



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



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Delhi Policy Group

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

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### ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

### DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH

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## South Asia

### India

#### [US Defence Secretary arrives today, may discuss S-400 deal](#)

March 19, 2021, The New Indian Express

US Defence Secretary Lloyd J Austin will arrive in India on a two-day visit Friday evening, marking the first visit of a cabinet-ranked official from the Joe Biden administration, which came to power in January.

#### [India Beats China at Vaccine Diplomacy](#)

March 18, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

When it comes to bullet trains, manufacturing plants and Olympic medals, China regularly eats India's lunch. But the South Asian nation is proving competitive with its East Asian rival in one important area: vaccine diplomacy.

#### [Jaishankar says Vaccine Maitri based on availability of adequate stock at home](#)

March 18, 2021, The Indian Express

Supply of Covid-19 vaccines to other countries is based on availability of adequate vaccines at home, and an empowered committee is overseeing the entire process, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar informed the Rajya Sabha. He added that the domestic requirement of the vaccine is being monitored continuously even as India sends vaccines to friendly nations across the globe.

#### [India, Kuwait set up joint ministerial commission, aim to boost trade in defence and security](#)

March 18, 2021, Mint

India and Kuwait established a joint ministerial commission that will impart new direction to ties. The two countries also said they were looking at setting up new panels to boost trade and investments and cooperation in defence and security.

#### [India will take up incidents of racism with UK, says S Jaishankar](#)

March 15, 2021, The Hindustan Times

India will take up incidents of racism in the UK with the British government, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said against the backdrop of strains caused by a debate on the farmers' protest in the British Parliament.

[Working In UNSC To Get "Balanced Outcome" Over Situation In Myanmar: Foreign Secretary](#)

March 16, 2021, NDTV

India is in conversation with all concerned in Myanmar in trying to facilitate and address the situation, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said.

[Make in India, Asia Pacific, technology transfer on table during Rajnath-Austin meeting today](#)

March 19, 2021, Times Now

The meeting between US Secretary of Defence Lloyd J Austin and his Indian counterpart Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was held on March 19.

[Indian Navy choses the local to boost its operational capability](#)

March 17, 2021, The New Indian Express

The Indian Navy has gone for indigenous platforms to boost the maritime operational capacity of the country. There have been orders placed with the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for fixed wing aircraft and rotary wing helicopters.

[India, China hold in-depth talks on addressing remaining issues in eastern Ladakh](#)

March 13, 2021, The Indian Express

India and China on Friday held "in-depth" discussions on addressing the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, holding that disengagement in the North and South banks of Pangong lake provided a good basis to work towards their early resolution.

## **Pakistan**

[Fazl, Nawaz agree to go ahead even if PPP leaves PDM](#)

March 19, 2021, Dawn

The agreement came two days after announcing postponement of the anti-government long march due to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)'s rejection of the proposal of submitting en masse resignations from the assemblies and in an effort to keep the opposition's alliance intact.

### [K-2 nuclear power plant connected to grid](#)

March 19, 2021, Dawn

The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) announced that it had connected the much-awaited 1,100MW Karachi Nuclear Power Plant Unit-2 (K-2) to the national grid.

### [Bajwa seeks world's help for peace with India](#)

March 19, 2021, Dawn

Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa made a strong pitch for peace with India and sought the world's help in ending the conflict between the two South Asian nuclear armed rivals.

### [Kuwait seeks stronger ties with Pakistan: minister](#)

March 19, 2021, Dawn

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Sabah said that his country was committed to developing stronger relations with Pakistan.

### [ACM Zaheer to take over as PAF chief](#)

March 18, 2021, The News

Air Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu has been promoted as Air Chief Marshal and appointed as the new Chief of the Air Staff of Pakistan Air Force (PAF).

### [Pakistan, Afghanistan need to work more to completely end trust deficit: Abdullah](#)

March 18, 2021, The Express Tribune

Dr Abdullah Abdullah, the chairman of High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) of Afghanistan, has said that Pakistan's consistent support for Afghan peace process is crucial for peaceful settlement in the war-torn country.

### [Pakistan gives another extension to helicopter deal with Turkey](#)

March 17, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan has given another extension to a helicopter deal with Turkey, giving Ankara six more months to deliver the aircraft. In July 2018, Pakistan signed a \$1.5 billion deal with Turkey for buying 30 Turkish-made T129 Atak helicopters.

