



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## India's Proximity Archives

### September 20, 2023



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Delhi Policy Group

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

[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://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, East 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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Image:

**South Asia:** Ambassador of China to Afghanistan Zhao Sheng presented a copy of credentials to Amir Khan Muttaqi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on September 13, 2023. Source: [X/@HafizZiaAhmad1](https://twitter.com/HafizZiaAhmad1)

**East Asia:** Chairman of State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Kim Jong-un with President of Russia, Vladimir Putin during Russia-North Korea talks at Vostochny Cosmodrome on September 13. Source: [President of Russia](https://www.president.ru/)

**Southeast Asia:** Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, India and Mr. Luke Goh, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Law and Second Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore in New Delhi on September 18, 2023. (Source: [MEA Spokesperson/ Official Twitter](https://twitter.com/MEA_Spokesperson/))

**West Asia:** President Biden addressed the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 19, 2023. Source: [Official X Handle/President Biden](https://twitter.com/OfficialXHandle/PresidentBiden)

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## South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On September 13, the ambassador of China to Afghanistan Zhao Sheng presented a copy of his credentials to the Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. China is the first country to formally appoint a new ambassador since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. Other diplomats serving in Kabul with the title of 'Ambassador' were [appointed before 2021](#) and have not presented ambassadorial credentials to the Taliban. China's foreign ministry said that "this is the normal rotation of China's ambassador to Afghanistan", while Amir Khan Muttaqi described Zhao's appointment as a "significant step with a significant message." Earlier, China signed a [mining](#) and [Oil extraction](#) deal with the Taliban.

Pakistan Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir [visited Turkiye](#) on September 12-13. During the visit, he met President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other civil and military leadership. The meetings were focused on enhancing defence collaboration and training cooperation between the two countries.

Bangladesh Navy Chief Admiral M Nazmul Hassan [visited India](#) from September 12-16. During the bilateral interactions, cooperation issues, like coordinated patrol along the international maritime boundary line, bilateral exercise BONGOSAGAR, and conduct of naval training were discussed.

On the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol held a bilateral meeting on September 18. During the meeting, both sides agreed to finalise Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement to facilitate more Korean investment in Sri Lanka.

### Other Developments

[INS Nireekshak, the Diving Support and Submarine Rescue Vessel arrived at the port of Trincomalee, Sri Lanka on September 14 for a weeklong naval exercise.](#)

[The Indian High Commission has called on authorities to action against Maldivian online media outlets for propagating fake news reports regarding the Indian government and military.](#)

[Launching of Pakistan Navy's PNS Hunain held in Romania](#)

[India offers 1,000 scholarships to Afghan students for 2023-24](#)

## East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Kim Jong-un, Leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, concluded his six-day trip to Russia on September 17. On his first overseas trip in over four years, Kim Jong-un arrived in Russia via his armoured train on [September 13](#) and engaged in high-level talks with Vladimir Putin. During his visit, he took the opportunity to [tour significant military and technology sites](#), including aviation factories in Komsomolsk-on-Amur and the Russian Pacific Fleet. [On September 16](#), Kim Jong-un and Russian Defence Minister Shoigu held discussions on strengthening "strategic and tactical coordination" between the two countries' militaries. Kim Jong-un inspected Russia's nuclear-capable bomber and hypersonic missiles.

After the meeting between North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un and Russian President Vladimir Putin, [South Korea's National Security Council \(NSC\)](#) remarked that North Korea and Russia would "pay a price" if they violate UN Security Council resolutions. It also stated that the council was taking seriously the two countries' discussions on military cooperation, including the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). The country urged North Korea and Russia not to trade weapons.

On September 17, [China flew 28 warplanes](#) around Taiwan for unspecified "long-range" missions. The authorities reported that 20 of the aircraft detected crossed the median line of the waterway separating Taiwan and mainland China. The Defence Ministry of China stated that it was conducting missions "such as long-range exercises and training and monitoring the situation with patrol aircraft and ships." From September 13-14, 68 Chinese aircraft and 10 naval vessels were detected around the island by Taiwan's Defence Ministry.

