

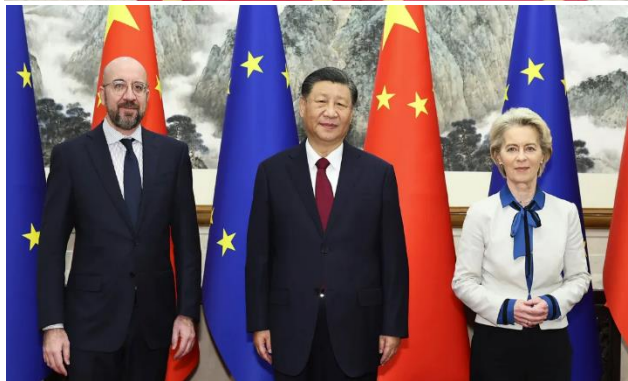


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives December 13, 2023



Karabakh: Back Home After 30 Years Accomplishments and Challenges

December 6, 2023
Baku, Azerbaijan



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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, 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.

Cover Image:

Southeast Asia - President Xi Jinping greeted by the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Pham Minh, upon his arrival in Hanoi on December 12, 2023. Source: [Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of India](#)

West Asia - Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Mohammed bin Salman met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Riyadh on December 6, 2023. Source: [Official Website - President of Russia](#)

China - China's President Xi Jinping met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on December 7, 2023. Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China](#)

Central Asia - Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev attended a forum entitled "Karabakh: Back Home After 30 Years: Accomplishments and Challenges" on December 6, 2023. Source: [President of the Republic of Azerbaijan](#)

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Contents

South Asia

Shreyas Deshmukh 1

Southeast Asia

Anshita Shukla 3

East Asia

Anshita Shukla 4

West Asia

Sanket Joshi..... 5

China

Angana Guha Roy 6

Central Asia

Jayantika Rao T.V. 8

South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On December 12, twenty-three Pakistan Army soldiers were killed and over 30 wounded in a [terrorist attack](#) carried out in Dera Ismail Khan by the Tehreek-i-Jihad Pakistan (TJP). Six terrorists who stormed a military compound were also killed. 21 militants were killed and two soldiers were martyred in two more military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following these major attacks, Pakistan issued a demarche to the Taliban Charge d'Affaires in Islamabad Sardar Ahmad Shakib demanding immediate and verifiable actions from the Afghan Taliban against militant outfits operating in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan Army Chief, General Syed Asim Munir, is on an official [visit to the US](#) from December 10, where he is expected to hold meetings with key defence, foreign policy, and national security officials.

PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif expressed his intention to [normalise Pakistan's ties](#) with its neighbouring countries, particularly India, if he wins the upcoming elections. He said, "We will have to improve our relations with India, Afghanistan, and Iran. We need to ensure stronger relations with China," and recalled that during his government's tenures, two Indian prime ministers – Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi had visited Pakistan.

Asif Durrani, Pakistan's special envoy to Afghanistan, said on December 6, that nearly [450,000 Afghan nationals](#) returned to Afghanistan since October 2023. While, Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Information Jan Achakzai said the government had tasked the law-enforcement authorities with deporting one million [illegal immigrants](#) by January 30, 2024. According to the Taliban Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, over 345,000 Afghans have been [deported from Iran](#) to Afghanistan over the past three months.

India and Maldives held [bilateral discussions](#) to strengthen cooperation in the area of bilateral security. Indian Ambassador to the Maldives, Munu Mahawar, accompanied by the officials from the High Commission, paid a courtesy call to Minister of Homeland Security and Technology Ali Ihusaan on December 11.

Other Developments

[Maldivian President Dr. Muizzu announced decision to establish the Maldives Embassy in Ankara](#)

[IMF board approves second tranche of \\$4.7bn loan for Bangladesh](#)

[US Treasury imposes sanctions on two Taliban officials for serious Human Rights violations](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

China's President Xi Jinping commenced his [first two-day visit to Vietnam](#) on December 12. In President Xi's first trip in six years, the two countries announced 37 cooperation deals, including on diplomatic ties, railways, and telecommunications. [Vietnam has agreed](#) to "support the initiative of building a community of shared future for humankind". During President Xi's visit, he is scheduled to meet President Vo Van Thuong, Prime Minister Chinh, and other Vietnamese officials.

