



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

India's Proximity Archives

January 10, 2024



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Delhi Policy Group

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

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.

Cover Image:

South Asia - India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Mr. N.P. Saud co-chaired the 7th meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission in Kathmandu, on January 4, 2024.

Source: [X/@DrSJJaishankar](https://twitter.com/DrSJJaishankar)

East Asia - Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, meeting Dmytro Kuleba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, on January 7, 2024. Source: [X/@MofaJapan_jp](https://twitter.com/MofaJapan_jp)

West Asia - Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Ahmedabad on January 9, 2024. Source: [Official X Handle/WAM English](https://twitter.com/OfficialXHandle/WAM/English)

Central Asia - The Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan, Arman Shakkaliev meeting the Minister of Investments, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan Laziz Kudratov in Tashkent, on January 5, 2024. Source: [Ministry of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan](https://www.mti.kz/en/press-releases/2024/01/05)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar, [visited Nepal](#) on January 4-5. Dr. Jaishankar co-chaired the 7th meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Mr. N.P. Saud. During the meeting, they reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral cooperation, including developmental partnership and exchanged agreements/MoUs related to implementing High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) in Nepal, power trade, science and technology, and renewable energy. Dr Jaishankar paid courtesy calls on the President of Nepal, Ram Chandra Paudel, and the Prime Minister of Nepal, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.

India and Maldives relations strained after the Maldivian Minister of Youth Empowerment and some other government officials made disrespectful remarks against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a [social media post](#) on January 2. Following the incident, newly elected Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu faced criticism from opposition parties. He [suspended three ministers](#) who made these remarks. Former Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih condemned the use of 'hateful language' against India, saying New Delhi has always been a good friend of Maldives.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh has been elected for a fourth successive term in the national elections held on January 7. The Bangladeshi electoral authority registered a 40 percent voter turnout amidst a [boycott and shut down](#) by the main opposition party BNP. The new Cabinet is expected to take oath on January 11. Meanwhile, the U.S. and the United Nations (UN) voiced [concern over violence](#) and reports of irregularities on the day of the elections. Indian PM Narendra Modi [congratulated](#) Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina for her victory.

Other Developments

[Sri Lanka approves bill to set up office for national unity as part of reconciliation efforts with Tamils](#)

[Sri Lanka to join US-led naval operations against Houthi rebels in Red Sea](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

The Philippines and the United States concluded a [two-day joint patrol](#) in the South China Sea on January 5, 2024. The patrol involved four Philippine Navy vessels and four ships from the U.S. Indo-Pacific command, including an aircraft carrier, a cruiser and two destroyers. Romeo Brawner, Philippine armed forces chief, stated that the US and Philippines "are advancing a rules-based international order and a free and open Indo-Pacific region in the face of regional challenges".

The Philippine military reported on January 4 that [two Chinese vessels shadowed Philippine and US ships](#) conducting joint patrols in the South China Sea. Colonel Xerxes Trinidad, Chief of the Philippine military's public affairs office stated, "we are hoping that China and other foreign countries will respect our sovereignty and right to conduct the activity that is following international law". This comes after Wu Qian, spokesperson of China's Foreign Ministry, stated that China "will not turn a blind eye to the Philippine's repeated provocations and harassment".

The military government of Myanmar has announced [its intent to hold a census in 2024](#), despite the ongoing conflict. The junta has reiterated that the census is a prerequisite for a general election. Soe Win, deputy commander-in-chief of the military, stated that "we need the census to complete the voter roll and a biometric database". The elections were planned for August last year but were postponed due to protracted domestic instability.

Other Developments

[Myanmar ethnic alliance reportedly seizes key city on China border](#)

[Indonesia election 2024: Anies, Ganjar attack Prabowo over defence, China policies in third presidential debate](#)

East Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa made an [unannounced visit to Ukraine](#) on January 7. During her meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, Minister Kamikawa pledged \$37 million to the NATO Trust Fund. She announced that [Japan would provide equipment](#) such as anti-unmanned aircraft detection systems and winter support by offering five mobile gas turbine generators and transportation support for seven large transformers. Kamikawa also met [President Volodymyr Zelensky](#), who offered condolences for Japan's New Year's Day earthquake and thanked Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida for "elevating the level of relations" with Ukraine during Japan's G7 presidency in 2023.

On [January 8](#), South Korea's intelligence agency provided its first photographic evidence alleging North Korea is supplying weapons to Hamas in its war with Israel. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) released a photo of a North Korean F-7 rocket-propelled grenade, the type believed to be used by Hamas fighters. The report featured a photo of a rocket part with Korean characters. The NIS is "[collecting and accumulating](#)" detailed evidence on the scale and timing of the purported arms shipments.

After North Korea fired more than [200 artillery rounds on January 5](#) near a disputed maritime border with South Korea, the latter carried out [a live-fire exercise in response](#). South Korea's military Yeionpyeong and Baengnyeong – two frontline islands' residents were forced to evacuate their houses and ordered into shelters. South Korean Defence Minister, Shin Won-sik called the shelling "a provocative act that threatens peace on the Korean peninsula". Additionally, the South accused the North of escalating tensions in the wake of the cancellation of an agreement signed in 2018 to reduce military activities, such as surveillance near their shared border. They also stated that Friday's exchange of fire marked "the end of a period of calm along the inter-Korean border".

North Korea again fired more than [60 artillery rounds](#) in the same area on January 6. However, unlike the previous day, the South Korean military did not respond to North Korea's provocation.

