

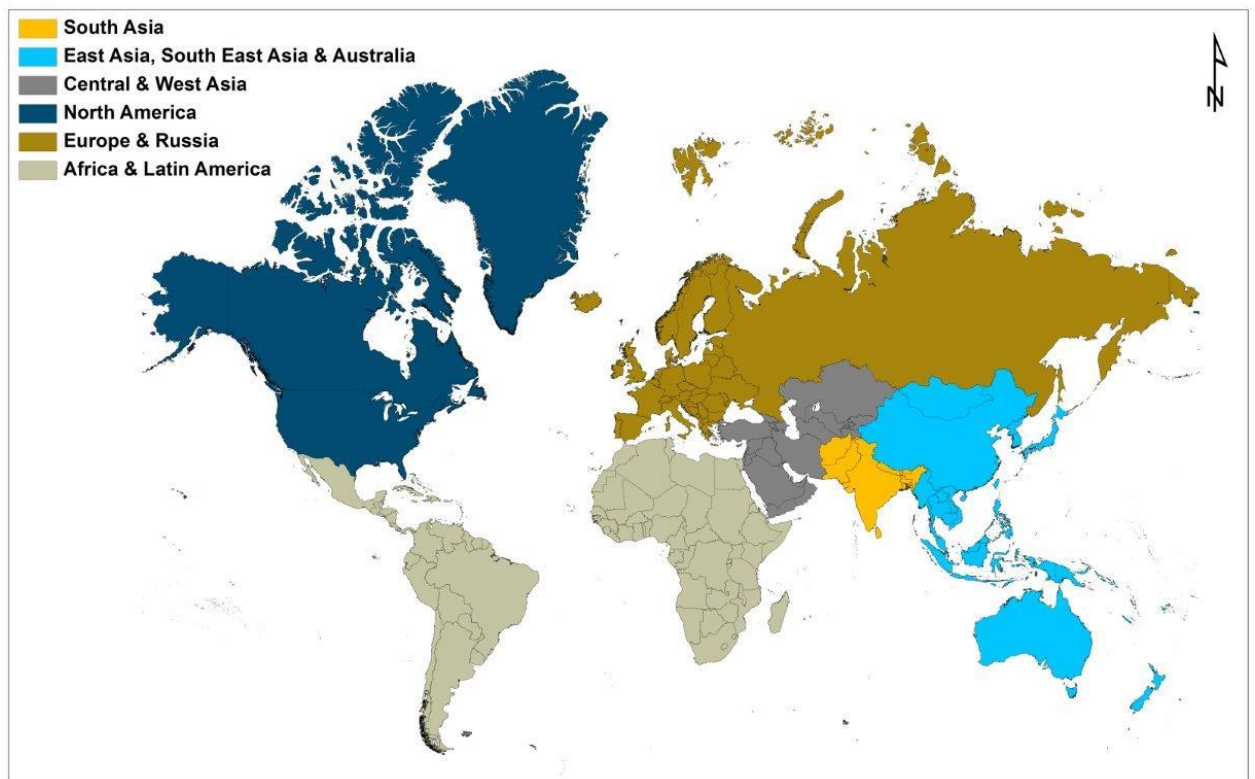


Delhi Policy Group

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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DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH Volume V, Issue 49

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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DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH

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Contents

South Asia.....	1
East & South East Asia	8
Central & West Asia	13
United States.....	17
Europe & Russia	19
Africa & Latin America	22

South Asia

India

[General Rawat was a valued partner, strong proponent of US-India defence partnership: US](#)

December 9, 2021, The Indian Express

The Mi-17V5 helicopter of the Indian Air Force (IAF) carrying the 63-year-old tri-services chief crashed near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday, killing 13 of the 14 people on board including his wife and 11 other armed forces personnel.

[General Bipin Rawat played key role in cementing India-US defence ties: US](#)

December 9, 2021, Hindustan Times

"General Rawat was pivotal to the India-US relationship, and that's why our thoughts go out to the general's family, to the families of all those on board this flight, and, of course, to the people of India on the loss that they have suffered today," said US state department spokesperson Ned Price.

[Taking forward General Rawat's legacy](#)

December 11, 2021, The Indian Express

D.S. Hooda writes: As CDS, he brought energy and purpose to military reforms. It must be ensured that the momentum is not lost.

[Indian Navy a preferred security partner for its maritime neighbours: President](#)

December 8, 2021, The Economic Times

The Indian Navy is looked upon as a preferred security partner by the country's maritime neighbours and it has a huge role to play in furthering India's foreign policy in protecting the national interests, President Ram Nath Kovind said on Wednesday. Speaking at the ceremony where the Navy's 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron was presented the President's Standard honour for its service, Kovind said the naval squadron has been deployed for a multitude of operations.

