



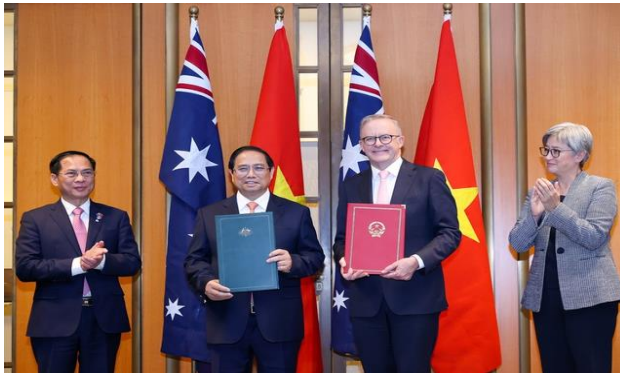
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



India's Proximity Archives

March 13, 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:

Southeast Asia - Vietnam Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese exchange the joint statement on the elevation of Vietnam-Australia relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership on March 7, 2024. Source: [Prime Minister's Office/Official Website](#)

West Asia - Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, met in Jerusalem on March 11, 2024. Source: [Prime Minister's Office, State of Israel](#)

Central Asia - The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev met during President Tokayev's state visit to Azerbaijan on March 11, 2024. Source: [President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)

Indian Ocean Region - A dual carrier operation was conducted by the Indian Navy at the First Naval Commanders' Conference Source: [Indian Navy](#)

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South Asia

by

Shreyas Deshmukh

On Mar 7, Colonel Ahmed Mujuthaba Mohamed of the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) said that MNDF will have [operational authority](#) over the helicopter given by India and the civilian crew that will pilot it. The first batch of Indian military personnel stationed in the Maldives have [departed](#). Earlier, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu announced that he will not renew an [agreement with India](#) to conduct hydrographic surveys. President Muizzu also announced that Maldives is working to establish a 24/7 monitoring system for the Maldivian waters to ensure control of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

JP Singh, the joint secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs of India for the Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran (PAI) division, on March 7 [met with Taliban's](#) Islamic Emiars of Afghanistan foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi. The [press release](#) issued by the Islamic Emiars of Afghanistan (IEA) Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that India has expressed interest in expanding political and economic cooperations with Afghanistan and enhance trade through Chabahar port. Spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs of India, Randhir Jaiswal, later affirmed this development and also added that the "Indian delegation also [held meetings](#) with former President Mr Hamid Karzai, UNAMA officials and members of the Afghan business community. The delegation held discussions on India's humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan and also discussed use of Chabahar port by Afghan traders,"

Political realignment of Pakistan is about conclude as newly elected members of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [cabinets were sworn in](#) on March 6. PMLN led coalition under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif formed the government in Punjab, while Ali Amin Gandapur of PTI became Chief Minister of KP. PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari took the oath as [president of Pakistan](#) on March 10. Also, 19 members of the [federal cabinet](#) was sworn in on March 11.

Other Developments

[Indian Navy commissions INS Jatayu at Minicoy, MH-60R helicopter squadron at Kochi](#)

[Bangladesh imports USD 34 million worth diesel using Friendship Pipeline](#)

[In rare political message, IMF urges resolution of all electoral disputes in Pakistan](#)

Southeast Asia

by

Anshita Shukla

Australia and Vietnam upgraded their relations to a [comprehensive strategic partnership](#) on March 7, 2024. The partnership includes expanded cooperation on a range of issues, including climate, environment and energy, defence and security, economic engagement and education. The two countries have also established an annual ministerial dialogue on energy and minerals to facilitate cooperation in the energy sector.

Australia and ASEAN ended a three-day summit to commemorate 50 years of bilateral relations on March 6, 2024. The [joint statement](#) calls for upholding a "rules-based" order in the Indo-Pacific and urged countries to "avoid any unilateral actions that endanger peace, security and stability in the region". On the issue of Gaza, the joint statement reiterated concern over the "dire" humanitarian situation and called for an "immediate and durable humanitarian ceasefire."

