Report of the Study on the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA), and initiated preparations to establish an RCEP Support Unit within the ASEAN Secretariat.

Amidst rising tensions in the South China Sea, the Philippines and Australia conducted an [air assault exercise](#) in Rizal town in Palawan province on August 21. The "first major" military drills in 2023 involved 175 troops from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and two platoons from the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The chief of public affairs at the Philippine military stated that "the exercise involved coordinated air, land and sea actions to simulate realistic combat scenarios, enhancing the forces' preparedness and operational readiness".

Other Developments

[Cambodia parliament endorses strongman's son Hun Manet as new PM](#)

[Indonesia's \\$27 billion climate deal with Biden hits delay](#)

[China-Philippines relations: outspoken Teodoro Locsin, who swore at China, appointed 'special envoy' to Beijing](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, arrived in South Africa for the [15th BRICS Summit](#), which is being held in Johannesburg from August 22-24. The BRICS Leaders will discuss several issues, including the "[expansion of groups membership](#)". Several countries from West Asia-North Africa are [interested in joining BRICS](#), including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, and Egypt. Meanwhile, on August 19, Prime Minister Modi spoke by telephone with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, reiterating the need to realize the full potential of [Chabahar Port as a connectivity hub](#).

During his [visit to Saudi Arabia](#) on August 17, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan. The two countries reiterated their intent to [enhance bilateral ties](#) under a deal brokered by China as part of its Global Security Initiative (GSI). Chinese officials are looking to Middle East countries to [shore up Belt and Road \(BRI\) deals](#) as trade relations with the US-led West deteriorate.

US National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, informed that a [prisoner swap agreement](#) between Washington and Tehran is "on track" as Iran transferred five detained US citizens from prison to house arrest. According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the [prisoner exchange process](#) is expected to take up to two months. Meanwhile, Iran has unveiled a drone called '[Mohajer-10](#)', which reportedly resembles the US's MQ-9 Reaper drone. 'Mohajer-10' can [travel 2000 km](#) and carry 300 kg of payload. Iran also continues to deepen its [military cooperation with Russia](#).

Other Developments

[Saudi Arabia, India Sign Cooperation Agreement on Digital Economy](#)

[China-brokered Saudi-Iran deal driving 'wave of reconciliation', says Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi](#)

[Japan plans a meeting with GCC Foreign Ministers in September](#)

[How Americans view Israel, Netanyahu and U.S. -Israel relations in 5 charts](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

[Major General-level military talks are currently underway between India and China](#) at Daulat Beg Oldie and Chushul along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. These talks aim to address the friction points after the 19th round of military talks at the Corps Commanders' level and find solutions to help reduce tensions.

[A report in the Wall Street Journal quoted economists](#) who believe China is entering an era of much slower growth, made worse by unfavourable demographics and a widening divide with the US and its allies, which is jeopardising foreign investment and trade. Rather than just a period of economic weakness, it commented that this could be the dimming of a long era.

Despite reports that Chinese hackers have hacked her Department's emails, US Commerce Secretary [Gina Raimondo is scheduled to visit China](#) in the coming week for meetings with senior Chinese government officials and US business leaders. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Raimondo convey a message that the US is not seeking to decouple from China but will protect its national security.

In his second visit to South Africa for the BRICS Summit, [Chinese President Xi Jinping called on South Africa](#) to join him in boosting the countries' combined influence on international affairs in the Global South. During a joint press conference with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, he said, "We support substantive progress in the G20 and support South Africa employing a greater role".

Other Developments

[Chinese research ship Shi Yan 6 requests Sri Lanka port call, raising possible security concerns in India](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, arrived in Vietnam for an [official visit on August 21](#). President Tokayev met the President of Vietnam, Vo Van Thuong and held talks wherein they discussed the prospects for developing cooperation in trade, economic, investment, energy, transport and logistics, agro-industrial, cultural and humanitarian spheres. Both presidents signed [12 agreements](#) to bolster bilateral relations.

The UN Security Council convened an [emergency meeting](#) to discuss the Azerbaijani blockade in Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed Armenian enclave in the territory of Azerbaijan. Earlier in the month, a former International Criminal Court prosecutor said the blockade might amount to a 'genocide' of the local Armenian population – an assertion that Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said at the emergency meeting. Recently [residents of Nagorno-Karabakh](#) substantiated this claim by stating that owing to the blockade, access to food, medicines and other essential supplies as the blockade drags into its ninth month. During the debate, many argued that the [Lachin Corridor](#) – connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to the rest of the world must be reopened for humanitarian aid. At the same time, the speakers urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to normalise their relations.

[According to Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó](#), as Hungary and Turkmenistan signed a political agreement on the supply of Turkmen gas to Hungary on August 20, commercial negotiations between the two countries' companies are expected to follow. He further said, "Turkmenistan's intention is quite clear for Hungary to become one of the directions of potential supplies of Turkmen gas to Europe and one of the transit countries".

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan increases import of light vehicles from China 7.5 times since January 2023](#)

[Azerbaijan's Armed Forces Shell Armenian Positions - Serviceman Killed on August 21](#)

[From Armenia To Greece: India's Geopolitics Unsettles Turkey, Azerbaijan, And Pakistan Triad](#)



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