Singapore's incoming Prime Minister Lawrence Wong concluded a [four-day working visit to Beijing](#) on December 8. During his visit, he held meetings with Premier Li Qiang, Vice-Premier He Lifeng, and Finance Minister Lan Fo'an. Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong co-chaired the [19th Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation \(JCBC\) meeting](#) with Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang. At the JCBC meeting, the two sides signed 24 memorandums of understanding on cooperation, including a bilateral visa-free policy and a protocol to further upgrade the China-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (CSFTA).

The Philippine Coast Guard accused China of [firing water cannon and ramming resupply vessels](#) and a coast guard ship on December 10. The Chinese Coast Guard stated that the two Philippine vessels ignored repeated warnings and intentionally rammed its ship. Philippine coast guard spokesperson stated that one of the Philippine vessels "suffered serious engine damage". On December 12, the Philippines' foreign ministry [summoned China's ambassador to Manila](#) to protest "back-to-back harassments" in the South China Sea. The Philippines [President Marcos Jr. reacted](#) to the recent developments stated "they have only further steeled our determination to defend and protect our nation's sovereignty".

Other Developments

[China brokers talks in Myanmar between military junta and rebel groups that yield 'positive results'](#)

[Thailand, Myanmar to form aid task force as border unrest intensifies](#)

[Asean+3 agree on new financing facility to fend off crisis](#)

East Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

US National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, met with South Korea's National Security Advisor Cho Tae-Yong, and Japanese National Security Advisor, Takeo Akiba, for the [fourth trilateral National Security Advisors meeting](#) in Seoul on December 9. The three sides agreed on new initiatives to deal with North Korea's threats in cyberspace, including cryptocurrency abuses and space launches. This comes after North Korea warned that it would deploy more spy satellites. Japan's security adviser, [Takeo Akiba](#), characterised North Korea's "illicit cyber activities a source of funds for the isolated state's nuclear missile development".

Chinese Coast Guard alleged that Japanese fishing boat and several patrol vessels [intruded into waters](#) around the tiny islands, Senkaku in Japan on December 9. The Japanese Coast Guard stated that two Chinese maritime patrol boats left Japan's territorial waters around the islands after receiving warnings. It further added that the Japanese patrol vessels were protecting a Japanese fishing boat that had been approached by the Chinese ships.

On December 8, Taiwan reported that 12 Chinese fighter jets and a suspected weather balloon [had crossed the Taiwan Strait's median line](#). The balloon was detected 101 nautical miles south-west of the northern Taiwanese city of Keelung, which travelled eastwards for about an hour, crossing the strait before disappearing. Chiu Kuo-cheng, Taiwan Defence Minister, stated that "their initial understanding was that it was probably a weather balloon, but felt the ministry had an obligation to report this to the public".

Other Developments

[Taiwan intelligence says China leadership held meeting on election interference](#)

[North Korea condemns US veto of Gaza ceasefire call at UN](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, visited the UAE and Saudi Arabia on December 6. During his visit to Saudi Arabia, President Putin discussed [cooperation in OPEC+](#) with the Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman. He welcomed the resumption of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, expressed support for efforts to achieve a comprehensive political solution to the Yemen crisis, and expressed eagerness to increase joint investments. As part of his visit to the UAE, President Putin discussed issues of mutual interest with a [focus on Gaza](#), and explored prospects to further strengthen bilateral relations.

On December 8, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, the US vetoed a [United Nations Security Council draft resolution](#) that would have demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and an unconditional release of all hostages. Washington expressed concern that an [immediate ceasefire in Gaza](#) would “only plant the seeds for the next war”. Meanwhile, Benny Gantz, Israeli War Cabinet Minister, has informed US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that Tel Aviv will respond to rising [Hezbollah rocket attacks](#) on northern Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, held a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 10. Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed concern about [Russia's anti-Israel stance at the United Nations](#) and the cooperation between Moscow and Tehran. The Russian President, for his part, reiterated the [rejection of terrorism in all its forms](#) and emphasised the need for de-escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Other Developments

[External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar reiterates India's long-standing position on Palestine to Palestinian PM](#)

[“Will remain in touch”: S Jaishankar speaks to Israeli Foreign Minister on Gaza](#)