[India re-elected to International Maritime Organisation Council](#)

December 11, 2021, The Indian Express

India has been re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council after elections were held at its Assembly in London for the 2022-23 biennium. India's election falls under the Category of 10 states with "the largest interest in international seaborne trade", alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

[Thirteen Chinese warplanes enter Taiwan air defence zone](#)

December 11, 2021, The Economic Times

Thirteen Chinese military aircraft entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ). This came on the day Nicaragua severed ties with Taiwan and established diplomatic relations with China.

Pakistan

[Gas-buying clause abolished for three LNG power plants](#)

December 4, 2021, Dawn

Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited's board of directors allowed a waiver of the minimum 66 per cent take-or-pay clause for three government-owned liquefied natural gas (LNG) power plants in Punjab in a bid to reduce the burden of capacity payments and increase the interest of both local and foreign investors in the government's plan of privatising these projects.

[Ghastly murder of Lankan man in Sialkot shames nation](#)

December 4, 2021, Dawn

Furious workers of a garment factory in Sialkot tortured their Sri Lankan general manager to death over allegations of blasphemy and set the body on fire. The brutal killing drew widespread condemnation from government officials and human rights bodies.

[Military court convicts rights activist of espionage](#)

December 5, 2021, Dawn

Rights and political activist Idris Khattak has been convicted of espionage and sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment. The verdict was pronounced this week after the trial concluded in Jhelum. The source said he was tried under Pakistan Army Act and Official Secrets Act, 1923. He was accused of providing sensitive information to a foreign intelligence agency.

[Pakistan to host OIC's extraordinary session on 19th](#)

December 5, 2021, Dawn

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi says Pakistan is set to host an extraordinary session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to avert a humanitarian crisis which is rearing its head in Afghanistan following US withdrawal.

[Saudi Arabia deposits \\$3 billion in Pakistan's central bank](#)

December 5, 2021, The News

Pakistan received a \$3 billion deposit from Saudi Arabia which will help shore up the country's foreign currency reserves and stabilise the local currency. The Saudi money comes when Pakistan is facing deterioration in the balance of payments position amid depleting foreign exchange reserves and weak inflows. High current account deficit weighed down by the soaring import bill continues to put pressure on the rupee.

[Religious scholars to oversee syllabus taught in educational institutions: Shahbaz Gill](#)

December 6, 2021, Dawn

Special Assistant to the Pakistan Prime Minister on Political Communication Shahbaz Gill has said that syllabus of educational institutions must nurture students' mindset in line with the Islamic code of life and ethics.

[Public debt rises 4pc to Rs40.3trln by end October](#)

December 7, 2021, The News

Pakistan's public debt increased by 4 percent at the end of October 2021. Analysts said rising interest rates is likely to drive debt servicing cost higher in months ahead. The public debt amounted to Rs40.3 trillion by the end of October. It came at Rs38.7 trillion in June. The debt surged 13.44 percent year on year. It stood at Rs35.5 trillion at the end of October 2020.

[Blasphemy convict acquitted after 11 years](#)

December 9, 2021, The Express Tribune

The Lahore High Court (LHC) acquitted a man after 11 years, as it set aside life imprisonment awarded to him by a trial court on charges of blasphemy, saying that the case was just a plot.

[Pakistan Navy conducts live firing of surface-to-air missiles](#)

December 9, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan Navy conducted successful live weapons firing during a ceremony. The units of Pakistan Navy demonstrated combat readiness and war fighting potential through Ground-Based Air Defence (GBAD) live firing of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) at Karachi.

[Let's engage at opportune time, Pakistan tells US](#)

December 9, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan conveyed to the United States that it would like to engage with Washington on the issue of democracy "at an opportune time in the future", indicating that it may not attend President Joe Biden's Democracy Summit.

[PDM announces plan for march on Pakistan Day](#)

December 7, 2021, Dawn

In what appears to be an action replay of last year, the opposition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) announced that it would hold a march to Islamabad against price hike in the country on the Pakistan Day on March 23.

[TTP declares end to ceasefire](#)

December 10, 2021, Dawn

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan declined to extend the month-long ceasefire with the government, accusing it of failing to honour the decisions reached earlier. The announcement has put the nascent peace efforts into the doldrums.

Afghanistan

[Women shouldn't be forced into marriage, says Taliban decree](#)

December 4, 2021, Dawn

Afghanistan's Taliban regime released a decree on women's rights which said women should not be considered "property" and must consent to marriage, but failed to mention female access to education or work outside the home.

[India to use Afghan trucks for sending aid to Afghanistan through Pakistan](#)

December 4, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan permitted use of Afghan trucks for transporting Indian humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

[Afghan currency slides on bank collapse fears](#)

December 8, 2021, Dawn

Afghanistan's currency hit 100 to the US dollar, losing five percent of its value in one day in a panic triggered by fears that one of the country's biggest banks could collapse.