### [Pakistan, Iran committed to promote bilateral trade](#)

March 13, 2021, The News

Pakistan and Iran reiterated a resolve to promote economic and trade linkages between the two countries by building on geographical proximity and economic commonalities.

### [Sazgar, Chinese firm to set up auto assembly plant](#)

March 13, 2021, The News

Sazgar Engineering Works Limited (SEWL) has signed an agreement with a Chinese automobile manufacturer for the manufacturing/assembly, sales and after-sales service of passenger and commercial vehicles in Pakistan.

### [Pak, India Indus commissioners to meet on March 23, 24](#)

March 16, 2021, The News

The Indus Commissioners of India and Pakistan will meet here on March 23 and 24 to discuss a host of issues, including Islamabad's concerns to the design of Indian hydropower projects on the Chenab River.

### [Regional maritime security discussed with UAE](#)

March 13, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi during an official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) called on Chief of Staff UAE Armed Forces Lt Gen Hamad Mohamed Thani Al Rumaithi and Commander UAE Naval Forces Rear Admiral (Pilot) Saeed bin Hamdan Al Nahyan separately.

## **Afghanistan**

### [Taliban says Doha agreement is sole platform for negotiation](#)

March 15, 2021, MEMO

The spokesman of the Taliban's political office, Mohammad Naim, stressed that the Doha agreement remains the only ground to strengthen the negotiation track between the parties to the Afghan peace process.

### [Ghani: No Transfer of Power Without Elections](#)

March 16, 2021, Tolo News

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani said that he will not transfer authority without elections, as pressure mounts for Afghans to consider a new US proposal for peace, which includes a plan for an interim government.

### [Unlikely allies Russia and U.S. push Afghan enemies to accept interim government](#)

March 18, 2021, Reuters

Russia hosted a summit on March 18 to revive the Afghan peace process, the first in a series of meetings that make unlikely allies of Washington and Moscow as they try to pave the way for an interim government in Kabul and end the bloodshed.

### [UN chief appoints personal envoy to Afghanistan](#)

March 18, 2021, France 24

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced he had appointed veteran French diplomat Jean Arnault to be his personal envoy to Afghanistan and the surrounding region, ahead of peace talks later this week in Moscow. Arnault will work in concert with Canada's Deborah Lyons, who is the world body's special envoy to the war-wracked country and the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

### [Biden administration considering 6-month extension for US troops in Afghanistan](#)

March 18, 2021, CNN

The Biden administration is considering a six-month extension for American troops in Afghanistan, just weeks before the May 1 deadline that the Trump administration had negotiated with the Taliban to withdraw all US forces from the country.

### [Army Helicopter Crash Lands in Maidan Wardak, 9 Killed](#)

March 18, 2021, Tolo News

Nine people, including a pilot and five security force members of Afghan Army, on board an Mi-17 helicopter, were killed after it crash landed in Behsud district in Maidan Wardak province.

## **Bangladesh**

### [Xi Jinping says ready to take China-Bangladesh ties to new heights](#)

March 17, 2021, CGTN

Chinese President Xi Jinping said he stands ready to better align China-Bangladesh strategies and jointly promote the construction of the Belt and Road, to take the China-Bangladesh strategic cooperative partnership to new heights.



### [PM Modi to visit Bangladesh, first foreign trip since COVID-19 outbreak](#)

March 16, 2021, The Hindu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bangladesh on March 26 and 27 to attend the celebrations to mark the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 50 years of the war of liberation of Bangladesh, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

### [India, Bangladesh likely to sign three MoUs during PM Modi's visit](#)

March 16, 2021, The Hindu

India and Bangladesh are likely to sign three MoUs during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka next week to attend the celebrations of the golden jubilee of the country's independence and the birth centenary of its founder 'Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

### [Mujib Borsho: Bangladesh to get 109 ambulances as 'gift' from India](#)

March 17, 2021, India Blooms

Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami informed Foreign Minister Ak Abdul Momen about the goodwill gesture in a meeting , the foreign ministry said in a statement.

## **Nepal**

### [COVID-19: Nepal to resume cross border transportation with India](#)

March 18, 2021, Mint

Nepal decided to resume cross border transportation with India as the Himalayan nation's COVID-19 cases significantly decreased.

