

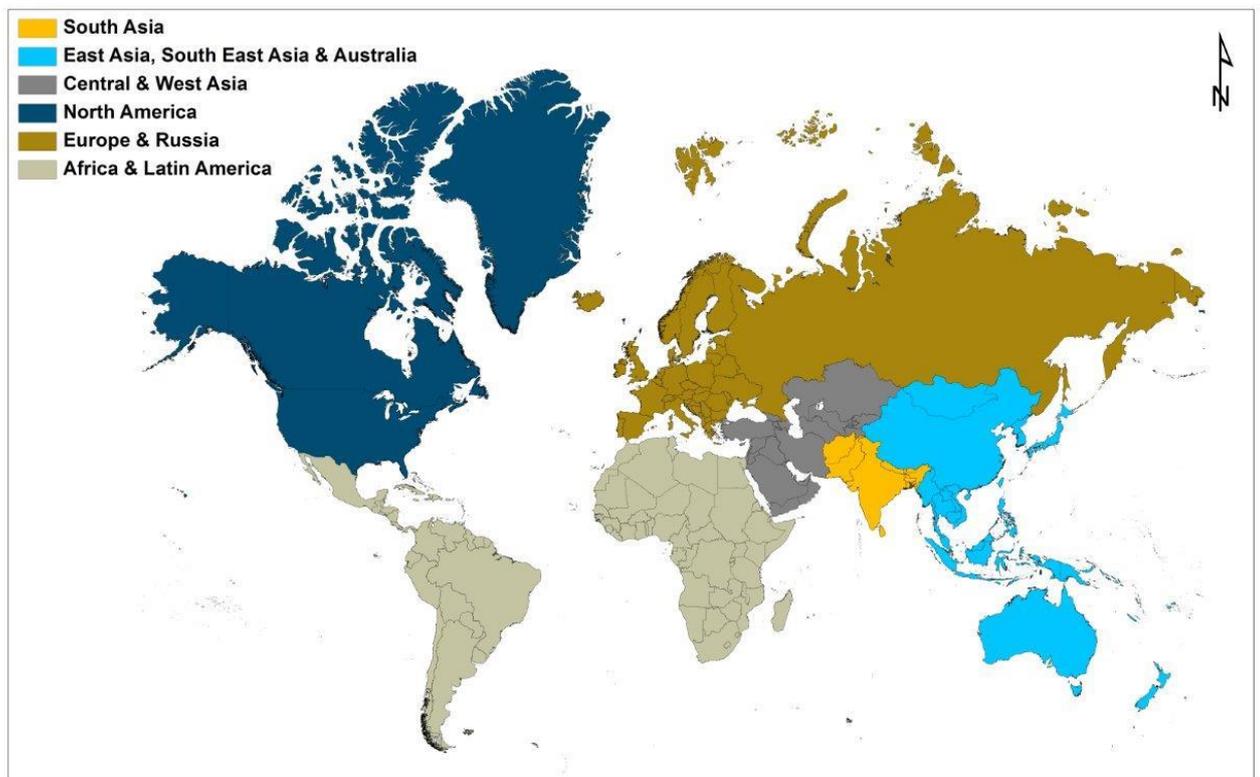


Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



Volume V, Issue 10 | March 5, 2021

Delhi Policy Group

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

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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.

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Contents

South Asia.....	1
East & South East Asia.....	9
Central & West Asia	9
United States	21
Europe & Russia	24
Africa & Latin America	28

South Asia

India

[India to export defence equipment to Philippines, expands reach in the Pacific](#)

March 3, 2021, The Economic Times

Expanding its defence footprint in the Indo-Pacific, India has reached an understanding with the Philippines for exporting military equipment to the nation which has been at the receiving end of China's expansionist plans in the South China Sea.

[Explained: China's cyber eye and India](#)

March 4, 2021, The Indian Express

In the latest in a series of surveillance and hacking attempts, a Chinese state-backed hacker firm has been reported to be targeting Indian vaccine makers. Why is this happening, and what are the implications?

[India's defence budget for domestic buys to fund fighters, tanks, missiles](#)

March 5, 2021, The Hindustan Times

The budget set aside for domestic defence procurement in 2021-22 will be used for buying a variety of military hardware, ranging from fighter jets to combat helicopters and tanks to missiles, officials familiar with the modernisation of the armed forces said.

[Sri Lanka 'Priority One' partner in defence: India](#)

February 28, 2021, The Hindu

India on February 28 described Sri Lanka as "Priority One" partner in the defence sphere and said the participation of its military aircraft in the 70th anniversary celebration of the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) is indicative of the growing cooperation, camaraderie and friendship between the two militaries.

[India to Begin 23 Waterways by 2030: PM Modi During Maritime India Summit 2021](#)

March 2, 2021, India.com

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India aims to operationalise 23 waterways by 2030. Speaking on the occasion of 'Maritime India Summit 2021' through video conferencing, he said through the focus areas of upgradation of infrastructure, boosting reform journey in maritime sector, India aims to strengthen the vision of 'Aatamnirbhar Bharat'

[India Breaks the Privatization Taboo](#)

March 4, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Nearly seven years after he was first elected, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi finally appears ready to place the private sector at the heart of his development model. This belated embrace of business is welcome. But the path Mr. Modi has chosen—state-guided capitalism of the East Asian variety—is strewn with pitfalls.

[India to invest \\$82 billion in port projects by 2035: PM Modi](#)

March 2, 2021, The Hindustan Times

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India has identified more than 574 port projects at a cost of 82 billion USD or ₹6 lakh crore for implementation during 2015 to 2035.

[Indian Navy to commission INS Karanj on 10 March](#)

March 1, 2021, Mint

The Indian Navy will commission its third Scorpene-class submarine--the INS Karanj--in Mumbai on 10 March, a person familiar with the development said.