[US, West blast Taliban over 'summary killings' of former Afghan security forces](#)

December 6, 2021, The News

The United States (US) led a group of Western nations and allies in condemnation of the Taliban over the summary killings of former members of the Afghan security forces, reported by rights groups demanding quick investigations.

[Afghanistan: Foreign Office chaotic during Kabul evacuation - whistleblower](#)

December 8, 2021, BBC

The UK Foreign Office's handling of the Afghan evacuation after the Taliban seized Kabul was dysfunctional and chaotic, a whistleblower has said. Raphael Marshall said the process of choosing who could get a flight out was arbitrary and thousands of emails with pleas for help went unread. The then Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab was slow to make decisions, he added.

[Qatar, Turkey to work together on stabilising Afghanistan](#)

December 6, 2021, Al Jazeera

Qatar's foreign minister has reiterated his country's position on addressing the situation in Afghanistan, saying Doha will continue to work towards enhancing humanitarian and economic efforts in the war-torn country.

[Turkish companies stimulate power projects in Afghanistan](#)

December 9, 2021, Daily Sabah

Turkish construction companies operating in Afghanistan are earning praise for their state-of-the-art projects in Afghanistan, which currently needs such developmental projects as well as investment. A Turkish company is building the 100-megawatt Kajaki Hydroelectric Power Station, some 700 kilometers (435 miles) from Afghanistan's capital Kabul.

[France, Europeans working to open mission in Afghanistan: Macron](#)

December 4, 2021, Al Jazeera

French President Emmanuel Macron said that several European nations were considering opening a joint diplomatic mission in Afghanistan but stressed it would not mean recognition of the country's Taliban rulers. Western countries have been grappling with how to engage with the Taliban, which took over Afghanistan in a lightning advance in August as US-led forces were completing their pull-out after 20 years of war.

Bangladesh

[Bangladesh@50: From a 'basket case' to a case study, how the country put itself on the fast track](#)

December 11, 2021, The Indian Express

History has proven the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's famous description of the infant state of Bangladesh in 1972 as an "international basket case" wrong. Bangladesh has twice declared Independence – once as part of Pakistan in 1947 and then again as the current nation in 1971. On both occasions, it was considerably worse off in economic terms. Yet, it is to its credit that as things stand today – the past 15 odd years being the key – an average Bangladeshi's income is more than that of an average Pakistani or even an average Indian.

[Over 120 'stranded' Indian truck drivers send SOS from Bangladesh](#)

December 11, 2021, Telegraph India

They had entered Bangladesh through Hilli in South Dinajpur district with wheat-laden trucks between November 20 and 23

[Liberation of Bangladesh: India Observes 'Maitri Diwas' To Mark 50 Years Of Friendship](#)

December 6, 2021, Outlook India

India and Bangladesh are jointly observing 'Maitri Diwas' to commemorate 50 years of the Bangladesh Liberation War 1971 and India's role in the neighbouring nation's freedom struggle.

[India-Bangladesh Maitri flourishes at EXPO2020 Dubai](#)

December 8, 2021, The Print

Marking the 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh, the two countries celebrated Maitri Diwas or Friendship Day on Tuesday evening at the India Pavilion in EXPO2020 Dubai.

Nepal

[Nepal: Schools built with India's assistance inaugurated](#)

December 10, 2021, India Today

Two new schools that were built with Indian assistance have been inaugurated in the Sarlahi district of Nepal.

[China to support Nepal reconstruction](#)

December 10, 2021, The Manila Times

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday delivered a speech at the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction 2021 via video link, calling for further cooperation in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic, continuous support for post-earthquake reconstruction and deepening cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Sri Lanka

[India working on urgent economic package to aid Sri Lanka, report says](#)

December 11, 2021, The Print

The plan is to extend credit lines for Sri Lanka to import food, medicine, fuel and other essential items from India, the Economic Times newspaper reported Saturday.

[Pak must expedite compensation to lynched Sri Lankan man's family: Colombo](#)

December 10, 2021, Hindustan Times

The Sri Lankan minister requested the Pakistan envoy to arrange a mechanism to ensure Kumara's family receives his salary every month without any disruption.

East & South East Asia

China

[China claims it's the 'largest democracy'](#)

December 10, 2021, The Hindu

As U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday hosted world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the second day of a democracy summit, China's government capped a week-long campaign criticising liberal democratic systems by attacking America's "democratic malaise".

[US imposes sweeping sanctions on China, Myanmar and North Korea](#)

December 10, 2021, Al Jazeera

Washington says it wants to send a message that it will act against those who abuse the power of the state to inflict suffering and repression.

