



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



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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

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DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH

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South Asia

India

[India's Foreign Policy in 2020: Challenges from COVID-19, China and the neighbourhood](#)

January 1, 2021, The Hindu

In the world of diplomacy too, COVID-19 was the biggest story, heightening tensions among some nations, most notably evident in the deteriorating U.S. - China relationship, while emerging as an opportunity for others who have offered medical assistance and are now pledging support in the distribution of vaccines.

[Missiles, drones, defence shield – India has a series of military trials planned for 2021](#)

December 30, 2020, The Print

India has a series of military tests and trials planned for 2021, including that of the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) shield, an Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) system for submarines, and drones, besides a number of missiles, including a BrahMos with an 800-km range.

[India To Export Akash Missile With \\$5 Billion Defence Export As Target](#)

December 30, 2020, NDTV

In a major move to boost domestic defence manufacturing, the government approved the export of indigenously-developed surface-to-air Akash missile system and set up a panel to ensure faster approvals for acquisition proposals by various countries.

[India cannot accept any unilateral change of LAC: Rajnath on continuing border standoff with China in Ladakh](#)

December 30, 2020, The Economic Times

As the over seven-month-long border standoff with China showed no signs of solution, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said India cannot accept any unilateral change of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and hoped the Ladakh deadlock will be resolved through talks. Asserting that India has always been in favour of peace, Singh also said the country can never compromise on its dignity and self-respect.

['Chinese air force heavily deployed in Ladakh theatre in support of PLA': IAF chief](#)

December 29, 2020, Hindustan Times

Indian Air Force Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria said that China has heavily deployed the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) to support its army in the Ladakh theatre along with a large number of radars and missiles, even as he listed out the possible Chinese objectives for its actions at the northern border.

[India-China military talks on standoff paused due to change of guard in PLA](#)

December 29, 2020, Hindustan Times

The ninth round of military dialogue between India and China is expected to take place once the newly-appointed PLA Western Theatre Commander Gen Zhang Xudong completes his military familiarisation and troop deployments on the Indian border. Gen Zhang, who has never served on the Indian border or Tibet, took over from Tibet veteran Gen Zhao Zongqi on December 21. Gen Zhao was the principal implementer of Beijing aggression in Doklam in 2017 and in East Ladakh in May 2020.

[S Jaishankar Meets Qatar's Emir, Prime Minister; Discusses Economic and Security Ties](#)

December 29, 2020, NDTV

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr S Jaishankar concluded his two-day stand-alone visit to Qatar from 27 to 28 December, said the Ministry of External Affairs.

[India to focus on multipolarity at UN](#)

January 1, 2021, Tribune

India will sit in the 15-nation United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the next two years.

Pakistan

[India and Pakistan exchanged list of Nuclear Installations](#)

January 1, 2021, MEA

India and Pakistan exchanged, the list of nuclear installations and facilities on January 1, 2021, covered under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between India and Pakistan.

[Govt amends AML, CFT laws to comply with FATF conditions](#)

December 31, 2020, The News

In order to comply with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) conditions, the Pakistan government has bound the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and all branches of commercial banks by enforcing the amended Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter Financing of Terrorist (CFT) laws. Earlier, these regulations were enforced on the National Savings Scheme (NSS) centers or branches only, but now the scope of regulations have been extended to the SBP and all commercial branches dealing with NSS instruments.

[China gives \\$100m grant for road rehabilitation](#)

December 31, 2020, The Express Tribune

China gave a \$100 million grant to Pakistan for rehabilitating a road that had been damaged by floods 10 years ago, indicating a shift in Beijing's policy of only extending loans to its strategic ally. The \$100 million grant was the highest amount given by China in recent years to Pakistan, announced Ministry of Economic Affairs.

[Pakistan to get costliest LNG in February 2021](#)

December 29, 2020, The Express Tribune

Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) has received all-time highest bid at 32.48% of Brent to secure cargoes for the month of February. Pakistan has to purchase the costliest liquefied natural gas (LNG) in February 2021 at 32.48% of Brent with a 31-day gap between tender opening and advertisement.