[India Sending Humanitarian Assistance To Drought-Hit Madagascar: S Jaishankar](#)

March 2, 2021, NDTV

India is sending a consignment of 1,000 metric tonnes of rice and 100,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets to Madagascar in response to the east African country's appeal for assistance to deal with a humanitarian crisis triggered by a severe drought, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

[India Keen To Focus On Connectivity With Bangladesh: S Jaishankar](#)

March 4, 2021, NDTV

India was keen to focus on the development of connectivity with Bangladesh and beyond for next 20 years to change the region's geo-economic scenario, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said.

[PM Modi to hold virtual summit on bilateral issues with his Sweden counterpart](#)

March 5, 2021, The Hindustan Times

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a virtual summit with his Sweden counterpart Stefan Lofven to exchange views on regional and global issues and to discuss the bilateral relations between the two countries.

[Russia welcomes India-China agreements on LAC standoff, says 'we continue to monitor the situation'](#)

March 5, 2021, Times Now

The massive flare-up along the Line of Actual Control between India and China has lasted close to a year now, and while bilateral talks are on between the two countries for disengagement of troops along the border, several neighbours are keeping a close watch on the developments near eastern Ladakh.

[Amid tensions at LAC, India and China ramp up drone technology to boost operational preparedness](#)

March 2, 2021, Firstpost

Ever since the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan broke out, the world has taken note of the extensive use of high-end military technology by using armed/unarmed drones. A number of videos have flooded social media demonstrating how artificial intelligence-based weapons system are being used and how they will shape the future of warfare.

Pakistan

[Ties with Qatar, Afghan peace discussed](#)

March 4, 2021, Dawn

Qatari land forces commander Maj Gen Saeed Hassen Mohammad Al-Khayareen said Pakistan's friendly and cooperative ties with Qatar were growing and termed them mutually beneficial. He made this observation during a meeting with Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa at the General Headquarters.

[Trade deficit widens by 10.64pc in 8MFY21](#)

March 4, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan's trade deficit posted double-digit growth as it widened by 10.64 per cent to \$17.54 billion in the eight months of 2020-21 (8MFY21) from \$15.85bn over the corresponding period last year. The trade gap has been widening since Dec 2020.

[Pakistan to issue smart cards to Afghan refugees](#)

March 3, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan government announced the Afghan refugees whose 'Proof of Registration' (PoR) cards had expired in 2015 would be given new smart cards after verification this year.

[Pak-Iran-Turkey container train set to start from March 4](#)

February 28, 2021, The News

Pakistan Railways has decided to resume trilateral container train from March 4 to connect Pakistan with Iran and Turkey, and Railways Headquarters has issued instructions to finalize arrangements in this regard.

[Wapda to add 9,000MW to grid by 2028](#)

February 28, 2021, Dawn

With 11 million acre feet gross water storage to irrigate three million acres of agriculture land, the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) pledges to add 9,000MW of low-cost hydel power to the national grid by completing seven mega hydropower projects by December 2028.

[Militants regrouping in Balochistan, KP tribal areas, NA told](#)

February 27, 2021, Dawn

As the National Assembly condemned the killing of four women vocational trainers in North Waziristan on February 22, the opposition parties asked the government to take immediate notice of the regrouping of militants in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan.

[Pakistan, Qatar sign 10-year LNG supply contract](#)

February 27, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan and Qatar have signed another long-term Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supply contract for additional 200 million cubic feet a day (MMCFD) at around 31 per cent lower rate than the 2015 contract for 500MMCFD.

[COAS, ISI chief call on PM](#)

March 5, 2021, Dawn

Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa met Prime Minister Imran Khan as part of the interactions between the civilian and military leadership on national issues. Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence Lt Gen Faiz Hameed was also present during the meeting.

[Govt borrows \\$2.7bln to repay foreign loans in Jul-Jan](#)

February 27, 2021, The News

Government borrowed \$2.7 billion from multiple external financing sources to repay maturing foreign commercial loans during the first seven months of the current fiscal year of 2020/21, according to the latest official data.

[Pakistan, Turkey to co-manufacture warplanes, missiles?](#)

March 3, 2021, The News

Turkey is in talks to co-manufacture warplanes and missiles with Pakistan. Turkish defence and government officials have held periodic talks with Pakistani counterparts -- the last high-level discussion was in January -- about developing and manufacturing military hardware with Pakistan, according to people from both countries who are familiar with the negotiations. The people didn't say when they'll meet again or how close they are to an agreement.

Afghanistan

[Afghanistan – three female journalists murdered](#)

March 3, 2021, DW

Three women were gunned down in Jalalabad in Afghanistan after leaving work at a local TV station. The Islamic State militant group has claimed responsibility, though Afghan officials blame the Taliban - who have denied any involvement.

[Mohib: Govt Considering Alternative Routes to Peace](#)

March 3, 2021, DW

President Ashraf Ghani's National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib has said that the Afghan government is working with various factions and considering a wide range of alternatives to achieve peace in the country.

[Khalilzad Back in Region for Afghan Peace](#)

March 1, 2021, Tolo News

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad has resumed his trip to the region on the Afghan peace process at a time that the talks in Doha have seen no progress over the last two months. US State Department in a statement said that Khalilzad and his team will travel to Kabul, Doha, and additional regional capitals on the Afghan peace process.

[Afghanistan: Over 8,000 Health Workers Get COVID Vaccination](#)

February 28, 2021, Tolo News

At least 8,200 health workers have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Afghanistan over the last one week. The vaccination is provided in over 600 health centers across the country.