[China brands US democracy 'weapon of mass destruction'](#)

December 11, 2021, The Times of India

China branded US democracy a "weapon of mass destruction" on following the US organized Summit for Democracy which aimed to shore up like minded allies in the face of autocratic regimes.

[Chinese project at Balochistan port: local protests, global concerns](#)

December 11, 2021, The Indian Express

This is not the first time Gwadar is seeing protests, but this one has now run for 26 days. Despite the severe conservatism of Balochistan, women protesters have come out in large numbers.

[China's state-affiliated media says death of Gen Rawat in chopper crash exposes India's lack of combat preparedness](#)

December 10, 2021, Deccan Herald

A media organization run by the Communist Party of China (CPC) dismissed as "conspiracy theory" the speculation about a link between two separate helicopter crashes, which killed top military leaders of Taiwan and India – the two nations facing the belligerence of Xi Jinping's Middle Kingdom.

[India defense chief's death shows flaws in Indian military, 'deals heavy blow' to its modernization](#)

December 9, 2021, Global Times

The death of India's defense chief in a helicopter crash on Wednesday not only exposed the Indian military's lack of discipline and combat preparedness, but

also dealt a heavy blow to the country's military modernization that could linger for a long time, Chinese experts said.

[China, Nicaragua resume diplomatic ties](#)

December 10, 2021, Xinhua Net

China and Nicaragua have resumed diplomatic relations. Delegations from the two countries held talks in China's Tianjin. On Thursday local time, Nicaragua's Foreign Ministry announced that Nicaragua is breaking "diplomatic relations" with Taiwan.

[Key meeting stresses proper understanding of major issues in China's new development stage](#)

December 10, 2021, Xinhua

The Chinese authorities have emphasized the need to establish a proper understanding of the country's major economic and development issues in a tone-setting economic meeting.

Japan

[Japan's support for U.S. forces to top ¥1 trillion over five years](#)

December 9, 2021, The Japan Times

Japan is planning to provide over ¥1 trillion in total under its Host Nation Support program for U.S. forces in Japan through the five years from fiscal 2022, multiple Japanese government sources have said. The amount will mark an increase from around ¥980 billion shouldered by the Japanese government to host the U.S. bases and troops in Japan between fiscal 2016 and fiscal 2020.

[Japan's ruling coalition to seek fairer capital gains tax](#)

December 9, 2021, The Japan Times

Japan's ruling coalition sees a need to review financial capital gains taxes to ensure fairness, but wants to avoid putting off ordinary investors, according to a copy of the party's fiscal 2022 tax plan seen by Bloomberg. The ruling parties said in the document there was a need to consider rectifying a situation in which people with higher incomes sometimes pay lower rates of tax.

[In parliamentary debut, new CDP leader tries policy-focused approach](#)

December 8, 2021, The Japan Times

Constitutional Democratic Party President Kenta Izumi made his parliamentary debut as party leader Wednesday, questioning Prime Minister Fumio Kishida over issues ranging from the government's coronavirus response to constitutional revision. It was the first time since Izumi, 47, was

elected CDP president last month that the leaders of the government and the largest opposition party had faced off against each other, and the exchange was remarkably cordial and free of rhetorical fireworks.

[Faltering capital spending saps Japan's economic growth](#)

December 8, 2021, Nikkei Asia

Many Japanese companies have been shying away from investing in domestic plants and equipment as they fret about potential overcapacity locally and turn overseas for expansion, keeping the country's capital spending in the doldrums and dragging on growth in the world's No. 3 economy. The nation's productive capital stock -- or total value of all production facilities and equipment held by private companies assessed by using an age-efficiency profile and retirement pattern -- has increased less than 10% over the past two decades, according to OECD, way behind a rise of 50% in the U.S. and 60% in the U.K.

[Abe throws full support behind Kishida at Tokyo fund-raiser](#)

December 7, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is back on the front line of Japanese politics, this time as head of the largest faction of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, a move described as "the starting shot of his comeback." Addressing his first fund-raising party since taking command of the faction, Abe on Dec. 6 pledged to continue to support the new Kishida administration where senior members of his faction fill crucial posts. "I vow that all 95 members of our faction will unite and firmly support the Kishida administration," he said.

[In speech, Kishida lays out bold plans for health, economic and defense policies](#)

December 6, 2021, The Japan Times

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida went on the offensive Monday to lay out a blueprint for containing the omicron variant, invigorating the weakening Japanese economy and reinforcing the country's defense programs even at the risk of upsetting the ruling party's coalition partner. In his second policy speech as prime minister, Kishida introduced an array of policy specifics, vowing to administer coronavirus booster shots earlier, expand tax credits for firms that raise wages and complete national security strategy updates within a year.

Korea

[South Korea, Japan to be united by 1st free trade pact in February](#)

December 7, 2021, Nikkei Asia

South Korea is now set to put the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership into force on Feb. 1, an arrangement that will give it its first free

trade deal with neighbouring Japan. RCEP will take effect Jan. 1 for 10 parties that completed the ratification process by Nov. 2, when the necessary conditions were met: China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia and Laos.