North Korea fired [two ballistic missiles](#) off its east coast on September 13, while Kim Jong-un was in Russia. Japan's coastguard reported that both missiles fell into the Sea of Japan outside Japan's EEZ. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said: "Our military has strengthened surveillance and vigilance in preparation for further launches while maintaining full readiness by closely cooperating with the US." Tokyo has lodged a protest with Beijing through diplomatic channels.

## Other Developments

[South Korea's Yoon fights 'ideology war' at home as critics slam his treatment of historical figures, war heroes](#)

[Japan's Kishida taps pro-Taiwan MP as new defence minister in cabinet shake-up](#)

## Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The [17<sup>th</sup> India- Singapore Foreign Office Consultations \(FOC\)](#) was convened on September 18 in New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, India and Mr. Luke Goh, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Law and Second Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore. The two sides discussed ways to strengthen the Strategic Partnership and enhance cooperation in areas of food security, green energy, health and pharma, skill development, digitalisation, defence and security and people-to-people ties.

ASEAN launched its first-ever maritime exercises, [ASEX 01-Natuna exercises](#), in Indonesia on September 19. The exercises involve the participation of hundreds of troops from September 19- 23. Five warships from Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore are expected to sail from the island of Batam to an area near the Natuna Islands. Admiral Yudo Margono, commander of Indonesia's armed forces, told the event's opening ceremony that "the unity of ASEAN will always be well maintained".

Myanmar hosted the [20th ASEAN Air Chiefs Conference](#) from September 13-15 in Naypyitaw. The conference was chaired by General Htun Aung, Myanmar's air force chief. Air Force chiefs from Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam were in attendance to discuss cooperation in defence, combating extremism and disaster relief. However, the meeting was skipped by air force chiefs of Indonesia and Malaysia. The chiefs of the Philippine and Singapore air forces sent video messages instead for discussions on "cooperation for a sustainable environment".

The military government of Myanmar and Russia signed a [memorandum on "cooperation in election activities"](#) on September 13. The memorandum was signed during a recent visit of the Myanmar delegation to Russia to "explore Russia's election methods, conditions for conducting elections, campaign procedures", as reported by the Global New Light of Myanmar. While Russia is scheduled for its next presidential elections in 2024, Myanmar is reported to likely hold fresh elections in 2025.



## Other Developments

[US, Philippines plan upgrades to airport, naval base near Taiwan](#)

[Indonesia promises better relocation package for islanders after clashes over Chinese project.](#)



## West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

On September 18, as part of a [prisoner swap agreement](#), the United States and Iran freed five detainees each. President Biden [thanked Qatar and Oman for their help](#) in facilitating this agreement with Iran following months of American diplomatic efforts. Meanwhile, addressing the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 19, President Biden stressed the importance of the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) in demonstrating Washington's efforts to build a more [sustainable and integrated Middle East](#).

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, in his remarks at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) reiterated Washington's resolve to [promote ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia](#). Adding that any future agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia must include a [two-state solution](#) to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Continuing [China's outreach to the Middle East](#), Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will visit Beijing in the coming week. As part of their deepening ties with China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are promoting [Mandarin Chinese education](#) in their countries.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received letters from Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi demonstrating the two countries' [resolve to enhance bilateral relations](#). The Houthi delegation has been invited to Riyadh as part of Oman-mediated talks between [Yemen's Houthi rebels](#) and Saudi Arabia.

In addition to Saudi Arabia, the UAE has shown interest in [power grid connectivity with India](#). As the European grid will also be connected to the Gulf countries, India's grid connectivity with the UAE and Saudi Arabia would enable it to supply power to Europe. Amid tight supply outlook, [crude prices hover around USD 90/barrel](#).