### [Nepal draws inspiration from India's democracy, says envoy](#)

March 18, 2021, The Hindustan Times

Noting the strong bilateral ties with New Delhi, Nepal's Ambassador to India, Nilambar Acharya said the Himalayan nation draws inspiration from India's democracy and also praised its vaccine programme.

### [Nepal must become self-dependent. China's undeclared trade blockade hurts Kathmandu](#)

March 19, 2021, The Print

Nepalese businessmen have protested against China both at Rasuwagadhi and Tatopani checkpoints at the Nepal-China border. They even accused China of imposing an unofficial blockade as container trucks loaded with importable

consumer items have not been permitted to cross the Nepal-China border into Nepal.

## **Sri Lanka**

### [Revival of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka may strengthen China's position in Indian Ocean](#)

March 19, 2021, India Today

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been highly criticised for its implementation and rate of returns on numerous occasions, and one could never de-link the strategically located Hambantota International Port from the BRI.

### [Colombo expresses concern over China-made Sri Lanka flag doormat](#)

March 14, 2021, India Blooms

"The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Beijing became aware of the misuse of the image of Sri Lanka flag on 'Non-Slip Doormat' produced in China," the Foreign Ministry of Sri Lanka said in a statement.

### [India has assured support at U.N. Human Rights Council, says Sri Lanka's Foreign Secretary](#)

March 18, 2021, The Hindu

India has assured Sri Lanka of its support at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Jayanath Colombage has said, just days before member countries vote on a new resolution on the island nation's human rights record.

### [India hands over training aids to Lankan Navy for capacity building](#)

March 16, 2021, The Hindustan Times

India's envoy in Sri Lanka has underlined the importance of close cooperation between the navies of the two countries as an essential part of the overall bilateral engagement, as he handed over training aids worth 22 million LKR (about ₹81,00,000) to the island nation's Navy for capacity building.

## East & South East Asia

### China

#### [China urges U.S. to earnestly promote, protect human rights](#)

March 18, 2021, Xinhua net

China urged the United States to reject double standards on human rights and take concrete actions to promote and protect human rights.

#### [Ministry: Rules on foreign investment set to safeguard national security](#)

March 19, 2021, China Daily

China's newly enacted rules on foreign investment security reviews are to safeguard national security and won't put an unnecessary burden on normal foreign businesses, the Ministry of Commerce said.

#### [Experts: What should we expect from the China-US meeting?](#)

March 17, 2021, China Daily

Yang Jiechi, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China's Central Committee, and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi were scheduled to meet with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Anchorage, Alaska. This is the first high-level meeting between senior diplomats from both countries under the Joe Biden presidency.

#### [Xinjiang govt urges EU to abandon sanctions, vows to 'fight back' against prejudice](#)

March 18, 2021, The Global Times

Xinjiang's regional government urged the EU to abandon prejudice and recognize facts after the EU agreed to its first sanctions against China in three decades, citing "human rights concerns in Xinjiang." The regional government warned that "otherwise, the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang will resolutely fight back and fight to the end."

#### [China communicates use of coast guard law to Japan, protects sovereign waters properly](#)

March 14, 2021, Global Times

Japanese media, amid the anti-China Quad meeting, reported that China had communicated with Japan over its new coast guard law in late February, seen by Chinese observers as a clear message that demonstrates China's transparency, determination and confidence in safeguarding its sovereignty in an appropriate manner.

[Western countries' interference would not stop the steps of justice: central govt office in HK](#)

March 13, 2021, Global Times

Spokesperson of the Liaison office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) issued a statement, refuting remarks of some Western countries on China's steps of justice to promote Hong Kong's prosperity.

[China, in joint statement with other countries, condemns Australia at UN Human Rights Council for human rights violations](#)

March 13, 2021, Global Times

China on behalf of a number of countries condemned Australia at the UN Human Rights Council over its serious human rights violations, urging the Australian government to close offshore detention centers and launch a comprehensive and impartial investigation into the killing of civilians and other serious crimes the Australian troops have committed overseas.

[China holds naval drills in three maritime areas amid US military threats](#)

March 15, 2021, Global Times

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) recently held combat-oriented naval exercises featuring different types of warships in three major sea areas, at a time when the US secretary of defense is rallying allies in the region and attempting to foster "credible deterrence" against China.