[Moon encourages corporate efforts for carbon neutrality goal](#)

December 10, 2021, The Korea Herald

South Korean President Moon Jae-in lauded the efforts made by companies to cut carbon emissions, and reiterated that the goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 is "must" for the country. In celebration of the first anniversary of the declaration of the country's 2050 carbon neutral vision, Moon invited company leaders and economic organizations to check on the year's progress and renew their determination, according to the presidential office.

[At Biden's summit, Moon bills Korea as 'exemplary testament' to democracy](#)

December 10, 2021, The Korea Times

President Moon Jae-in said that South Korea is an "exemplary testament" to the value of democracy, citing the Korean people's struggle against authoritarianism and move for peaceful revolutions. Moon made the remarks at a virtual democracy summit of leaders of more than 110 countries hosted by the U.S. President Joe Biden.

[Yoon leads Lee by 8.2 percentage points in presidential race: survey](#)

December 8, 2021, The Korea Times

Yoon Suk-yeol, the presidential nominee of the main opposition People Power Party, is leading his rival Lee Jae-myung of the ruling Democratic Party by 8.2 percentage points in a hypothetical multicandidate race, a survey showed. Yoon earned 45.3 percent support against Lee's 37.1 percent in the survey of 1,036 adults conducted Monday and Tuesday by Realmeter.

[Korean defense industry expanding presence in global market](#)

December 11, 2021, The Korea Times

The Korean defense industry is expanding its presence in the global market, with some successful promotions of domestic weapons to other countries' militaries in recent months.

Southeast Asia

[Ahead of Blinken trip, U.S. says committed to 'unprecedented' ASEAN ties](#)

December 9, 2021, Reuters

President Joe Biden is committed to elevating U.S. engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to "unprecedented" levels, the top U.S. diplomat for Asia said on Wednesday, ahead of a visit to Southeast Asia by Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

[U.S. envoy urges Cambodia to make no concessions to Myanmar junta in ASEAN](#)

December 10, 2021, Reuters

A senior U.S. official urged Cambodia on Friday not to make any concessions to Myanmar's military junta when Phnom Peng chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) next year.

[ASEAN running out of time to recast role as buffer in US-China great power competition](#)

December 8, 2021, Brookings

Following the latest incident in the South China Sea, in which Chinese coastguard vessels blocked and water-cannoned Philippine ships carrying resupplies to Second Thomas Shoal, the silence of ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) stood as a glaring but not surprising contrast to the quick responses from the United States and the European Union.

[South Korea, ASEAN agree to quicken customs procedure for FTA](#)

December 6, 2021, Business Standard

South Korea and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have agreed to address issues in customs procedures for better implementation of their Free Trade Agreement.

[New ASEAN Chair Cambodia to Push Engagement With Myanmar Junta](#)

December 7, 2021, The Diplomat

Following a meeting with the junta's foreign minister today, Prime Minister Hun Sen said he would visit Myanmar next month.

[Myanmar: A push to restore democracy](#)

December 9, 2021, Hindustan Times

India should continue making use of its influence with Myanmar's military leadership to make a discreet push for the restoration of democracy.

Central & West Asia

Central Asia

[Explosion In Uzbek Mall Kills One, Injures Nine People](#)

December 7, 2021, RFE/RL

One person was killed and at least nine injured after an explosion in a mall in Uzbekistan's southern region of Surxondaryo. No cause has been given for the blast, but gas explosions are not uncommon in the Central Asian nation during the winter due to aging pipelines and infrastructure, as well as lax safety standards.

[Kyrgyzstan parliamentary elections strengthen President Japarov's rule](#)

December 8, 2021, The Times of Central Asia

The newly-elected Kyrgyz parliament is dominated by a group of President Sadyr Japarov loyalists, which will allow the president to achieve his political goals.

[Kazakh President Signs Law On Mass Amnesty Marking 30 Years Of Independence](#)

December 8, 2021, The Times of Central Asia

Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has signed a law creating a mass amnesty as part of commemorations marking the 30th anniversary of the Central Asian nation's independence.

['Uyghur Tribunal' Says China Committed Genocide In Xinjiang](#)

December 9, 2021, RFE/RL

A London-based independent, unofficial panel investigating alleged human rights abuses in China's northwestern Xinjiang region has concluded that the government committed "genocide, crimes against humanity and torture" against Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and members of the region's other indigenous, mostly Muslim ethnic groups.

[Central Asian Deputy Foreign Ministers discuss security issues](#)

December 9, 2021, AKI Press Agency

The 11th annual meeting of the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the Central Asian countries was held in Dushanbe on December 8. The parties discussed regional and international issues, challenges and threats to security like international terrorism and extremism, radicalization, organized crime and drug trafficking, socio-economic problems, and exchanged views on the development prospects of the regional cooperation in Central Asia.