## Other Developments

[US, Bahrain sign strategic security and economic agreement](#)

[India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor to change the face of the Middle East: Israeli PM](#)

[U.S. exploring defence pact with Saudi Arabia for Israeli normalization - report](#)

[President Biden to meet Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu at UN in awkward rapprochement](#)

## China

by

Angana Guha Roy

[White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi](#) in Malta. The two sides discussed key issues in the U.S.-China bilateral relationship, global and regional security issues, Russia's war against Ukraine, and cross-Strait issues, among other topics," the White House readout of the call said. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the "two sides conducted candid, substantive and constructive strategic communication focusing on stabilizing and improving Sino-US relations." The meeting is part of the Biden administration's efforts to cool down tensions with China.

[Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov](#) in Moscow. The Chinese foreign ministry readout mentioned that Wang Yi has said that both China and Russia pursue an independent foreign policy, and bilateral cooperation "does not target any third party, is not subject to disruption by any third party, and is not swayed by any third party." The Russian Foreign Ministry Moscow and Beijing are closely aligned in their positions on the United States and resolving the Ukraine conflict.

[China and the European Union conducted discussions in Beijing](#) on themes such as artificial intelligence and cross-border data flows. The discussions were part of an EU-China High-level Digital Dialogue. The discussion was held amid disagreements over an investigation launched by EU Commission to impose punitive tariffs to protect European Union producers against cheaper Chinese electric vehicle (EV) imports.

[Chinese ocean research vessel Shin Yan 6](#) has been cleared by the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence to dock at Colombo. A Chinese statement said the ship would help "strengthen scientific research cooperation and exchanges with countries along the Maritime Silk Road and further realise the integration of science and education for the Belt and Road Initiative".

### Other Developments

[Why China's expanding footprint in Bangladesh and beyond is a strategic concern for India](#)

## Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The heads of states of Central Asia and the United States met in New York for the inaugural [C5+1 presidential summit](#) on September 19. The leaders discussed various issues, including security, trade and investment, regional connectivity, "the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations and the ongoing reforms to improve governance and the rule of law". [During the summit](#), emphasis was placed on economic cooperation and the opportunities available for American companies to invest in mineral resources and renewable energy sources.

The fifth [Consultative Meeting of the Heads of States of Central Asia](#) was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on September 14, 2023. The heads of state discussed a wide range of issues of relations between the countries of the region and considered prospects of expanding regional cooperation. The President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, noted that Central Asia has been transforming over the last few years to become a "stable, economically developed and very prosperous region". The meeting was held a week before the '[first ever C5+1 Presidential dialogue](#)'.

At the meeting, the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, proposed the establishment of the [Economic Council of Central Asian States](#). President Mirziyoyev's proposal may not currently have the same level of structure as the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, which already includes Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However, given time, it has the potential to become just as organized and effective.

On September 17, Kazakhstan's national railway company and Westinghouse Air Brake Technologies Corporation (Wabtec) [signed a framework agreement](#) on strategic cooperation during President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's visit to New York to attend the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly. Wabtec President and CEO Rafael Santana revealed the company's plans to invest nearly \$1 billion in Kazakhstan's transport and logistics industry.

Prior to the agreement, Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Roman Skylar took part in the opening ceremony of the [China-Europe Railway Express Cooperation Forum](#) on September 15. The forum was attended by Vice Premier of China's State Council, Ding Xuexiang, who held a bilateral meeting with

Skylar to discuss wide range of trade, economic, transit, transport and investment areas of Kazakh-Chinese cooperation.

## **Other Developments**

[Germany Welcomes Central Asian Govts As Russia Trade Tumbles](#)

[Azerbaijan Says Karabakh Military Action Continues After Us Calls For Halt](#)

[General Prosecutor Of Kyrgyzstan Holds Talks With His Russian And Azerbaijani Counterparts](#)



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