[US military activities in S. China Sea in 2020 unprecedented](#)

March 12, 2021, Global Times

In unprecedented moves that aimed to deter China, the US military repeatedly deployed strategic weapon platforms, including aircraft carrier strike groups, to the South China Sea in 2020. It is likely that it will continue to rally regional allies and partners to interfere in regional affairs and enhance its frontier military presence, as well as the intensity of its activity in the region in an effort to achieve maritime containment of China, a recent report by a think tank focusing on the South China Sea shows.

[How the WHO's Hunt for Covid's Origins Stumbled in China](#)

March 17, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

More than a dozen foreign scientists led by the World Health Organization gathered with Chinese counterparts last month to vote on the question: How did the Covid-19 pandemic start? A month on, however, as the WHO-led team finalizes its full report on the Wuhan mission, a Wall Street Journal investigation has uncovered fresh details about the team's formation and

constraints that reveal how little power it had to conduct a thorough, impartial examination—and call into question the clarity its findings appeared to provide.

### [China, U.S. Trade Barbs at First High-Level Talks Under Biden](#)

March 18, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The U.S. and China began their first high-level meeting under the Biden administration with an acrimonious exchange of words, setting an abrasive tone as the two powers try to stabilize tense relations.”

### [Facing up to the Chinese threat](#)

March 19, 2021, Taipei Times

Within the past 12 months, Chinese President Xi Jinping has no fewer than four times publicly called on the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to prepare for war. On Jan. 4, Xi welcomed the New Year with an ominous message: The Chinese military must be ready for war “at any moment.”

### [China is not just shackling Hong Kong, it is remaking it](#)

March 19, 2021, The Economic Times

For most of its modern history, Hong Kong had no time for nostalgia. The city was built by unsentimental people in a hurry: traders and shippers and British opium peddlers turned merchant-grandeemes; imperial officials as tough as the granite of Victoria Peak; wave upon wave of Chinese migrants.

## **Japan**

### [Top U.S. and Japanese officials get tough on China in key security talks](#)

March 16, The Japan Times

S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made their debut on the global stage in talks with their Japanese counterparts in Tokyo that singled out China for the first time over its behavior and set the tone for the direction of the alliance.

### [Japanese regulators say TEPCO nuclear plant prone to attack](#)

March 18, 2021, Japan Today

Japanese nuclear regulators said that the world's largest nuclear power plant, owned by the utility behind the Fukushima nuclear crisis, will not restart anytime soon due to serious holes in the anti-terrorism measures found at the facility.

[Japan in 'impossible situation' over Diaoyu visit request, after Blinken blasts Chinese 'aggression'](#)

March 17, 2021, SCMP

Tokyo has been put in an "impossible situation" after local government officials in Ishigaki asked permission to travel to a group of islands at the centre of a territorial dispute between Japan and China.

[Japan-China on a razor's edge over Senkakus](#)

March 18, 2021, Asia Times

Japan is in a policy box of its own making regarding the Senkaku island chain. China has raised the ante significantly by giving its Coast Guard the right to challenge and shoot back in any confrontation with Japan around the contested island chain.

[Japan Commissions New Maya-Class AEGIS Destroyer JS Haguro はぐろ DDG-180](#)

March 19, 2021, Naval News

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) commissioned today its second and final Maya-class AEGIS Destroyer at Japan Marine United Corporation (JMU) Isogo shipyard in Yokohama. JS Haguro はぐろ (DDG-180) joins the JMSDF's Escort Flotilla 4, based in Sasebo.

## **Korea**

[Seoul withdraws testing mandate for all foreign workers in policy U-turn](#)

March 19, 2021, The Korea HeraldThe Seoul city government withdrew an order requiring mandatory coronavirus testing for all foreign workers after facing criticism from foreigners, medical workers and the human rights commission.

[Assembly speaker discusses S. Korea-US alliance, NK issues with Nancy Pelosi](#)

March 19, 2021, The Korea Herald

National Assembly Speaker Park Byeong-seug held a videoconference with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to discuss pending issues such as the South Korea-US alliance and North Korea's nuclear weapons.