[India to host Central Asian foreign ministers on December 18-19](#)

December 9, 2021, The Economic Times

India is planning to host five Central Asian foreign ministers on December 18-19 for the third edition of this format of dialogue. This comes close on the heels of National Security Advisor-level dialogue with five nations and Russian President Putin's India visit that reaffirmed New Delhi's stakes in Eurasia.

West Asia

[Indian Army Gets 4 Israeli Heron Drones To Keep An Eye On China Along LAC In Ladakh](#)

November 30, 2021, India Today

In a major boost to its capabilities, the Indian Army has deployed 4 Heron drones from Israel to keep a close eye on China's movements in the Ladakh sector.

[Attention Invested Has Led To Very Impressive Outcomes: EAM Jaishankar on UAE](#)

December 02, 2021, Hindustan Times

In recent years, the Indian government has assiduously courted several key players in West Asia, including the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar, even as it has built up its strategic relationship with Israel. Efforts have been made to diversify relations with these countries from the traditional field of energy by adding new areas of cooperation.

[EAM Jaishankar Meets Top UAE Leaders, Discusses Ways To Bolster Strategic Ties](#)

December 05, 2021, India Today

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed here and expressed confidence that the bilateral strategic ties between India and the UAE will scale new heights in the years to come.

[US Caution, Rise of China: EAM Jaishankar Lists Developments in Geo-Politics of Indian Ocean Region](#)

December 04, 2021, Mint

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar pointed at the caution America has exercised in their power projection and an effort to correct its overextension, along with the rise of China, as he listed the developments in the geo-politics

of the Indian Ocean region at the Indian Ocean Conference 2021 being held at Dubai.

[India, US, UAE, Israel Likely To Meet In Dubai To Discuss Infrastructure: Israeli Ambassador Gilon](#)

December 05, 2021, ANI News

Leaders of the "West Asian Quad" [India, US, UAE, Israel] are soon likely to meet in Dubai to discuss infrastructure cooperation.

[India, UAE Aim To Conclude Trade Pact Talks Next Week](#)

December 03, 2021, The Economic Times

India and the UAE aim to conclude the negotiations for a free trade pact next week when the two sides meet for the third round of talks in New Delhi, the government said after commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal met representatives of aluminium, copper, chemicals and petrochemicals industry as part of the ongoing stakeholder consultations.

[Biden Administration Still Seeking Return To Compliance With Original Iran Nuclear Deal While Preparing For World Without It](#)

December 04, 2021, CNN

The Biden administration is still seeking a return to mutual compliance to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran but is "preparing for a world in which there is no return" to the landmark agreement, a senior State Department official said.

[Iran Enriching Uranium at 20 Percent Purity at Fordow: IAEA](#)

December 02, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Iran has started to enrich uranium up to 20 per cent purity at Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said.

[French President Macron: Difficult To Reach Nuclear Deal if Gulf, Israel Not Involved](#)

December 04, 2021, The Times of Israel

In striking comments, French President Emmanuel Macron suggested Israel as well as the Gulf states should be part of discussions on a return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

[UAE Buys Record 80 French Rafale Fighter Aircrafts in \\$19bn Arms Deal](#)

December 03, 2021, AL Jazeera

The United Arab Emirates and France have signed a \$19bn arms deal that will see the Gulf state acquire 80 Rafale fighter jets and 12 military helicopters.

[Arab Gulf States Compete for Influence in Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan](#)

December 04, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

America's Gulf Arab allies are stepping up their involvement in Afghanistan, expanding their diplomatic presence and resuming flights as competition for influence over the new Taliban administration heats up.

United States

United States

[Democrats Confront Inflation, Cost Concerns on \\$2 Trillion Spending Plan](#)

December 10, 2021, Wall Street Journal

President Biden and top Democrats rushed to counter fresh Republican criticism that the party's education, healthcare and climate-change bill is more expensive than it seems and will exacerbate inflation, concerns also shared by Sen. Joe Manchin (D., W.Va.), a make-or-break vote for the plan. Democrats will need the support of all 50 of their members in the Senate to meet their goal of passing the \$2 trillion Build Back Better bill before Christmas, but Mr. Manchin hasn't signed onto the legislation, repeatedly raising concerns about its price tag and inflation. Mr. Biden said on Friday he wasn't sure if Mr. Manchin would support the bill.

[U.S. Inflation Hit a 39-Year High in November](#)

December 10, 2021, Wall Street Journal

U.S. inflation reached a nearly four-decade high in November, as strong consumer demand collided with pandemic-related supply constraints. The Labour Department said the consumer-price index—which measures what consumers pay for goods and services—rose 6.8% in November from the same month a year ago.