Other Developments

[Taiwan Issues Alert Over China Firing Satellite Over South Of Island](#)

[South Korea's Yoon Vows to "Completely Block" North's Nuclear Threat](#)

[Russia Using North Korean Ballistic Missiles In Ukraine, White House Says](#)

[Japan Lifts Operational Ban on World's Biggest Nuclear Plant](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Ahmedabad ahead of the ['Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024'](#) to be held from January 10-12. India and the UAE have further deepened their partnership by signing three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to expand bilateral investment cooperation in renewable energy, food processing, and healthcare. Meanwhile, on January 4, India condemned the [bombings in Kerman city of Iran](#), which occurred during the commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the targeted killing of Qassem Soleimani. The Afghanistan branch of Islamic State, [ISIS-Khorasan](#), has claimed responsibility for the bombings in Iran.

A visit by US Secretary of State [Antony Blinken to the Middle East](#) from January 4-11 marked his fourth visit to the region since the terror attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. Secretary Blinken reiterated Washington's determination to prevent a widening of the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Moreover, he emphasised that Israelis should be able to live in peace and security free from terror attacks, the West Bank and Gaza should be reunited under the Palestinian Authority, and the future of the region should be marked by integration.

Amidst US de-escalation efforts, on January 9, Iran-backed Lebanese militant group [Hezbollah launched explosive drones](#) targeting the Israeli command base in Safed. Meanwhile, Wissam Tawil, a senior [Hezbollah commander](#), was killed in an Israeli drone strike in south Lebanon. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant warned Hezbollah that the IDF could ["copy-paste" Gaza war to Beirut](#).

Other Developments

[UAE President and US Secretary of State discuss bilateral relations and regional developments](#)

[Gaza Hostage Talks Inch Closer to a Restart as Blinken Meets With Israeli Leaders](#)

['Heinous': World reacts to twin blasts that kill dozens in Iran](#)

[India signs Bilateral Haj Agreement 2024 with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia \(KSA\)](#)

[IDF spokesperson says war with Hamas has 'shifted a stage' to less intense combat](#)

China

by

Angana Guha Roy

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu arrived in Beijing for a [state visit](#) at the invitation of President Xi Jinping on January 9, 2024. During this visit, President Muizzu is [seeking support from China](#) to bolster and stabilise the Maldivian economy by increasing the number of tourists visiting the country. The call comes at the heels of a diplomatic row with India, Maldives' top tourism market in 2022 after derogatory remarks were made towards Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. President Muizzu emphasised China as Maldives' "closest" ally and praised President Xi's infrastructure projects.

Bangladesh's [Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said that his country won't succumb to China](#) as its loan from Beijing is less than 1 per cent of GDP. "We don't have too much influence of China in Bangladesh," he said when asked about Beijing's growing influence in the region. Abdul Momen said that there was propaganda that Bangladesh was also becoming indebted to China. He said a country could be considered to be in debt of another country if its foreign borrowing was more than 55 per cent whereas "Our total borrowing is only 13.6 per cent".

Amid a slight thaw in relations between Washington and Beijing, [US and Chinese defense officials met face-to-face at the Pentagon](#) on January 8-9, for the first time since January 2020. The talks were led by the Pentagon's Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China Michael Chase and Maj. Gen. Song Yanchao, deputy director of China's Central Military Commission's office for international military cooperation. During the two days of talks the two sides discussed defense relations and the US side "highlighted the importance of maintaining open lines of military-to-military communication," according to a readout provided by DOD spokesperson Lt. Col. Martin Meiners.

Other Developments

[Eye on China, India plans ISI certification for Nepali cement, electrical products](#)

['Learn from Sri Lanka': Maldivian President warned of China's debt-trap policy as he arrives in Beijing](#)

[China and India race to expand aircraft carrier fleets](#)

[India declines offer of special envoys from China and other countries after Balakot strikes](#)

[Taiwan prepares to vote in election overshadowed by tensions with Beijing](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Kazakh Minister of Trade and Integration, Arman Shakkaliyev and Uzbek Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade, Laziz Kudratov, [signed a protocol](#) on expanding mutual cooperation on January 5. The [negotiations focused](#) on transit and transport policy issues, modernisation of border checkpoint infrastructure, cross-border and regional cooperation, and preparing for the fourth Forum of Interregional Cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

[On January 3](#), Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev opened the year with a sweeping interview addressing many lingering questions about the deadly political in January 2022. In the [interview](#), published in a state-run publication, President Tokayev came the closest as he has ever come to pinning the blame for the bloodshed on prominent figures close to his predecessor and mentor – Nursultan Nazarbayev, who stepped down in 2019. President Tokayev responded to the critics who accused him of compromising Kazakhstan's sovereignty by inviting foreign troops, particularly Russian troops, to deal with a domestic crisis. He clarified that the appeal was not explicitly made to Russia but to the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), which includes Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan troops.

Dragon Oil Company, owned by the government of Dubai, signed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) with Turkmenbet Company, the national oil company of Turkmenistan. During the meeting, the two sides discussed further ways to enhance bilateral cooperation and explored possibilities of advancing Turkmenistan's energy sector and the oil and gas industry.

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan Starts Building Third Railway To China](#)

[Kazakhstan Takes Over Chairmanship at International Fund for Saving of Aral Sea](#)

[Kazakhstan: Alleged Deripaska Plane Purchase Raises Sanctions Bypass Questions](#)

[Norway's State-Owned Oil Company- Equinor To Leave Azerbaijan After 30 Years](#)

[Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan Negotiate Gas Swap Resumption Amidst Temporary Disruption](#)



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