[Blinken calls sexual violence inflicted by Hamas ‘beyond anything I’ve seen’](#)

[Iran's President Raisi says ‘genocide’ unfolding in Gaza as he meets Russia's Putin](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

Amidst reports of China's [economic downturn](#), President Xi Jinping warned that China's economic recovery is "still at a critical stage". Communist party leaders have pledged to support growth with further "proactive" fiscal and "effective" monetary policy in the new year. In a speech to a political gathering in Beijing, President Xi Jinping said that, although the economic recovery from the pandemic was improving, it faced an adverse international political and economic environment and overlapping domestic cyclical and structural challenges.

On the backdrop of a recent surge in respiratory illness cases, approximately ten million subscribers have withdrawn from [China's state health insurance system](#). The development has been attributed to higher costs of healthcare schemes in China as people are going through a post-pandemic economic downturn. Enrolment across China's state-subsidised health insurance system, which covers over 1.3bn policyholders across multiple programmes, fell by an unprecedented 19mn people in 2022, according to official data.

On December 7, European Council president Charles Michel and European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen [met President Xi](#) Jinping and Prime Minister Li Qiang in Beijing. This is the first in-person EU-China summit held after the Covid Pandemic. During the meeting, EU leaders voiced their concern over the trade surplus in favor of China. Von der Leyen attributed the root causes of China's trade surplus with the EU, a lack of market access for European companies and Beijing's preferential treatment of domestic companies as well as overcapacity in Chinese production. However, China's foreign ministry director-general for European affairs Wang Lutong said in the post summit briefing that the Asian country's surplus with the EU was already falling. Further, dismissing EU's growing concern over China's €400 billion trade surplus with the EU in 2022, Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said "Both sides discussed what Brussels has been calling imbalance about bilateral trade – we don't think China could be held accountable for this."

In a letter sent to US Vice-President Kamala Harris and House Speaker Mike Johnson, [Micronesia's former leader David Panuelo has warned](#) that a Sino-American war could ensue if the Compacts of Free Association [Cofa] agreement is not signed this year, between Washington and three Pacific island nations, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau. The Cofa give Washington

exclusive access to the land, water and air of the three Pacific island nations to boost American security. In exchange, the island nations receive financial help and their citizens can study, live and work in the US.

Other Developments

[Bangladesh embraces wind energy with Chinese solutions](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Azerbaijan's President, [Ilham Aliyev warned France and India](#) against providing weapons to Armenia, saying such supplies could trigger a new war in the region. At the forum entitled "Karabakh: Back Home After 30 Years: Accomplishments and Challenges", which was organised to celebrate Azerbaijan's victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, [President Aliyev said](#), "As the countries, who supply Armenia with weapons like France and India, now pour the oil on fire and create unrealistic illusions in Armenia that using these weapons they can take back Karabakh."

[On December 8](#), Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko spoke about Kazakhstan's 2023 foreign policy and how middle power countries can contribute to the restoration of dialogue at the global level. Vassilenko highlighted that over the past year, Kazakhstan's foreign policy had gone into overdrive, and the relations with many partners have been strengthened. He said Kazakhstan, as a middle power, will use its 'multi-vector foreign policy to create positive, constructive, balanced relations with all to restore global dialogue'.

The [7th meeting of the Astana Club](#) held on December 11-12. The discussions covered eight thematic panel sessions, including on Central Asia's greater integration and emerging prospects for regional development, rising [economic fragmentation](#), and the future of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The hurdles appeared in [China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project](#) that was announced during the China-Central Asia Summit in May 2023. Kyrgyz Cabinet Chief, [Akylbek Japarov told parliament](#) that while the Kyrgyz portion is nearly complete and could launch in 2024, the funding has not been completely secured. Further, he stated that, "We and Uzbekistan need this road. And China, our friends, is dissuading us from the project". China's enthusiasm for the project is waning, as Beijing grapples with deepening domestic economic woes, including a local debt crisis and youth unemployment.

Other Developments

[Azerbaijan And Tajikistan Discuss Bilateral Cooperation](#)

[RSF worries about a former journalist held incommunicado in Turkmenistan](#)

[Meeting of FM of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Brussels is not scheduled](#)



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