[PM signs letter seeking \\$4.8b for trilateral rail project](#)

December 29, 2020, The Express Tribune

Prime Minister Imran Khan signed a "Joint Appeal Letter" seeking \$4.8 billion loan from various International Financial Institutions (IFIs) for a railway line project connecting Pakistan with Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and the Central Asian Republics. The premier signed the letter after Uzbekistan's Minister for Transport Makhkamov Ilkham called on him.

[Pakistan officially takes credit for facilitating Afghan peace](#)

December 28, 2020, The Express Tribune

Pakistan has for the first time officially taken credit for facilitating not just the February 29 deal between the US and the Afghan Taliban but also talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, as the intra-Afghan talks are set to resume next month in Doha after a 20-day break. Islamabad played a key role in the Afghan peace efforts but this is the first time that the Foreign Office (FO) in a statement explicitly mentioned how Pakistan facilitated the US-Taliban

deal as well as commencement of the intra-Afghan talks. The statement has been issued by the FO against the backdrop of some negative statements emanating from both official and private Afghan circles questioning Pakistan's role.

[Seven soldiers martyred in Harnai attack](#)

December 27, 2020, The Express Tribune

Seven soldiers of paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) laid down their lives during an intense exchange of fire that ensued when heavily armed terrorists attacked their check-post located in the Sharig area of Harnai district in Balochistan. The terrorists opened fire on the checkpoint from nearby hilltops using rockets and then automatic gunfire.

Afghanistan

[Afghan Intelligence Busts Chinese Spy Cell in Kabul: Report](#)

December 26, 2020, Tolo News

Afghanistan's intelligence agency—the National Directorate of Security (NDS)—has busted a 10-member Chinese module operating a terror cell in the city of Kabul. The crackdown has come as a huge embarrassment for Beijing, which has been trying to persuade the Afghan government to keep the case secret. The Afghan security and intelligence agencies so far have not made an official comment about the report.

[Qatar to host next round of Afghan gov't-Taliban talks: Official](#)

December 27, 2020, Al Jazeera

The next round of negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government will be held in Qatar from next month, despite President Ashraf Ghani's recent calls for them to be moved home. Peace talks began on September 12 at a hotel in Doha, but negotiations are currently on a break until January 5.

[Islamabad, Kabul agree to have more discussions on APTTA](#)

December 27, 2020, Al Jazeera

Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to have further discussions and exchange views on the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). The 8th meeting of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority (APTTCA) was held in Islamabad from 28th to 30th December, 2020.

[China offered Afghan militants bounties to attack US soldiers: reports](#)

December 31, 2020, DW

US intelligence officials briefed President Donald Trump on alleged findings that China has offered money to non-state actors in Afghanistan to attack US troops. The president was told about the Chinese bounty issue on December 17, and that officials were working to corroborate the claims.

Bangladesh

[Bangladesh, India consolidate bilateral ties in 2020 amidst challenges posed by COVID-19](#)

December 30, 2020, The Hindu

A major diplomatic achievement of Bangladesh in 2020 was the further consolidation of bilateral ties with India, amidst the raging COVID-19 pandemic that posed a serious challenge to the country's rudimentary public health care system and slowed down one of the fastest growing economies in South Asia.

[Bangladesh navy ships shift 1,700 Rohingya refugees to isolated island](#)

December 29, 2020, Hindustan Times

Five Bangladesh navy ships carrying more than 1,700 Rohingya refugees left the southeastern port city of Chittagong for an isolated island where they will be relocated despite concerns among human rights groups about their safety.

[PM Hasina: Building forces to protect independence, sovereignty](#)

December 30, 2020, Dhaka Tribune

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the government is building up every force in such a way so that the country could avail all sorts of measures and training to protect its independence and sovereignty.

Nepal

[As China shows its hand in Nepal's political crisis, India prefers to watch from the sidelines](#)

December 27, 2020, The Hindu

Within just seven months, the disposition of Nepal's top leadership towards New Delhi has undergone a complete turnaround. On the one hand, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who was running a collision course with the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing it of territorial

hegemony, has considerably softened his tone, and courted high-level visits from India towards the end of 2020.

[China holds sway in Nepal as rival communist factions create crisis](#)

December 31, 2020, Reuters

Alarmed that a political crisis in Nepal could endanger China's strategic interests and Belt and Road projects, a Chinese Communist Party emissary has held days of talks to try to stop the Himalayan country's ruling communist party from tearing itself apart.