### [Washington stresses Seoul's 'input' in NK policy review](#)

March 19, 2021, The Korea Herald

A senior US diplomat stressed South Korea's "input" in Washington's ongoing policy review on North Korea, reiterating the importance of close consultations and coordination between the allies in dealing with the reclusive regime.

### [North Korean WMD pose threat to neighbors, violate UN Security Council resolutions: US official](#)

March 19, 2021, The Korea Times

North Korea's nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) pose a threat to its neighbors and the international community, a State Department official said, reaffirming U.S. efforts to denuclearize the North.

### [North Korea says it will sever diplomatic relations with Malaysia for extraditing citizen to US](#)

March 19, 2021, The Korea Times

North Korea said it will cut off diplomatic relations with Malaysia for extraditing one of its nationals to the United States to face money laundering charges and pinned Washington as the "backstage manipulator."

### [North Korea, China reviving economic cooperation](#)

March 18, 2021, The Korea Times

Prospects of revived economic cooperation between North Korea and China have increased following North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's announcement of a five-year plan for economic development during the eighth congress of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea in January.

### [Pyongyang wants Washington's 'concession' before denuclearization talks](#)

March 18, 2021, The Korea Times

North Korea has issued a series of statements pledging to ignore any contact from Washington, and Pyongyang watchers say the North is attempting to put itself in an advantageous position to draw a "concession" in future denuclearization talks.

### [Hitting Nerve With Kim Jong Un Regime Takes Just a Few Words](#)

March 18, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

In nuclear diplomacy between the U.S. and North Korea, changing just two words can elicit a big response. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin during this week's visit to Tokyo and Seoul used the phrase the "denuclearization of North Korea," mirroring language used by Biden administration officials in recent weeks to describe the ultimate goal of

peace talks with the Kim Jong Un regime. That varied subtly from language used by past U.S. administrations, and included in 2018's Singapore accord reached between the Trump administration and Pyongyang, when the objective was phrased as the "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

## **Southeast Asia**

### [Can Indonesia Use Myanmar To Balance The US and China?](#)

March 13, 2021, SCMP

Indonesia's efforts to make the peace in post-coup Myanmar aren't just about showing Southeast Asian solidarity, they are a way of showcasing Jakarta's democratic credentials to the new administration in the United States, experts say.

### [PM Modi, Finnish Counterpart Express Concern Over Recent Developments In Myanmar](#)

March 16, 2021, ANI

PM Narendra Modi and his Finnish counterpart expressed concern over the recent developments in Myanmar in which protestors have been killed in clashes with security forces following a coup and said rule of law must be upheld.

### [Asean Countries Need To Review Maritime Legislation](#)

March 17, 2021, The Malaysian Reserve

Malaysia and its ASEAN neighbours need to review its maritime legislation in response to the new China's "coast guard law" to maintain stability and security in the South China Sea.

### [First Indonesian-Built Submarine Handed Over To TNI AL](#)

March 17, 2021, Naval News

KRI Alugoro is the third Nagapasa-class submarine (also known as the DSME 1400 design or Improved Chang Bogo-class) and the first one built locally in Indonesia (and the first submarine ever built in South East Asia).

### [Taiwan Bolsters South China Sea Deployments, Gets U.S. Submarine Parts Approval](#)

March 17, 2021, Reuters

Taiwan's newly-appointed defence minister said it has strengthened deployments in the disputed South China Sea and that the United States has approved the export of sensitive technology to equip Taiwan's new submarine fleet.



### [India, Vietnam Rice Rates Gain On Robust Demand; Bangladesh Eyes Stocks](#)

March 18, 2021, Yahoo

Rice export prices rose for the Indian and Vietnamese varieties this week boosted by a pick-up in demand, while Bangladesh issued a fresh tender to stock up supplies.

### [China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam Making 'Excessive Claims' Over South China Sea –Us Dept. Of Defense](#)

March 18, 2021, GMA News

China, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam have made “excessive maritime claims” over the South China Sea, according to the Annual Freedom of Navigation Report 2020 prepared by the US Department of Defense.

### [India's Khaitan To Open First Overseas Office In Singapore](#)

March 18, 2021, Asian legal business

India's second-largest firm, Khaitan & Co, is set to open an office in Singapore next month. The office will be manned by Anuj Shah, a partner focusing on M&A and private client practice work, and director Jean Muller.