['Democracy needs champions:' Biden kicks off first 'Summit for Democracy' at White House](#)

December 10, 2021, CNN

President Joe Biden on Thursday took the next step in his plans to promote democracy against rising autocracies when he convened a virtual "Summit for Democracy," which hosted more than 100 participants representing governments, civil society and private-sector leaders. "In the face of sustained and alarming challenges to democracy, universal human rights, and all around the world, democracy needs champions," Biden said as he kicked off the summit.

[U.S.-China Frictions Undercut Efforts to Settle Global Trade Disputes](#)

December 10, 2021, Wall Street Journal

Rising tensions between the U.S. and China are hampering efforts by members of the World Trade Organization to repair its ability to settle international trade disputes. China's entry into the WTO 20 years ago this month came with expectations that Beijing would gradually adopt Western free-trade practices.

[This Inflation Defies the Old Models](#)

December 8, 2021, Wall Street Journal

Neither supply nor demand by itself is increasing prices; it's an unusual combination of both. Last April, economists thought inflation would be around 2.5% right now. Instead, it's over 6%. Even by the forgiving standards of economic forecasting, that's a miss of epic proportions. Explanations come in two schools. The demand school blames President Biden and the Federal Reserve for administering too much stimulus. The supply school blames pandemic-related bottlenecks and supply chains.

Europe & Russia

Europe

[EU countries agree to take in 40,000 Afghan refugees](#)

December 9, 2021, Al Jazeera

Group of 15 EU member states agree to resettle Afghans, with Germany accepting the bulk of new arrivals, commissioner says.

[Hungary court strikes down Orban over EU asylum ruling](#)

December 10, 2021, The Times of India

Hungary's constitutional court on Friday struck down a bid by Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government to challenge a ruling by the EU's top court against Budapest's harsh asylum policy.

[Germany promises to take in 25,000 Afghans - EU document](#)

December 10, 2021, The Times of India

Germany has pledged to admit 25,000 Afghans deemed most at risk following the Taliban takeover in Kabul from about 40,000 such people that European Union states are to accept, according to a letter by a senior EU official.

["Aggression Comes With A Price Tag": EU Warns Russia Over Ukraine](#)

December 11, 2021, NDTV

"Aggression needs to come with a price tag, which is why we will communicate these points ahead of time to Russia," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told a joint news conference with Olaf Scholz.

[India, Slovenia discuss developments in Indo-Pacific, relations with EU](#)

December 11, 2021, Business Standard

India and Slovenia discussed regional and global issues including developments in the Indo-Pacific and India-EU relations.

Russia

[Moscow Says U.S. Spy Plane Nearly Caused Mid-Air 'Catastrophe'](#)

December 5, 2021, The Moscow Times

Moscow has said that a U.S. plane threatened civilian aircraft but "catastrophe" was avoided when a Russian passenger plane dived to avoid the NATO reconnaissance aircraft that crossed its path above the Black Sea.

[Russia, India Extend Military Cooperation Deal During Putin-Modi Summit](#)

December 6, 2021, RFE/RL

Russia and India extended a program for military and technical cooperation lasting until 2031 and signed a slew of bilateral defense agreements, including a deal for the production of assault rifles, during President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi on December 6. The two countries are also planning long-term cooperation on coal, shipbuilding, fertilizer, steel, and skilled labour.

[Russia says no to lease of disputed islands](#)

December 7, 2021, Russia Today

The Kuril Islands in the Pacific, which Japan lays territorial claims to, will reel in both domestic and foreign investors, but renting out the archipelago is strictly off the cards, Russia's deputy prime minister has announced.

[Putin-Biden Call: Key Points Discussed by US, Russian Presidents During Video Meeting](#)

December 7, 2021, Sputnik News

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Joe Biden have finalised their "protracted and comprehensive" video call, having discussed pressing issues linked to both international affairs and the complicated relations between the US and Russia.

[Moscow Court Orders Google To Pay More Fines For Failing To Delete Content](#)

December 7, 2021, RFE/RL

A court in Moscow has ordered Google to pay another fine, this time 5 million rubles (\$67,600), for violating the country's rules on banned content. The magistrate court of the Taganka district in the Russian capital handed down the decision on December 7, saying that Google had failed to delete banned content as instructed.

[Russia, China to continue joint drills, patrols – chief of Russian General Staff](#)

December 9, 2021, TASS News Agency

Russia and China are set to engage in more joint defense activities after they signed a roadmap for military cooperation last month, said Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces.

[Russia issues rebuke to American 'democracy summit'](#)

December 9, 2021, Russia Today

The participants of the virtual US-run Summit for Democracy will end up serving the interests of Washington, Russia's Foreign Ministry claimed. Writing on her Telegram channel, spokeswoman Maria Zakharova suggested that the

summit will give those taking part an “honorary right” to work for the agenda of the US worldwide.