Bhutan

[India, Bhutan Sign Pact On Cooperation In Peaceful Uses Of Outer Space](#)

December 31, 2020, NDTV

The Union Cabinet approved the Memorandum of Understanding between India and Bhutan on cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Sri Lanka

[India-Lanka strengthen ties, revive maritime dialogue despite pandemic in 2020](#)

December 29, 2020, Money Control

Sri Lanka's powerful Rajapaksa dynasty consolidated its grip over power, with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's elder brother Mahinda becoming the prime minister in 2020 - a year which witnessed strengthening of Colombo's ties with New Delhi and revival of a key trilateral maritime dialogue involving India after a gap of six years.

[India Calls On Sri Lanka For Early Release Of 40 Fishermen](#)

December 31, 2020, NDTV

India calls on Sri Lanka to ensure the early release of fishermen arrested recently on the charge of poaching in Sri Lankan waters.

Maldives

[Neighbourhood first: India makes urgent supply of BCG vaccines to Maldives](#)

December 31, 2020, The Economic Times

India on Male's request has urgently dispatched a supply of 2400 vials of BCG vaccine to bridge a shortfall in the National Immunisation Programme of the Maldives.

East & South East Asia

China

[China, EU lay the foundation for stronger economies](#)

January 1, 2021, Global Times

With COVID-19 and its mutant variants expected to dominate media headlines in 2021 and continue to shadow the global economy, the recently-concluded China-EU talks on the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) are set to enable European and Chinese companies to be aligned closer, cooperate on clearly-defined terms, and shore up a common industrial supply chain and create more jobs for both sides' workers.

[CPEC forges ahead in 2020](#)

December 31, 2020, People's Daily

While Western media is disseminating negative propaganda against China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), both countries are satisfied with the progress and committed to turn this mega project into a role model for the rest of the world to follow.

[Chinese defense ministry opposes U.S. warships' sailing through Taiwan Strait](#)

December 31, 2020, People's Daily

A Chinese military spokesperson voiced resolute opposition to the sailing of two U.S. warships through the Taiwan Strait.

[Xi, Putin pledge further development of China-Russia ties in New Year greetings](#)

January 1, 2021, Guangming Online

Chinese President Xi Jinping said that he stands ready to maintain close contact with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in various forms in a bid to lead their countries towards deeper comprehensive strategic coordination and practical cooperation in various fields.

[China, Japan to build direct telephone line under maritime and air liaison mechanism](#)

December 31, 2020, Xinhua

A Chinese military spokesperson said China and Japan have made positive progress in the consultations involving the direct telephone line under the maritime and air liaison mechanism.

[Chinese, Pakistani FMs vow to strengthen bilateral ties](#)

January 1, 2021, Xinhua Net

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi , with both sides pledging to further strengthen the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

[China, India in discussion on holding 9th round of military talks: spokesperson](#)

December 31, 2020, Global Times

China and India are having consultations on holding the 9th round of the corps commander level meeting, a Chinese military spokesperson said.

[Beijing Accelerates Campaign of Ethnic Assimilation](#)

December 31, 2020, The Wall Street Journal

To realize the China of his dreams, Xi Jinping wants to meld the nation's dozens of ethnic groups into a singular national identity. The program of aggressive cultural assimilation—or "ethnic fusion," as it's called in government documents and speeches—has gone to extremes in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, home to the largest mass detention of a minority group since World War II. The campaign has begun to spread and intensify in other ethnically diverse areas. In Inner Mongolia, a plan to expand Mandarin-language education and mandate the use of national textbooks over local versions sparked protests and school boycotts among students and parents concerned that the Mongolian language was in danger of being erased.

[Xi's China Crafts Campaign to Boost Youth Patriotism](#)

December 30, 2020, The Wall Street Journal

In the era of Mao Zedong, China used propaganda posters to urge young people to create a great socialist nation. After the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, the Communist Party rewrote textbooks to deliver its version of history and to steer its young away from Western ideas. Today, China is embarked on another campaign to re-educate its young people. The message is more blatantly nationalistic than anything in recent decades, with President Xi Jinping's image often at the center. And it is far more sophisticated than anything Beijing has attempted in the past.