### [Indonesian Armed Forces Chief 'Deeply Concerned' by Myanmar Situation](#)

March 18, 2021, Radio Free Asia

Indonesia's military chief expressed deep concern about increasing violence in Myanmar, following futile efforts by officials from his government to influence the crisis through diplomacy.

### [Thailand, China Progress Plan To Establish Joint Mro Facility](#)

March 18, 2021, Janes

Thailand and China are progressing plans to establish a maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility that would support the Royal Thai Armed Forces' expanding inventories of Chinese-produced military equipment.

### [North Korea To Sever Diplomatic Ties With Malaysia Over Extradition Of Citizen To US](#)

March 19, 2021, Zee News

North Korea said it would sever diplomatic relations with Malaysia after a court there ruled that a North Korean man could be extradited to the United States to face money-laundering charges, state media KCNA reported.

## Central & West Asia

### Central Asia

#### [Police In Almaty Disperse Peaceful Picket Near Chinese Consulate](#)

March 15, 2021, RFE/RL

Police in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty, have dispersed a peaceful picket by several protesters demanding release of their relatives "illegally" held in China, the first time law enforcement has intervened since the daily rallies started more than a month ago.

#### [Russia, Kyrgyzstan Launch Gold Project In Central Asian Nation](#)

March 17, 2021, RFE/RL

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Kyrgyz counterpart, Sadyr Japarov, opened operations at Kyrgyzstan's second-largest gold deposit, pledging it would fuel investment in the economy and pad the state budget.

#### [Kazakhstan, Turkey Reaffirm Strategic Partnership, as Kazakh FM Visits Ankara, Meets Erdogan](#)

March 18, 2021, Astana Times

Kazakhstan and Turkey have reaffirmed their commitment to a strategic partnership, as Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi made his official visit to Turkey on March 16-18, reports the Kazakh Foreign Ministry's press service.

#### [Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan move toward resolution of longstanding border dispute](#)

March 19, 2021, Times of Central Asia

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have taken new steps to complete the demarcation of their border, which would further allow for expanded trade between the two neighbors. At a meeting on March 11, the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan agreed to open land and air communications between Uzbekistan and the Uzbekistani exclave of Sokh inside Kyrgyzstan.

### West Asia

#### [Eyeing US Crude, India Plans to Buy Less Oil from Middle East](#)

March 17, 2021, AL Jazeera

Indian refiners plan to buy less oil from the Middle East in the coming months as OPEC+ supply restrictions make U.S. crude more attractive.

### [KRAS Rolls Out First Batch of MRSAM Missile Kits For Indian Army and Air Force](#)

March 16, 2021, Mint

Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS), a joint venture between India's Kalyani Group, and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems of Israel rolls out its first batch of Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) kits for the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force.

### [Indian Oil, Israel's Phinergy to Manufacture Special Batteries in India](#)

March 18, 2021, Business Standard

Indian Oil and Israel's Phinergy announced a joint venture for commercialising aluminium-air (Al-Air) battery technology. The joint venture, IOC Phinergy (IOP), will be manufacturing Al-Air systems in India and recycle the used aluminium.

### [India, Kuwait Announce Joint Commission to Boost Ties in Energy](#)

March 18, 2021, Hindustan Times

India and Kuwait announced the creation of a joint commission to further institutionalise their relations in areas ranging from energy to defence and to forge a framework for cooperation in the future.

### [China Splurges on Iranian Oil Despite U.S. Sanctions](#)

March 11, 2021, Oilprice.com

Despite the U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil exports, some Chinese refiners are buying so much Iranian crude that the ports in the Shandong province, where most independent refiners are based, are experiencing tanker traffic congestions.

### [China Ready to Strengthen Friendship, Mutual Trust with Iraq, Says Chinese FM](#)

March 13, 2021, CGTN

China is ready to consolidate its traditional friendship with Iraq and deepen mutual political trust, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said.

### [Iraqi Paramilitaries Agree to Stop Attacks on the US Troops if PM Kadhimi Demands their Withdrawal](#)

March 11, 2021, Middle East Eye

After frantic meetings in Baghdad, Beirut and Tehran, Iranian-backed Iraqi paramilitaries have agreed to stop attacks against US forces in Iraq on the condition that Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi formally demands an American withdrawal. PM Kadhimi must tell Washington that the pullout has to be completed within 12 months.