[Report: US wasted billions on cars, buildings in Afghanistan](#)

March 1, 2021, AP

The United States wasted billions of dollars in war-torn Afghanistan on buildings and vehicles that were either abandoned or destroyed, according to a report released by a U.S. government watchdog. The agency said it reviewed \$7.8 billion spent since 2008 on buildings and vehicles. Only \$343.2 million worth of buildings and vehicles "were maintained in good condition," said the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR.

[German Defense Minister doesn't rule out sending more troops to Afghanistan](#)

February 28, 2021, DW

German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer isn't ruling out the possibility of sending more troops to Afghanistan if the security situation worsens drastically.

Bangladesh

[Bangladesh Navy ship 'Prottoy' visits Mumbai for 3 days](#)

March 4, 2021, Yahoo News

The Bangladesh Navy Ship (BNS) Prottoy, which is currently visiting Mumbai for 3 days, is on a return passage to its home country after participating in a naval exhibition at Abu Dhabi, UAE.

[1,800 more Rohingyas moved to Bhasan Char](#)

March 4, 2021, Dhaka Tribune

A group of nearly 1,800 refugee Rohingyas set sail for Bhasan Char, as part of the government's plan to relocate them to the remote Bay of Bengal island from crammed camps in Cox's Bazar.

[Vaccine Maitri: Bangladesh only country in the world to receive 9 mn vaccine doses; PM Modi to visit Dhaka](#)

March 4, 2021, Financial Express

Neighbouring Bangladesh is the highest recipient of the vaccines from India. It has received so far 9 million doses of the COVISHIELD vaccines from Serum Institute of India (SII).

Nepal

[Indian national killed in police firing at India-Nepal border; one missing](#)

March 5, 2021, The Hindustan Times

An Indian national was killed in police firing at the Indo-Nepal border in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh. The man, identified as Govinda Singh, succumbed to the injuries sustained after being shot by the Nepal police, said UP Police.

[China can't replace India, so don't worry about its influence in Nepal, says ex-PM Bhattarai](#)

March 3, 2021, The Print

China's influence in Nepal has grown in the last few years but this should not "worry" New Delhi as it has strong historical, cultural and economic ties with Kathmandu, former Nepalese Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai said.

[India grants NRs 44.17 million for construction of new building in Nepal](#)

March 4, 2021, Yahoo News

India extended a grant of Nepali Rs 44.17 million to Nepal to build a new building for Naharpur Secondary School at Butwal-11 in Rupandehi district under the Nepal-Bharat Maitri Development Partnership as part of India's High Impact Community Development Project scheme programme.

Sri Lanka

[Sri Lanka Reverses Course, Offers Strategic Deep-Sea Port To India, Japan](#)

March 2, 2021, NDTV

Sri Lanka will offer a strategically located deep-sea port to India and Japan, an official said, as the island seeks to balance traditional ties against China's rising regional influence.

[IAF chief attends SLAF's anniversary celebrations during two-day visit to Sri Lanka](#)

March 4, 2021, The Economic Times

Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria arrived in Colombo on a two-day visit and attended the inaugural ceremony of an air show celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Sri Lankan Air Force (SLAF), according to an official statement.

[Inauguration of NSA Trilateral Secretariat: A step forward for maritime security cooperation with Sri Lanka, and the Maldives](#)

March 4, 2021, Financial Express

A trilateral secretariat for National Security Advisors (NSA) on Maritime Security Cooperation between India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives was inaugurated on March 1, 2021.

Maldives

[Writing history in sports ties with India: Maldives sports minister Mahloof](#)

March 3, 2021, DNA

Maldives sports minister Ahmed Mahloof has said that India and Maldives are "writing history in the Maldives – India sports ties" even as New Delhi is helping build mega sporting infrastructure in the Indian ocean country.

East & South East Asia

China

[China Got Its Economy Growing Again, but a Shortfall in Babies Will Be Harder to Fix](#)

February 28, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

China may have blunted the pandemic's impact on its economy, but a shortfall in babies is clouding its growth horizon. But the world's most populous country is losing when it comes to demographics. Ahead of the results of China's once-a-decade census, there have been several indications that fewer babies were born in the country in 2020 than in any year since 1961, when China suffered mass starvation.

[China to hold month-long military drills in South China Sea](#)

February 28, 2021, Global Times

China has announced that it will hold military exercises in the South China Sea for the whole of March, at a time when the US military has been frequently sending reconnaissance aircraft and ships to the region and a French warship group is on its way.

[China gives up ambitious \\$20 billion semiconductor investment project](#)

February 28, 2021, The Taiwan News

A US\$20 billion semiconductor manufacturing project backed by the Chinese government has gone belly-up, as its key operator Wuhan Hongxin Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (HSMC) announced its decision to dismiss all employees on Friday (Feb. 26). Employees at the company, which was once touted as part of Beijing's plan to become a self-sufficient chipmaker, were "asked to resign" by Monday via a WeChat message, according to Chinese media reports. The company made clear that it had "no plan to resume production," which has been halted since late 2019 due to failure to attract more investors.

[How China's legal system has changed](#)

March 1, 2021, SCMP

With China and its companies facing an increasing number of bruising overseas legal battles, defending the country's interests abroad has become a pressing issue for the ruling Communist Party.

[China counters Uighur criticism with explicit attacks on women witnesses](#)

March 01, 2021, Reuters

China, under growing global pressure over its treatment of minority Muslim Uighurs in far west Xinjiang, is mounting an unprecedented and aggressive campaign to push back, including explicit attacks on women who have made claims of abuse. As allegations of human rights violations in Xinjiang mount, with a growing number of Western lawmakers accusing China of genocide, Beijing is focusing on discrediting the female Uighur witnesses behind recent reports of abuse.