[Apple's longtime supplier accused of using forced labor in China](#)

December 29, 2020, The Washington Post

One of the oldest and most well-known iPhone suppliers has been accused of using forced Muslim labor in its factories, according to documents uncovered by a human rights group, adding new scrutiny to Apple's human rights record

in China. The documents, discovered by the Tech Transparency Project and shared exclusively with The Washington Post, detail how thousands of Uighur workers from the predominantly Muslim region of Xinjiang were sent to work for Lens Technology. Lens also supplies Amazon and Tesla, according to its annual report.

[Hong Kong's democracy movement was crushed in 2020. But the spirit of resistance survives](#)

December 29, 2020, The Guardian

"Check out that security guard," Alex said, nodding to my left. Alex (not his real name) is a protester in his early 20s, and I was meeting him for coffee at the only "yellow" pro-democracy cafe in New Town Plaza, Hong Kong, a once quiet shopping mall in my home district that last year became a battleground in massive anti-government protests. I turned to look: sure enough, there was a guard standing to the side of the main square, staring out into the crowd. I hadn't noticed him before. Now I can't help but catch him in the corner of my eye every time I pass through.

[Pushback on Xi's Vision for China Spreads Beyond U.S.](#)

December 28, 2020, The Wall Street Journal

In March 2019, Xi Jinping flew to Paris to meet French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the then-president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. After toasting with flutes of Champagne, the Chinese president pressed the three leaders, according to an official present. A recent European Union policy paper had described China as a "systemic rival." Did the Europeans really mean it? Ms. Merkel demurred with a compliment for Mr. Xi, saying the language showed Europe recognized China's growing strength and influence, the official said. Mr. Juncker cut the tension with a joke about the EU's inability to agree on what China was. But Mr. Macron was blunt, the official recalled. It's true, the French president said. You are a rival.

[Ministry tightens Chinese investment regulations](#)

December 31, 2020, Taipei Times

The Ministry of Economic Affairs yesterday said that it has tightened control on Chinese investments in Taiwan due to national security concerns, following in the steps of countries such as the US and Japan. Based on new regulations, Chinese military-owned companies and Chinese Communist Party-owned companies are banned from investing in Taiwan.

Japan

[Japan committed to working with India for realising better health for the people: Satoshi Suzuki](#)

December 30, 2020, Hindustan Times

Japan sees India as the “most natural strategic partner” to promote a free and inclusive Indo-Pacific, and this year’s Malabar naval exercise was an example of efforts by the four members of the Quad to ensure the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, Japanese ambassador Satoshi Suzuki has said.

[‘No space for unilateral attempts to change status quo in free Indo-Pacific’: Japanese ambassador](#)

December 29, 2020, Hindustan Times

There is no space for unilateral attempts to alter the status quo by coercion in a free and open Indo-Pacific region, be it in Ladakh or the East China Sea, Japan’s ambassador to India, Satoshi Suzuki, said against the backdrop of concerns in both countries about China’s actions.

[Parties agree to move up Diet talks on revising COVID-19 law](#)

December 29, 2020, The Asahi Shimbun

The growing health crisis led to a rare agreement between the ruling coalition and opposition camp to start immediate Diet deliberations on revising the special measures law for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Japan to play placeholder role in Asia as Biden gets his house in order](#)

January 1, 2021, The Japan Times

When U.S. President Donald Trump’s “America First” policy gets the boot on Jan. 20, it will be replaced by Joe Biden’s more outward-looking and cooperative approach in Asia – one in which Japan is widely expected to play an integral part.

[Japan gave key intel on China's Uighur crackdown to U.S. and Britain](#)

December 29, 2020, The Japan Times

Japan provided intelligence to the United States and Britain last year showing evidence of China's forceful detainment of the Muslim Uighur minority on condition of keeping the source confidential, a person close to Japan-U.S. relations said.

[Japan-UK post-Brexit trade deal takes effect](#)

January 1, 2021, Japan Today

A post-Brexit trade deal between Japan and the United Kingdom came into force, ensuring business continuity and strengthening the bilateral relationship as London seeks to join the larger Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement.