[NATO offers Russia meeting](#)

December 9, 2021, Russia Today

NATO has told Russia that an invitation to meet has not been taken off the table amid increasingly strained relations, as Moscow voices concerns that the US-led military bloc is treading close to its self-declared boundaries.

[Russian fighter jets escort NATO warplanes over Black Sea – Defense Ministry](#)

December 10, 2021, TASS News Agency

According to the National Defense Management Centre (part of the Russian Defense Ministry), Russian aircraft crews identified the aerial targets as a Mirage 2000 jet fighter and a Rafale fighter from the French Air and Space Force, the US Army’s CL-600 Artemis reconnaissance aircraft, an RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft from the US Air Force and a French KC-135 refuelling aircraft, and escorted them over the Black Sea.

Africa & Latin America

Latin America

[Remembering US-backed state terror in El Salvador](#)

December 11, 2021, Al Jazeera

Forty years ago, on December 11, 1981, one of the worst massacres in modern Latin American history commenced in El Salvador, in the village of El Mozote and its environs.

[Incoming Honduras gov't to keep Taiwan ties for now: Officials](#)

December 10, 2021, Al Jazeera

The incoming Honduran government will maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan for now, officials have said, a day after neighbouring Nicaragua broke off diplomatic relations with Taipei to re-establish ties with Beijing.

[Colombia: Ex-soldiers take responsibility for killing 227](#)

December 27, 2021, Al Jazeera

Twenty-one former Colombian soldiers and one civilian have accepted responsibility for the forced disappearance and subsequent murder of at least 227 people, the country's transitional justice tribunal has said.

[Nicaragua cuts diplomatic ties with Taiwan to align with Beijing](#)

December 10, 2021, Al Jazeera

Nicaragua has broken off diplomatic relations with Taiwan, leaving the self-ruled democratic island with just 14 formal diplomatic allies amid continuing pressure from China, which claims the island as its own.

[Major Venezuela opposition leader quits interim government](#)

December 6, 2021, NBC News

The interim government is not serving its purpose, said Julio Borges, foreign minister for the U.S.-backed interim government, saying it's been "damaged."

[Chinese boats spotted illegally hauling tuna in Indian Ocean](#)

December 9, 2021, AP News

Chinese squid vessels were documented using wide nets to illegally catch already overfished tuna as part of a surge in unregulated activity in the Indian Ocean, according to a new report by Norway-based watchdog group that

highlights growing concerns about the lack of international cooperation to protect marine species on the high seas.

Africa

[African leaders set to speak at Summit for Democracy](#)

December 9, 2021, Africa Times

While not focused specifically on Africa, Biden has made clear that his government wants to re-engage with African leaders as part of a strategy that keeps a close eye on China and the competition for influence in the region.

[Africa's debt burden threatens to slow economic recovery](#)

December 11, 2021, Frontline

The debt-to-GDP ratio for 12 sub-Saharan African countries has significantly surpassed the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) recommended threshold of 45 per cent for low-middle income countries, raising alarm bells over the severity of Africa's debt as the continent looks towards post-pandemic economic recovery. South Africa, Guinea Bissau, Eritrea, Ghana, Togo, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Kenya and Zambia all have debt totalling more than 70 per cent of their respective gross domestic products (GDPs), according to the most recent data from the IMF and the World Bank.

[Problems between Serum Institute of India and Africa affecting vaccine supply, says Africa CDC](#)

December 9, 2021, The Times of India

The supply of Covid-19 vaccines from Serum Institute of India to the global vaccine sharing network COVAX has been affected by its poor relations with African bodies, the head of the African Centres for Disease Control said.

[Congo an economic 'bright spot' in Africa, says IMF chief](#)

December 9, 2021, Reuters

Democratic Republic of Congo is a rare "bright spot" in Africa's economic performance as high commodity prices and government reform improve finances, the head of the International Monetary Fund said.

[Russian COVID-19 Diplomacy in Africa: A Mixed Bag](#)

December 10, 2021, CSIS

More than a year after the launch of Sputnik V, promotional efforts (which are occasionally boosted by public comments from Russian President Vladimir

Putin) have claimed that the vaccine is now “registered” for use in over seventy countries, including fifteen in Africa.

[America worries about China’s military ambitions in Africa](#)

December 9, 2021, The Economist

When china began building its first overseas naval base in 2016, in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa, Chinese officials tried to allay Western anxiety about their country’s expanded military footprint. They said the outpost (pictured) was only for supporting multinational anti-piracy efforts, helping to secure vital shipping lanes and enabling China to protect its citizens in the region. Five years later, the facility in Djibouti remains the Chinese armed forces’ only foreign bastion.



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