[Guardian report on 'East Turkestan' a distortion and negation of Xinjiang's history: Chinese Embassy in UK](#)

March 2, 2021, Global Times

Never in Chinese history has Xinjiang been referred to as "East Turkestan," and there has never been any state known by that name, said the Chinese Embassy in the UK, refuting a report by The Guardian alleging that "East Turkestan" once "existed" in the modern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

[PLA commissions upgraded destroyer, naval drills show](#)

March 2, 2021, Global Times

A newly commissioned, upgraded variation of the Type 052D destroyer recently made its public debut in a series of maritime exercises by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, and analysts said more warships of this class are expected to join the service soon.

[Military ties support China-Russia strategic cooperation: ministry](#)

March 2, 2021, Global Times

Military relations stand as a bright spot and an important supporting force of the strategic cooperation between China and Russia, the Chinese Ministry of National Defense said.

[CPPCC spokesperson calls 'vaccine diplomacy' claims 'narrow-minded'](#)

March 3, 2021, China Daily

It is "very narrow-minded" to perceive China's action of providing COVID-19 vaccines and related assistance to other countries as a tool for gaining geopolitical influence, Guo Weimin, the spokesperson of the fourth session of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said during a news briefing

[China to work with Pakistan to cement ironclad friendship, says Chinese FM](#)

March 3, 2021, Global Times

No matter how the regional and international landscapes may evolve, and what challenges and risks may arise, China will continue to work with Pakistan to cement their ironclad friendship, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said.

[China's Crackdown on Hong Kong Tested in Trial of Pro-Democracy Politicians](#)

March 04, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Defense lawyer Lawrence Lau represented the first person charged under a new national-security law—a flag-bearing street protester—in July. This week, he found himself presenting his own defense after being charged under the same legislation. Mr. Lau was among dozens of pro-democracy politicians accused of subverting the state, the biggest case brought so far amid China's crackdown on democracy advocates in the city. After a four-day bail hearing ended late Thursday, all of them remained in jail.

[China urges Lithuania to adhere to one-China principle: FM](#)

March 5, 2021, Global Times

China firmly opposes the mutual establishment of official agencies and official exchanges in all forms between the Taiwan region and countries having diplomatic relations with China including Lithuania, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

[China hikes defense budget by 6.8 % in 2021, faster than 6.6% growth last year](#)

March 5, 2021, Global Times

China increased its 2021 defense budget by 6.8 percent to 1.35 trillion yuan (\$ 209 billion) in a quicker pace than last year's growth, which analysts believe is normal, steady and restrained as the country resiliently emerges from the wreckage of COVID-19 pandemic.

Japan

[Sri Lanka approves new port development with India and Japan](#)

March 3, 2021, Japan Today

Sri Lanka's government said it will allow India and Japan to develop a new container terminal at the country's main port, several weeks after scrapping a deal with the two countries to develop one of the key terminals at the same port.

[Ex-PMs Kan, Koizumi urge Japan to quit nuclear power generation](#)

March 2, 2021, Japan Today

Former prime ministers Naoto Kan and Junichiro Koizumi urged Japan to stop using nuclear power, saying the country should learn from the Fukushima crisis a decade ago and turn to renewable energy.

[China's Xi will not make a state visit to Japan this year](#)

March 2, 2021, Japan Today

Chinese President Xi Jinping will not make a state visit to Japan this year as both countries continue to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

[Side with citizens, not military, Myanmar expat urges Japan, ASEAN](#)

March 1, 2021, Japan Today

With the turmoil in Myanmar showing no signs of abating a month after the coup, some Myanmar people living in Japan are urging their host country to suspend aid to the Southeast Asian nation as part of international pressure on the military to restore the democratically elected government.

[Japan urged U.S. last month to resume nuclear talks with North Korea](#)

March 4, 2021, The Japan Times

Japan urged the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden last month to resume denuclearization talks with North Korea, as the new administration in Washington plans a full review of its approach to Pyongyang, sources familiar with the matter said.

[U.S. defense chief, secretary of state to visit Japan from March 15](#)

March 4, 2021, The Japan Times

U. S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin plan to visit Japan from March 15 for talks with their Japanese counterparts, marking the first trip to the country by senior members of President Joe Biden's administration, Japanese government sources said.

[Japan ramps up cooperation with Europe to curb China at sea](#)

March 4, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Japan is strengthening cooperation with various European nations to work toward a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) region to counter various maritime moves being made by China.

[Moon: South Korea, Japan must look to future to improve ties](#)

March 1, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said that his government is eager for talks with Japan to improve relations following years of bitter feuding over historical grievances, adding that those unresolved issues should not stand in the way of developing "future-oriented" ties.

Korea

[US defense chief shortlists North Korea as 'nation-state threat'](#)

March 5, 2021, The Korea Times

U. S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin included North Korea in only a handful of countries that pose threats to the United States and its allies.

[Sanctions not sole reason for humanitarian crisis in North Korea: unification ministry](#)

March 3, 2021, The Korea Times

Unification Minister Lee In-young did not mean that global sanctions are the sole reason for causing a humanitarian crisis in North Korea when he recently stressed the need to review their efficacy, his spokesperson said.

[Satellite images show North Korea built structure to conceal nuclear weapons site: CNN](#)

March 3, 2021, The Korea Times

Recent satellite images show that North Korea may have taken steps to hide a facility that the U.S. believes is used to store nuclear weapons.

['Consistency needed in North Korea policy'](#)

March 2, 2021, The Korea Times

When it comes to the goal of denuclearizing North Korea, shared by allies South Korea and the United States, establishing consistency in their relevant policies is a necessary step, regardless of which administration takes office, either in Seoul and Washington, lawmakers and politicians of the countries said during a virtual forum.

['N. Korea is exploiting cyberspace to evade sanction'](#)

March 5, 2021, The Korea Herald

North Korea is exploiting cyberspace to circumvent UN sanctions, Gen. Paul Nakasone, commander of the US Cyber Command, said at a conference it hosted.