[Japan-S Korea deadlock to continue despite Biden push to mend ties](#)

December 30, 2020, Japan Today

Relations between Japan and South Korea in 2021 are expected to remain at a historic low over a wartime labour issue, even though the U.S. administration under President-elect Joe Biden is set to increase pressure on the two American allies to mend ties.

Korea

[Moon picks former Science Minister You Young-min as chief of staff](#)

December 31, 2020, The Korea Herald

President Moon Jae-in has tapped You Young-min, a former science and technology minister, as his new chief of staff, Cheong Wa Dae announced.

[Unification ministry to scale up financial support for N. Korea aid groups](#)

December 31, 2020, The Korea Herald

The unification ministry said it will allow North Korea aid groups to receive state financial support multiple times a year in an effort to facilitate humanitarian assistance to the impoverished nation.

[Ex-UN chief calls on govt to 'rectify' ban on sending anti-North Korea leaflets](#)

December 31, 2020, The Korea Times

Former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for the government to "rectify" a recently legislated ban on sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets into North Korea, saying the law made South Korea a target of international human rights criticism.

[Assembly speaker bolsters parliamentary diplomacy with neighboring countries](#)

December 29, 2020, The Korea Times

National Assembly Speaker Park Byeong-seug is pushing "parliamentary diplomacy" with neighboring countries, conducting talks recently with parliamentary leaders of China, Japan and Russia.

Southeast Asia

[India, Vietnam Conduct Naval Exercise In South China Sea](#)

December 28, 2020, Times Now

An Indian Navy warship undertook a "passage exercise" with the Vietnamese Navy in the South China Sea as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries.

[Thailand Is Top Emerging Market Pick For 2021; India Ranks 11th](#)

December 28, 2020, ANI

The report studies a total of 17 emerging markets and forecasts their potential for 2021 based on 11 indicators of economic and financial performance.

[Cambodia-China FTA, RCEP Key Driver For Economic Growth In post-COVID-19 era](#)

December 28, 2020, Khmer Times

The recently-signed Cambodia-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade pact will be a key driver to reboot Cambodia's economic growth in the post-COVID-19 era, Cambodian officials and experts have said.

[Singapore arrests man who spied for China in United States](#)

December 30, 2020, The Indian Express

Singapore authorities arrested a man on his return to the city-state after he was jailed for spying for China in the United States, saying they would investigate whether he posed a security risk.

[India, Myanmar officials to meet on Jan. 5 to discuss border trade](#)

December 29, 2020, The Hindu

'Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was suspended from April and trade between the two countries was slashed by 40%,' says Manipur MP.

[Enhance foreign investment policy to boost Malaysia-China investments](#)

December 31, 2020, The Star

Malaysia can further streamline its foreign investment policy to boost business networks and alliances between its companies and China firms and state-owned enterprises.

[Indonesia's Nonalignment Problem](#)

December 30, 2020, Foreign Affairs,

Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country and its seventh-largest economy. Yet the Southeast Asian country has historically played an undersized role in global affairs. Its traditional policy of neutrality in international relations has made it a bit player in Asia and rendered it mostly invisible in international forums such as the United Nations. But China's ascent, and its escalating incursions into waters that Indonesia claims, has inflamed anti-China sentiment in the archipelago and called into question the wisdom of nonalignment. Now, after decades of punching below its weight, Jakarta may be about to assert itself on the international stage.

Central & West Asia

Central Asia

[The overlooked heartland – Recognising the strategic relevance of Central Asia in the US-China rivalry](#)

December 28, 2020, ORF

The considerable shift in the role of Central Asia from “largely ignored” to “strategically relevant” in international affairs in less than a decade has drawn the attention of leading global powers in the region, turning it into a zone of competition of leading powers.

[Central Asia is an obvious winner of better EU-China ties](#)

[West Asia](#)

December 29, 2020, Euractive

As China eyes the new economic goals for the next five years announced at the Annual Economic Work Conference on 18 December, Chinese and EU diplomats seem hopeful of striking a historic investment deal before the end of the year.

[Geopolitical significance of trilateral Chabahar connectivity and India- Central Asia relations](#)

December 30, 2020, The Economic Ties

A new impetus to India’s connectivity project with Central Asia was added when India-Iran-Uzbekistan signed an agreement for the use of the strategically important Chabahar Port located in Iran.