The Foreign Ministry of the Philippines reported on March 12, 2024, that China had submitted several maritime-related proposals to Manila last year. These proposals include 11 concept papers to manage the Second Thomas Shoal and fishing issues around the Scarborough Shoal. One of the proposals "insisted on actions that would be deemed as acquiescence or recognition of China's control and administration over the Ayungin Shoal", read the [official statement by the Department of Foreign Affairs](#) (DFA) of the Philippines. However, DFA reported that these [proposals could not be considered](#) as they are against the national interests of the Philippines.

Other Developments

[US companies to announce investments of more than USD 1.33 billion in the Philippines](#)

[Thai election authority seeks to disband Move Forward Party](#)

[Philippine envoy says US key to Manila's plan to tap oil, gas in South China Sea](#)

East Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) clarified its definition of 'first strike' on [March 8](#). The entry of any Chinese military asset into Taiwan's territorial borders will be considered an act of aggression. In such scenarios, commanders have been authorised to take appropriate measures to maintain national security.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that while ties with the US have improved, [Washington fundamentally misunderstands China](#), and its unilateral actions against Beijing will backfire. On the sidelines of the National People's Congress, Wang Yi said, "The US has been devising various tactics to suppress China and kept lengthening its unilateral sanction list, reaching a bewildering level of unfathomable absurdity". Wang Yi questioned Washington's continued rollout of technology-related sanctions, which include Washington's efforts to limit China's access to semiconductors, and said suppressing China "will eventually harm itself". Additionally, when asked about [increasing tension in the Taiwan Strait](#), Wang Yi stated that the "stronger the commitment to the one-China principle is, the greater the guarantee for the peace across the Strait will be". As such, Wang Yi warned that "whoever engaged in 'Taiwan Independence' on the island will be held accountable by history and whoever in the world connive at and support 'Taiwan Independence' will get burned for playing with fire and taste the bitter fruit of their own doing".

On [March 13](#), Japanese rocket joint venture Space One's maiden rocket launch failed to become Japan's first private firm to put a satellite into orbit when its solid-fuel Kairos rocket burst into flames just seconds after liftoff, in a significant setback for Japan. The Kairos rocket was carrying a mock-up of a government spy satellite. Space One [postponed the rocket's launch on March 9](#) when the firm detected a ship in the downrange 'maritime warning area' just ten minutes before liftoff.

Other Developments

[North Korean Missiles developed with foreign help](#)

[China Congress Report mentions 'Security' record 29 times](#)

[Taiwan needs strategic shift away from conventional warfare](#)

['Was, is & Will Always Be an Integral Part': India rejects China's objections to PM Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh](#)

West Asia

by

Sanket Joshi

Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval met in Jerusalem on March 11. They discussed [developments in Gaza](#), efforts to free the hostages, and humanitarian assistance. Meanwhile, Qatar's Foreign Ministry informed that it is working on a [permanent ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas.

Amidst this, Prime Minister Netanyahu categorically rejected the US-led West's call for the [Palestinian Authority \(PA\) to govern Gaza](#) following the elimination of Hamas. Netanyahu also vowed to proceed with the [offensive in Rafah](#) (southern Gaza strip) to prevent a repeat of the terrorist attack by Hamas that occurred on October 7, 2023. President Biden, on his part, expressed concern about an escalation of conflict into Rafah that could result in widespread civilian casualties. The Biden Administration is reportedly considering conditions for [US military aid to Israel](#) if the IDF moves forward with its planned offensive in Rafah. Rafah is currently a [refuge for about half of Gaza's 2.3 million population](#).

South Africa, in a letter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), warned that the [Palestinians in Gaza were facing starvation](#) and asked the ICJ to order all parties to cease hostilities and release all hostages. It also expressed concerns about Israel breaching ICJ measures already in place.

Other Developments

[Low turnout as conservatives dominates Iran parliamentary election](#)

[Belgium to intervene in South Africa's genocide case against Israel at top UN court](#)

Central Asia

by

Jayantika Rao T.V.

The Presidents of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan discussed prospects for future cooperation and participated in the [Supreme Interstate Council meeting](#) on March 11. On the same day, both leaders also took part in the [ceremony](#) to celebrate the arrival of the first container block train from Xi'an at the Apheron station on the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TKB).