[U.S., Korea Finally on Course for Defense Cost-Sharing Deal](#)

March 4, 2021, Chosun Ilbo

Negotiators from Korea and the U.S. meet for defense-cost sharing talks in Washington to settle Korea's contribution to the upkeep of American forces here.

Southeast Asia

[ASEAN Prepares to Convene First Meeting on Myanmar Crisis](#)

March 2, 2021, The Diplomat

This afternoon, the foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were scheduled to hold a virtual informal meeting to discuss the unfolding crisis in Myanmar. The online meeting, which will be hosted by current ASEAN chair Brunei, is the product of active diplomacy by Indonesia in the month since the February 1 coup that has plunged the country into political turmoil.

[Blue economy offers ASEAN-India a sea of cooperation opportunities](#)

March 3, 2021, The Jakarta Post

Blue economy is a transboundary issue that should be addressed collectively at regional and sub-regional levels to better manage ocean resources and ensure benefits for all in the region. ASEAN countries and India shall aim to transform traditional ocean economy to a sustainable, innovative and inclusive blue economy.

[German warship to sail through South China Sea](#)

March 4, 2021, Wion News

A German warship is set to sail through the South China Sea even as the United States warned China against the use of force in the disputed waters.

[U.S. imposes trade sanctions on Myanmar, calls on China to help end coup as violence escalates](#)

March 4, 2021, CNBC

The United States imposed trade sanctions against the military regime in Myanmar, a day after security forces killed dozens of people in the deadliest day of violence since a coup ousted the country's civilian leaders last month and sparked nationwide protests.

[China Said to be Installing Missile Base Near Border with Vietnam](#)

February 16, 2021, Voice of America

To the alarm of the Vietnamese government, China is apparently building a surface-to-air missile base 20 kilometers from its border with Vietnam, as a long-term precaution and near-term warning to neighboring countries, observers say.

[Growing cooperation between Hanoi and Bangkok on South China Sea](#)

March 3, 2021, Asia News

In this context, this week the two governments have also reiterated their cooperation on the issue of defending sovereignty on the East Sea (the name by which Vietnam refers to the South China Sea), threatened by Chinese expansionism. While Vietnam and neighbouring countries have to deal with a second wave of the pandemic, China has started its own military exercises in the South China Sea since March 1 that will last throughout the month.

[Government opts not to impose duty on Thai tyres](#)

March 3, 2021, The Times of India

The finance ministry has decided not to impose anti-dumping duty on truck and bus radial tyres imported from Thailand.

[China-funded water project meets stiff opposition in the Philippine](#)

March 4, 2021, China Dialogue

Opposing it is a loose alliance of indigenous people's groups, environmentalists and some national politicians. They have warned of the project's impact on forests and rivers in the mountainous Cordillera region of Luzon – the largest of the Philippine islands. They have also questioned the legality of the funding agreement with China Exim development bank.

Central & West Asia

Central Asia

[Turkmenistan Special Forces Commence Combat Free Fall Training at Indian Special Forces Training School](#)

March 4, 2021, PIB

Based on a request from the Turkmenistan Special Forces, the Special Forces Training School (SFTS) of the Indian Army, which is a unique institution providing training to the Indian Army's Special Forces, has commenced training of paratroopers from the Turkmenistan Special Forces in Combat Free Fall as a precursor to a series of other customised professional courses which will assist in capability enhancement of Turkmenistan Special Forces.

[On Chabahar Day, India Pushes For Iran Port In Key International Route](#)

March 4, 2021, Outlook

Foreign minister S. Jaishankar, speaking at a virtual meeting of the India Maritime Summit, which celebrated Chabahar Day, held out hope for the future, saying: "The port is part of our shared commitment towards peace, stability and prosperity of the people of Afghanistan. India has utilised the Chabahar port to ship 75,000 MT of wheat as humanitarian food assistance to Afghanistan in September 2020."

[Kazakhstan: New large oil field discovered in Caspian region](#)

February 26, 2021, Eurasianet

An oil-rich province in western Kazakhstan has unveiled what it claims might be its largest discovery of hydrocarbons in the nation's post-independence history. The announcement on February 25 by officials in Mangystau province presents a glimmer of positive news in a torrid year for the economy.

[Uzbekistan: Opposition politician's detention undermines democracy pledges](#)

February 28, 2021, Eurasianet

An opposition politician in Uzbekistan has reportedly been detained by law enforcement authorities on the same day he was set to preside over a congress for his unregistered party. He was immediately transported to the Ferghana Valley city of Andijan for questioning. The detention of Khidirnazar Allakulov occurred just days after President Shavkat Mirziyoyev delivered a speech to the United Nations Human Rights Council pledging fresh efforts to "enhance democratic transformations in Uzbekistan."

[Notorious Kyrgyz Crime Boss Released From Pretrial Detention](#)

March 02, 2021, RFE/RL

Kyrgyz organized-crime figure Kamchy Kolbaev, who was added by Washington to a list of major global drug-trafficking suspects in 2011, has been released from pretrial detention and ordered not to leave Bishkek. The U.S. Embassy in Bishkek welcomed Kolbaev's detention at the time it was announced and expressed hope that Kyrgyz authorities would "prosecute and continue to detain this dangerous criminal leader in the interest of public safety."

[Uzbekistan embarks on mass vaccination, but where will doses come from?](#)

March 03, 2021, Eurasianet

Uzbekistan is embarking on a mass coronavirus inoculation campaign with a vaccine that is still months away from completing its third stage of tests. Millions are being offered the option of getting a jab for free, but it is far from clear how many will be eager. And the fact that life largely returned to normal a long time ago may rob the drive of a sense of urgency.