[Trans-Afghan rail project discussed with Uzbekistan](#)

December 30, 2020, Breccorder

Pakistan and Uzbekistan discussed Trans Afghan Rail Project that would connect Pakistan and Uzbekistan via Afghanistan, and later, the other Central Asian countries could also join in the project.

[China-Australia relations: from Kazakhstan to Serbia, winemakers vie for piece of Chinese market amid trade dispute](#)

December 30, 2020, SCMP

Kazakhstani winemaker Zeinulla Kakimzhanov is pleased with the fresh inquiries he has been getting from Chinese wine importers in recent months.

West Asia

[India to Invite Afghanistan to Next Meet on Chabahar Port](#)

December 24, 2020, Deccan Herald

Afghanistan will be invited to the next meeting of India, Iran and Uzbekistan on joint use of strategically-located Chabahar port, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

[Israel's Rafael Awarded \\$200 Million Contract by an Asian Country for SPICE Air-Surface Systems, Spike Tactical Missiles and Bnet Communication](#)

December 23, 2020, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems

Rafael Advanced Defense Systems announced that it has been awarded a \$200 million contract to provide an Asian country with SPICE 2000 air-to-surface systems, Spike ATGMs, tactical, electro-optically guided missiles, and advanced communication systems.

[EAM Jaishankar Begins Two-day Visit to Qatar; Bilateral Cooperation in Focus](#)

December 27, 2020, DNA

During the visit, EAM Dr. Jaishankar will meet the foreign minister of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani and other top political leaders.

[India Welcomes "Positive Developments" in Yemen](#)

December 25, 2020, Outlook

India welcomed "positive developments" in Yemen to end years of unrest in the country. "India welcomes the positive developments in Yemen with the formation of the new power sharing Cabinet in the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement," External Affairs Ministry Spokesman said.

[New Yemen Gov't Sworn in After Saudi-brokered Power-sharing Deal](#)

December 26, 2020, AL Jazeera

Yemen's President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi has sworn in a new government that was formed thanks to a power-sharing deal brokered by Saudi Arabia last year. The 24-member cabinet, announced last week, was sworn in during a ceremony held in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, where Hadi is living.

[UN Criticises Trump's Pardons for Blackwater Guards Jailed over Iraq Killings](#)

December 24, 2020, BBC News

The UN has sharply criticised President Donald Trump's decision to pardon four former Blackwater contractors jailed over the killing of 14 Iraqi civilians.

The UN Human Rights Office warned that the pardons would serve to embolden others to commit similar crimes.

[Saudi King Calls Gulf Leaders to Attend GCC Summit](#)

December 26, 2020, Anadolu Agency

Saudi Arabia instructed the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) top official to invite member countries' leaders to a summit slated for Jan. 5, 2021.

[Israeli Jets Fly over Beirut, Explosions Reported in Syria](#)

December 25, 2020, Arab News

The Syrian Ministry of Defence issued a statement saying Israel "launched an aggression by directing a barrage of rockets" from the north of the Lebanese city of Tripoli toward the Masyaf area.

United States

United States

[Trump Signs Covid-19 Aid Bill Averting Government Shutdown](#)

December 27, 2020, The Wall Street Journal

President Trump signed a sweeping pandemic-aid bill on December 27, ending a standoff with Congress and paving the way for millions of Americans to get economic relief as the coronavirus pandemic surges across the country.

[Trump Signs Tibetan Policy And Support Act Into Law, Prompting Warnings From Beijing](#)

December 28, 2020, Radio Free Asia

U. S. President Donald Trump signed into law a bill that pledges increased support for Tibetans, including by sanctioning Chinese officials if they try to appoint the next spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, prompting warnings from Beijing.

[Trump extends immigration restrictions, citing pandemic's impact on labor market](#)

January 1, 2021, CNN

President Donald Trump extended certain restrictions on legal immigration and on visas that allow immigrants to temporarily work in the United States, just hours before those restrictions were set to lapse.

[Joe Biden to sign executive order blocking Trump's 'midnight regulations'](#)

December 31, 2020, New York Post

President-elect Joe Biden will sign an executive order when he enters office Jan. 20 blocking any "midnight regulations" from President Trump that haven't gone into effect by Inauguration Day, his incoming White House spokeswoman said.