On [March 12](#), Armenia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paruyr Hovhannisyán, told reporters at the National Assembly that Armenia's partnership with the European Union has never been at such a high level. Paruyr's remarks hinted at Armenia's need to strengthen its ties with the EU, which would contribute to strengthening Armenia's sovereignty, development, and diversification of the economy.

On [March 11](#), the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, welcomed the delegation from Uzbekistan, led by Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov. At the meeting, President Rahmon highlighted the importance of the Uzbek delegation's visit in defining future collaboration prospects and noted the rapid development of friendly relations between the two nations in recent years. Prime Minister Aripov emphasised that the open and trustworthy dialogue between the leaders of the two states is a critical factor in strengthening good neighbourliness, strategic partnership, and alliance between the countries.

In an [exclusive interview with the TASS agency](#), the CSTO Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov spoke about the organisation's current relations with the Armenian leadership, the CSTO peacekeeping work and assessed the security situation in Eurasia on March 12. Secretary General Tasmagambetov stated that while the CSTO has not received any official statement from Armenia regarding its decision to remain or suspend its membership, certain developments and sentiments among the Armenian elites have caused concern but he hopes that Armenia takes a "balanced assessment of the prospects for the implementation of various scenarios with regard to the organisation". Additionally, he stated that with the increasing threats and challenges in Eurasia, "as a polycentric system of international relations develops, we will face the need to increase the level of responsibility of regional security systems and, possibly expand their functionality".

Other Developments

[Kazakhstan, UK sign roadmap on critical minerals](#)

[Saudis make big wind power strides in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan](#)

[Kazakhstan pushes to increase trade with India via INSTC](#)

[Turkmenistan gently presses Afghanistan on the Qosh-Tepa Canal Amidst Water Worry](#)

Indian Ocean Region

by

Divya Rai

Iran, China, and Russia began the [sixth edition](#) of the Sea Security Belt-2024 joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman on March 12. The Russian Pacific Fleet's missile cruiser Varyag and frigate Marshal Shaposhnikov; the guided-missile destroyer Urumqi, the guided-missile frigate Linyi and the comprehensive supply ship Dongpinghu from China's 45th escort task force and up to ten vessels and two helicopters from Iran's naval forces are [participating](#). Additionally, representatives from Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Oman, India, and South Africa are joining for the first time as observers. The primary objective of Sea Security Belt international exercise since its inception in 2018 has been to ensure safety in maritime economic activities.

Following the sinking of the UK-owned bulk carrier "[Rubymar](#)" in the Red Sea, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist launched its first fatal attack on the Barbados-flagged and Liberian-owned bulk carrier M/V True Confidence. On March 06, an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) fired from Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen hit the [M/V True Confidence](#) while it was travelling in the Gulf of Aden. The attack claimed three lives—two Vietnamese and one Filipino—and seriously damaged the ship. Closely observing the maritime crisis, the [Indian Navy](#) quickly conducted a rescue mission by INS Kolkata and 21 crew members of the commercial vessel were safely rescued. [Houthis fired five ASBM](#) last week; two of those affected the M/V MSC Sky II and the M/V True Confidence, two shipping boats, while one ASBM was shot down by USS Carney (DDG 64).

From March 5–8, 2024, the Indian Navy hosted the inaugural [Biannual Naval Commanders' Conference](#). The Conference serves as an institutional forum for military-strategic discussions on significant maritime security concerns. The inaugural session was presided over by the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, Shri Rajnath Singh with Chief of the Defence Staff, Defence Secretary and other senior MoD officials, along with the participation from Naval Commanders. In his speech, Raksha Mantri underlined the Indian Navy's role and the significance of Tri-Services Jointness and Integration to positively shape and impact the future battlespace. The conference's first session took place on board the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, while subsequent sessions were hosted in a hybrid.

Other developments

[A comprehensive maritime security exercise called "Sea Defenders-2024" involving the US Coast Guard and the Indian Coast Guard was held in Port Blair.](#)

[The US military along with UK and France downed at least 28 uncrewed aerial vehicles \(UAVs\) launched by the Houthis.](#)

[IORA commemorated its 27th anniversary on March 7.](#)



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