[Uzbekistan, India moving swiftly to partner on Chabahar](#)

March 03, 2021, Daiji World

India and Uzbekistan are swiftly moving to strengthen their partnership to develop connectivity in Central Asia via the Chabahar port. Last week, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov, visited New Delhi and met External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, to discuss various aspects of bilateral cooperation.

[Kazakhstan: Exporters lose money to China anti-coronavirus regime](#)

March 04, 2021, Eurasianet

After months of delays suffered by trains heading from Kazakhstan to China, Kazakh railway authorities have said they are now prohibiting the eastward passage of cargo freight. The holdups, which began in mid-November, have been caused by time-consuming coronavirus-related inspections by Chinese border personnel.

[Indian Army begins training of Turkmenistan Special Forces](#)

March 04, 2021, Central Asia News

The Indian Army on March 04 began the training of Turkmenistan Special Forces in "Combat Free Fall" to help them build their capabilities. The Indian Army shared the information of the training on Twitter and said it was building bonds of friendship with the Turkmenistani forces.

West Asia

[Biden's Iran Problem](#)

March 1, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Presidents Obama, Trump and now Biden have all vowed to reduce the amount of attention the America pays to the Middle East, but events keep frustrating that goal. Last week the Biden administration launched two carefully calibrated strikes in the region: a military strike against a Syrian border post used by Iran-linked militias that are said to be involved in recent attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq, and a political strike against Saudi Arabia involving the release of a Central Intelligence Agency assessment linking Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

[India, Bahrain Discuss Ways to Boost Cooperation](#)

March 03, 2021, The Siasat Daily

Indian Ambassador to Bahrain Piyush Srivastava met Bahrain Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani and discussed ways to promote cooperation to meet common aspirations between the two countries.

[EAM Jaishankar asks Israeli Diplomats to Keep up 'Forward and Upward Trajectory' in Bilateral Relations](#)

March 02, 2021, The Times of India

External affairs Minister S Jaishankar told Israeli diplomats to understand the "profound changes" underway in India post-Covid-19 pandemic and utilise the fundamental and deep comfort enjoyed by the two sides to further the "forward and upward trajectory" in bilateral ties.

[Rockets Hit Iraqi Base Where U.S. Troops are Stationed](#)

March 04, 2021, The New York Times

A barrage of rockets was fired at the Ayn Al Asad air base in Iraq's western Anbar Province – one of the last remaining Iraqi bases where U.S. forces are stationed. An Iraqi security statement and one released by the Pentagon said 10 rockets were launched toward the sprawling base.

[Iran's Chabahar Port Crucial for Trade in Central Asia: EAM Jaishankar](#)

March 04, 2021, Mint

Speaking at an event to mark the Chabahar Day at the Maritime India Summit organised by India's shipping ministry, Jaishankar pointed out that there was a "huge infrastructure deficit in the region, which needs to be met to fulfil the growing aspirations of our people."

[Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed meets with Indian Minister of External Affairs in New Delhi](#)

February 26, 2021, Gulf News

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, met with Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Indian Minister of External Affairs, to discuss the historic UAE-India friendship ties and ways of enhancing joint cooperation and partnership to serve the mutual interests of the two countries and their people.

['India's Startups, Digital Economy Show Promise': Governor Saudi PIF](#)

March 01, 2021, Mint

As a long-term investor, the market fundamentals for many emerging markets such as India remain unchanged or improved on a relative basis. Our [Saudi Arabia's] outlook for India is very positive.

[Reliance's Move to Spin off Oil may Have Cleared Decks for Saudi Aramco Deal](#)

February 25, 2021, S&P Global

A strategic move by Reliance Industries to carve out an independent oil-to-chemicals subsidiary may take the country's biggest private refiner one step closer to selling a stake to Saudi Aramco, as well as help draw investors keen to focus on specific businesses of the diversified group.

[Looking Forward with Strong Interest for Iran's Willingness to Engage: US on Nuclear Issue](#)

March 05, 2021,

As the United Nations nuclear watchdog looks forward to a technical dialogue with Iran, the United States said it is hopeful that Iran would come forward for diplomacy after European allies dropped plans to censure Tehran at the UN nuclear watchdog.

[Khashoggi Report Spurs 'Reckoning Moment' for US-Saudi Relations](#)

February 26, 2021, AL Jazeera

A United States intelligence report that lays blame for the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the feet of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman raises stark questions about the future of US-Saudi relations.

[Khashoggi Murder: Bahrain, UAE reaffirm Support for Saudi Arabia after CIA Report](#)

February 27, 2021, Middle East Eye

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stood behind Saudi Arabia's position on a newly released CIA intelligence report that blames Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

[Syrian Army Says Israel Attacks Areas around Southern Damascus](#)

March 1, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Iranian forces were reported as targeted in the air strike. This might suggest the strike is an Israeli response to what is believed to be an Iranian attack on an Israeli-owned ship in the Gulf of Oman

[Pope Francis Embarks on Historic Visit to Iraq](#)

March 04, 2021, AL Jazeera

Pope Francis begins a historic visit to Iraq, the first by a pontiff to the birthplace of the Eastern Churches from where more than a million Christians have fled over the past 20 years.

United States

United States

[Biden tells NASA engineer Indian-Americans are 'taking over the country'](#)

March 4, 2021, New York Post

President Biden made one of his most head-turning comments since being sworn in when he told an Indian-American aerospace engineer that immigrants from the subcontinent are “taking over” the US.

[Biden now says US will have enough vaccine for every adult by the end of May](#)

March 2, 2021, CNN

President Joe Biden said the United States would have enough Covid-19 vaccine doses for every adult American by the end of May, dramatically accelerating his timeline but acknowledging the country must still be vigilant against the virus.

[Biden called off strike against second target in Syria to avoid killing civilians, say officials](#)

March 5, 2021, NBC News

President Joe Biden called off an air strike against a second target in Syria last week after a woman and children were spotted in the area, a senior administration official told NBC News.