[House Rejects Trump's Defense Bill Veto In Highly Unusual Vote](#)

December 28, 2020, NPR

The House voted to overturn President Trump's veto of the gargantuan annual defense authorization bill. The vote, 322-87, was a highly unusual response to a highly unusual move by a president in rejecting the legislation, which sets policies and establishes other priorities every year for the military services.

[Turkey, U.S. in talks to form joint working group on S-400s, sanctions -minister](#)

December 30, 2020, Reuters

Turkey and the United States have started talks to form a joint working group regarding U.S. sanctions imposed over Ankara's purchase of Russian S-400 missile defence systems, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

[US greenlights \\$4 billion attack helicopter sale to Kuwait](#)

December 31, 2020, Defense News

The U.S. State Department has cleared a foreign military sale of AH-64E Apache attack helicopters to Kuwait worth an estimated \$4 billion, according to a Dec. 29 post by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

[White House moves to freeze some foreign aid, defying Congress in Trump's final days](#)

January 1, 2021, Washington Post

The White House is preparing to temporarily freeze some foreign aid during President Trump's final days in office, two people with knowledge of the planning said, slowing down funds already approved by Congress.

[Iran's Foreign Minister Says Trump Trying to Fabricate Pretext to Attack Iran](#)

December 31, 2020, US News

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif accused U.S. President Donald Trump of attempting to fabricate a pretext to attack Iran, and said Tehran would defend itself forcefully.

[U.S. Companies to Face China Tariffs as Exclusions Expire](#)

December 31, 2020, The New York Times

American companies are facing the prospect of higher taxes on some of the products they import from China, as the tariff exclusions that had shielded many businesses from President Trump's trade war are set to expire at midnight.

[The End of the Wilsonian Era](#)

December 2020, Foreign Affairs

One hundred years after the U.S. Senate humiliated President Woodrow Wilson by rejecting the Treaty of Versailles, Princeton University, which Wilson led as its president before launching his political career, struck his name from its famous school of international affairs. As "cancellations" go, this one is at least arguably deserved. Wilson was an egregious racist even by the standards of his time, and the man behind the persecution of his own political opponents and

the abuses of the first Red Scare has been celebrated for far too long and far too uncritically.

Europe & Russia

Europe

[U.K. Takes a Leap Into the Unknown as Split From EU Is Completed](#)

January 1, 2021, Bloomberg

The U.K. completed its divorce from the European Union, leaving the bloc's single market and customs regime more than four years after the country voted for Brexit.

[Britain backtracks over Brexit curbs on cross-border swaps trading](#)

December 31, 2020, Reuters

Britain's markets watchdog intervened hours before the country leaves the European Union's single market with a partial climbdown on curbs that risked disrupting swaps trades worth billions of euros.

[Gibraltar Gets Its Own Last-Minute Brexit Deal on Borders](#)

December 31, 2020, The New York Times

Spain and the European Union will share oversight over the flow of goods and people to the British territory, which worried about being left isolated and economically pinched outside the bloc.

[Neither human rights concerns nor US disapproval could stop the EU-China investment agreement](#)

December 31, 2020, CNN

In a year that has seen global perceptions of China plunge, Beijing scored a major diplomatic victory with the finalizing of an investment agreement with the European Union -- in spite of criticism from the United States and outstanding concerns many in the bloc have over Beijing's worsening human rights record.

[Vaccinations begin for 450 million in Europe as fears grow about new coronavirus variant](#)

December 27, 2020, NBC News

Mass vaccination programs began to roll out across Europe after several countries reported cases of a more contagious variant of the coronavirus.

[France's Macron says dialogue between EU and China now stronger](#)

December 30, 2020, Reuters

French President Emmanuel Macron said that relations between the European Union and China had strengthened in recent years, following an investment deal that will give European companies greater access to Chinese markets.

[Portugal to use EU presidency to bolster bloc's vaccination drive](#)

January 1, 2021, Financial Times

Rolling out the EU's mass vaccination programme will be one of Portugal's top priorities when it takes over the six-month rotating EU presidency as a new, more infectious strain of coronavirus spreads across Europe.