[Biden's Iran approach praised as deft despite lack of progress](#)

March 5, 2021, Reuters

US President Joe Biden's refusal to offer upfront sanctions relief to Iran may have angered Tehran's clerical rulers but it has won some praise at home despite his failure so far to draw Iran into nuclear talks or deter attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq.

[Biden Commerce Chief Says Steel, Aluminum Tariffs 'Effective'](#)

March 4, 2021, Bloomberg

Tariffs that Donald Trump placed on foreign steel and aluminum have been “effective,” President Joe Biden's commerce secretary said, an indication that the Biden administration won't soon abolish the highly contentious duties.

[Biden national security guidance calls to increase diplomacy, downplay nukes, end Afghanistan conflict](#)

March 4, 2021, Defense News

In an "interim" security strategy document released afternoon, the White House emphasized that the Biden administration views diplomacy as its first tool for national security issues – and democracy as its greatest asset.

[Biden's energy department revives loan program to boost clean technology](#)

March 4, 2021, The Guardian

As part of its clean-energy agenda, the Biden administration is reviving an energy department program that disbursed billions of dollars in loan guarantees to companies such as electric car maker Tesla and the failed solar company Solyndra, the energy secretary, Jennifer Granholm, says.

[Blinken and Austin will travel to Japan and South Korea later this month](#)

March 4, 2021, CNN

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will travel to Japan and South Korea later this month, marking the first international trip by Biden Cabinet officials since President Joe Biden's inauguration, according to a State Department official and a diplomat from the region.

[Blinken Proposes a Foreign Policy Not 'Disconnected From Our Daily Lives'](#)

March 3, 2021, The New York Times

In his first major address, the secretary of state pledged to focus on how diplomacy has a direct effect on regular Americans. At the top of the list: dealing with China.

[Blinken: US stands with Israel, ICC lacks jurisdiction to hold investigation](#)

March 4, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed the US's opposition to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) decision to open a full war crimes probe against Israel and the Hamas terrorist group in the Gaza Strip night.

[China poses 'biggest geopolitical test' for the U.S., Secretary of State Blinken says](#)

March 4, 2021, NBC News

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said China represented America's "biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century," saying the Asian nation was the only country with enough power to jeopardize the current international order.

[China denies wrongdoing, confrontation after Blinken speech](#)

March 4, 2021, UPI

China denied it is engaged in a confrontation with the United States after remarks from U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the challenges posed by the world's second-largest economy on the "stable and open international system."

[The U.S. Doesn't Have to Make Sacrifices to Get China's Climate Cooperation](#)

March 4, 2021, Foreign Policy

Joe Biden entered the White House in January and immediately began mobilizing the U.S. government and global partners around two major policy poles, combating climate change and strategic competition with China. As the two most critical issues the United States arguably faces, they dominate the foreign-policy conversation, leading to tough questions about what happens when priorities seem to clash.

Europe & Russia

Europe

[EU to extend COVID vaccine export controls to end of June - sources](#)

March 4, 2021, NASDAQ

The European Union is planning to extend its export authorisation scheme for COVID-19 vaccines to the end of June, two EU sources told Reuters, in a move that could reignite tensions with countries who rely on shots made in the EU.

[Italy blocks export of Covid-19 vaccine doses to Australia, using EU powers for the first time](#)

March 4, 2021, CNN

Italy invoked European Union powers to block the export of 250,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses to Australia, in a dramatic escalation of a dispute between the EU and drug giant AstraZeneca.

[Proposed E.U. Law Aims to Rectify Gender Pay Gap](#)

March 4, 2021, The New York Times

Pushing member states to address salary disparities between men and women, the European Union revealed details of a proposed law that would require companies to divulge gender pay gaps and give job candidates access to salary information in employment interviews.

[EU regulator starts a review of Russia's COVID-19 vaccine](#)

March 4, 2021, Associated Press

The European Medicines Agency has started a rolling review of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine, many months after it was first approved for use in Russia and after dozens of countries around the world have authorized it.

[EU vows legal response as UK moves unilaterally on Northern Ireland](#)

March 3, 2021, Reuters

The European Union promised legal action after the British government unilaterally extended a grace period for checks on food imports to Northern Ireland, a move Brussels said violated terms of Britain's divorce deal.

[Romania reveals the limits of China's reach in Europe](#)

March 3, 2021, Politico

Bucharest has struck a far bolder stance than most Western European countries in saying no to China. Not only has Romania booted Chinese companies out of core sectors like nuclear power and telecoms, but it also last month delivered

a scathing diplomatic rebuke to Chinese leader Xi Jinping when it refused to send its president to a landmark summit, despite persistent diplomatic hectoring from Beijing.

[EU Criticized For Slow Response To Hungary's Crackdown On Press Freedom](#)

March 4, 2021, NPR

The European Union condemned the closure of an independent radio station in Hungary, but critics say the EU has been slow to punish Budapest for repeatedly violating democratic principles.

[European Parliament backs plan for conference on EU's future](#)

March 4, 2021, Politico

European Parliament leaders endorsed a plan to finally launch a Conference on the Future of Europe, after months of delays caused by the coronavirus crisis and bickering between EU institutions over who should be in charge.

[Borrell: EU doesn't have resources to fight disinformation from China](#)

March 1, 2021, Politico

The European Union's foreign service doesn't have the resources nor the authority to effectively counter hybrid attacks coming from China, its foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said today.

[Kremlin urges France and Germany to stop Ukraine conflict crossing 'dangerous line'](#)

March 4, 2021, Reuters

The Kremlin urged France and Germany to use their influence with the Ukrainian government to make sure that events in the part of eastern Ukraine controlled by Russian-backed rebels did not "cross a dangerous line".

[US, UK suspend retaliatory tariffs for four months](#)

March 4, 2021, The Hill

The U.S. and United Kingdom have agreed to suspend some retaliatory tariffs regarding a long-standing Boeing and Airbus dispute for four months, effective.

[German warship to cross South China Sea for first time since 2002](#)

March 4, 2021, Al Jazeera

A German frigate will set sail for Asia in August and, on its return journey, become the first German warship to cross the South China Sea since 2002, senior government officials said.

Russia

[Russia launches satellite to monitor climate in Arctic](#)

February 28, 2021, Reuters

Russia launched its space satellite Arktika-M on a mission to monitor the climate and environment in the Arctic amid a push by the Kremlin to expand the country's activities in the region. The Arctic has warmed more than twice as fast as the global average over the last three decades and Moscow is seeking to develop the energy-rich region, investing in the Northern Sea Route for shipping across its long northern flank as ice melts.

[Russia develops new-generation Kedr strategic missiles system](#)

March 01, 2021, TASS

The Russian military and industrial complex commenced the development of the new-generation Kedr strategic missile system, a source in the rocket and space industry told TASS. According to the source, the project is currently undergoing the science and development phase. "If it progresses to the experiment and design phase, we will be able to talk in substance. So far, it is still a deep R&D stage," the source said.

[Moscow must continue 'necessary' policy of de-dollarization to end dependence on US currency, says Russian Senate chief Matvienko](#)

March 02, 2021, Russia Today

The US dollar will not disappear from the international market any time soon, but it is absolutely essential for Moscow to continue its long-term policy of 'de-dollarization' to reduce Russia's dependence on the currency. That's according to Senator Valentina Matvienko, the chairperson of the country's Federation Council, who voiced her support for Russia's movement away from the dollar.

[Russian space agency Roscosmos begins design of 'Venera-D' orbital station, set to be Moscow's 1st mission to Venus since USSR era](#)

March 04, 2021, Russia Today

Russia has begun planning the build of 'Venera-D', a spacecraft destined to become the first sent by Moscow to Venus since Soviet times. Initially planned as a joint operation with America's NASA, it will now likely be unilateral. The scientific director of the Institute of Space Research Lev Zeleny explained that the vessel will first be launched in 2029, if everything runs on schedule.

[Russia to Receive Advanced Armata Tanks in 2022](#)

March 04, 2021, The Moscow Times

The Russian military will receive a pilot batch of the hyped Armata T-14 tanks next year, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said. The Armata T-14, which is undergoing state tests amid multiple delivery delays since its first public display in 2015, will be Russia's first main battle tank to be deployed in 40 years.

[Russia may up oil production, while OPEC + may extend cut by 1 mln bpd – source](#)

March 04, 2021, TASS

OPEC + ministers are discussing the extension of the additional reduction in oil production by 1 mln b/d, which Saudi Arabia assumed in February-March, and into April, while at the same time, Russia may get the possibility of a small increase in production, a source in OPEC told TASS. "The Saudis will extend the cut by 1 mln bpd," he said, adding that Russia would be able to "increase a little."

[Russia welcomes US signals about strategic stability dialogue - envoy](#)

March 05, 2021, TASS

Moscow positively views signals from Washington about its plans to revive the strategic stability dialogue, Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov said. "We perceive positively the signals from the White House and the State Department on the plans to restore the dialogue on strategic stability and the possibility of further dialogue on arms control," he said.

Africa & Latin America

Latin America

[Argentine President attacks opposition, Judiciary, media and economic powers](#)

March 02, 2021, MercoPress

In a speech before the Legislative that launched the campaign for the October midterm elections, Argentine president Alberto Fernandez on Monday opened the 139th Congressional period of ordinary sessions with a barrage of attacks on the opposition, Judiciary, media and the concentrated economic powers.

[Producer price inflation in Brazil anticipates Central Bank will raise interest rates](#)

March 03, 2021, MercoPress

Brazil's statistics agency IBGE said the monthly rate of producer price inflation kicked off this year at its second highest, with prices rising across all 24 activities surveyed.

[Chile's economy falls 3.1% in January](#)

March 01, 2021, Prensa Latina

Chile's economy fell 3.1 percent in January 2021 compared to the same month in 2020, the Central Bank (BC) informed. According to data from the Monthly Indicator of Economic Activity (IMACEC), this decrease is due to the fall in service activities and the production of goods, which was partially offset by the dynamism of trade.

[Venezuela strengthens gender violence law](#)

March 03, 2021, Prensa Latina

Venezuela is making progress to strengthen current legislation to guarantee a society free of gender violence. It passed a law that is geared to expanding the scope of legal instruments adapted to the present situation.

Africa

[US takes helm at UNSC with focus on Africa](#)

March 01, 2021, Africa Times

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the new United States Ambassador to the United Nations, said that African affairs will be a priority as the U.S. takes up the presidency role for the United Nations Security Council this month. The focus

areas would be humanitarian crises, poverty and hunger in the African countries.

[Western Sahara conflict shows signs of escalation](#)

March 02, 2021, The African Report

Hostilities between Morocco and Algeria have taken on a new dimension in recent months, especially over the Western Sahara question. Tensions between Algeria and Morocco have never been as tense in 45 years.

[Zimbabwe becomes the first African country to authorize the use of COVAXIN](#)

March 04, 2021, ANI

Zimbabwe became the first African country to authorize the use of COVAXIN. The development comes after the reports showed an efficacy of 81% in the phase-III trials of India's indigenous COVID vaccine.

[Senegal clashes kill one after an opposition leader is arrested.](#)

March 04, 2021, Africa News

Senegalese police clashed with supporters of arrested opposition leader Ousmane Sonko leaving one person dead. Sono, also a former presidential candidate, is considered a key potential challenger for President Macky Sall in elections in three years.



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