Russia

[Vladimir Putin Hopes Russia, India Continue To Work On Bilateral Ties In 2021](#)

December 30, 2020, NDTV

In his Christmas and New Year's greetings to President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vladimir Putin said Russia and India are connected by relations of privileged strategic partnership.

[Russia set to work out new 'security equation' with US – Lavrov](#)

December 30, 2020, TASS

The top diplomat underlined that Moscow is waiting for the next US administration to determine its approach to the future of the New START and the arms control negotiations in general.

[Russia, Turkey reaffirm commitment to military cooperation despite US pressure](#)

December 29, 2020, TASS

Moscow and Ankara reaffirm their commitment to developing military-technical cooperation despite the pressure from Washington, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on the outcomes of the talks with his Turkish colleague Mevlut Cavusoglu.

[Moscow Expands List of UK Officials Banned From Russia](#)

December 30, 2020, The Moscow Times

Moscow expanded a list of UK officials banned from entering Russia in a tit-for-tat response to British sanctions imposed over the poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

[Putin Signs Controversial 'Foreign Agent' Law Expansion](#)

December 30, 2020, The Moscow Times

President Vladimir Putin has signed into law a bill allowing any politically active, foreign-funded individual or organization to be labelled a "foreign agent."

[Joint Russia-U.S. Operation Busts S.American Cocaine Smuggling Network](#)

December 29, 2020,, The Moscow Times

Russia and the United States have cut off an international cocaine smuggling chain and seized over 330 kilograms of the drug, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) announced, marking a rare joint law enforcement effort between the two countries.

Africa & Latin America

Latin America

[Cuban foreign minister denounces new US aggression](#)

December 30, 2020, Prensa Latina

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez denounced US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's pretensions to include Cuba in the list of nations that sponsor terrorism.

[Cuba and Vietnam strengthen economic and scientific collaboration](#)

December 30, 2020, Prensa Latina

Cuba and Vietnam strengthened bilateral economic and scientific technical collaboration, as a result of the 38 session of the intergovernmental commission that met virtually between the Caribbean capital and Hanoi.

[Argentina's regulator approves the AstraZeneca and Oxford University Covid-19 vaccine](#)

December 31, 2020, Merco Press

Argentina's regulator approved the COVID-19 vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University for emergency use, AstraZeneca said in a statement.

[Indonesia asks Brazil for data on the Chinese vaccine](#)

December 26, 2020, Merco Press

With the slow development of its own phase three clinical trial of a Covid-19 vaccine candidate, Indonesia said it has asked for data from Brazil, where a similar trial is progressing smoothly.

[Maduro calls on Judiciary to act against "unconstitutional" opposition controlled National Assembly](#)

December 29, 2020, Merco Press

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said a move by the opposition-controlled National Assembly to extend its term into next year was "unconstitutional," and called on the country's justice system to "do its work."

Africa

[Africa heralds onset of free-trade pact after years of talks](#)

January 1, 2021, Bloomberg

The first goods will begin to flow under an Africa-wide free-trade pact, the culmination of more than five years of negotiations on cutting cross-border tariffs.

[UN confirms closure of Darfur peacekeeping mission](#)

December 30, 2020, UN News

In a statement released, UNAMID confirmed the decision to close the mission, which followed the unanimous adoption of a Security Council resolution on 22 December, and progress made by the transitional Government of Sudan in addressing the conflict in Darfur.

[Concern for civilians as UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur folds](#)

January 1, 2021, Africa News

The United Nations-African Union mission in Darfur is set to end 13 years of peacekeeping in the vast Sudanese region, even as recent violent clashes leave residents fearful of new conflict.

[‘My country in trouble’: WHO chief on Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict](#)

December 28, 2020, Al Jazeera

In rare, personal comments, World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has spoken of his “personal pain” about the “worsening” conflict raging in his home country of Ethiopia.

[Burkina Faso president says security priority after swearing-in](#)

December 28, 2020, Al Jazeera

Burkina Faso’s President Roch Marc Christian Kabore has promised to make security his priority after he took the helm of the troubled Sahel country for a second term.

[Sudan regains full control of border with Ethiopia: Ministry](#)

December 31, 2020, Al Jazeera

Sudan’s army recovered the border that had been taken over by Ethiopian farmers, the Sudanese foreign ministry says.



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