### [India Said to Blame Iran's Quds Force for Blast Outside Israeli Embassy in New Delhi](#)

March 08, 2021, The Times of Israel

Indian counter-terror investigators reportedly believe the IRGC tasked a local cell with planting the remote-control detonated device in January in New Delhi.

### [Saudi Arabia's Salic to Step up India Agri investments](#)

March 05, 2021, The Economic Times

Saudi Arabia's Salic, which has 29% minority stake in LT Foods subsidiary Daawat Foods, will step up investments in the Indian agricultural ecosystem, Salic and United Farms Investment Company group chief executive Sulaiman AlRumaih said, during an India visit this week.

### [Kosovo Follows US, Guatemala in Opening Embassy in Jerusalem](#)

March 14, 2021, Middle East Monitor

Kosovo opened its embassy to Israel in Jerusalem, joining the United States and Guatemala as the only countries with embassies in a city whose status is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Muslim-majority Kosovo promised to locate its embassy in Jerusalem when it established diplomatic ties with Israel last year under US sponsorship.

### [Russia Seeks Arab Support in Reviving Iran Nuclear Deal \(JCPOA\)](#)

March 14, 2021, Anadolu Agency

Lavrov's efforts to push Arab countries to better relations with Iran may have a deeper meaning than a simple desire to contribute to regional security, taking into account a recent statement by US President Joe Biden who said he was willing to return to the Iran nuclear deal.

## United States

### United States

#### [US, China Diplomats Meeting in Alaska](#)

March 18, 2021, Voice of America

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Anchorage, Alaska, in what will be the first bilateral meeting between Chinese and American officials since June.

#### [US and China trade barbs after Blinken warns of need to respect global order or face a 'more violent world'](#)

March 19, 2021, CNN

A first face-to-face meeting between US and Chinese officials got off to a heated start in Anchorage, Alaska, as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's statement that the Biden administration would bring up "deep concerns" about some of China's actions around the world was met with immediate pushback from Chinese counterparts, sparking an unusually public exchange of diplomatic barbs.

#### [Blinken denounces China's 'strings attached' vaccine diplomacy](#)

March 17, 2021, Nikkei Asia

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken denounced China's so-called vaccine diplomacy, saying it was "deeply unfortunate" that countries play politics with people's health. He also attacked Beijing's maritime expansion around Taiwan, Senkaku.

#### ['More than words': Democrats, Republicans hope Biden will take a harder line on China as summit begins](#)

March 18, 2021, NBC News

As the Biden administration holds its highest-level meetings with China since taking office, it enjoys broad bipartisan support for taking a tough stance toward Beijing but also faces scepticism about whether the talks will bring real policy changes.

#### [Blinken warns entities involved in Nord Stream 2 pipeline to immediately quit](#)

March 18, 2021, Reuters

The U.S. State Department is tracking efforts to complete Russia's Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline and evaluating information on entities that appear to be involved, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

### [US-Russia ties nosedive after Biden-Putin tit-for-tat](#)

March 18, 2021, Associated Press

S.-Russia ties nosedived after Russian leader Vladimir Putin shot back at President Joe Biden's description of him as a killer.

### [Biden's first 50 days: Where he stands on key promises](#)

March 11, 2021, Associated Press

Fifty days in, Biden has made major strides on a number of key campaign pledges for his earliest days in office, while others are still awaiting action. Where does he stand on some of his major promises?

### [President Joe Biden's 'big problem' at the US border](#)

March 18, 2021, BBC

The president is confronting his the first political and policy crisis on immigration, as the US-Mexico border experiences yet another surge in undocumented entries.

### [Israel-US to set up joint team to share intel on Iran's nuclear program](#)

March 17, 2021, The Times of Israel

Israeli and US officials agreed to set up a joint team for sharing intelligence about Iran's nuclear program during recent strategic talks, according to a report

### [Pentagon Chief Sees Asia Ties as Deterrent Against China](#)

March 14, 2021, Voice of America

US. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he was traveling to Asia to boost military cooperation with American allies and foster "credible deterrence" against China.

### [Why the U.S. Won't Leave the Indo-Pacific](#)

March 15, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The diplomatic tempo in the Indo-Pacific is picking up. But if Americans haven't always been noble or wise in their Pacific policies, they have always been engaged. That is unlikely to change today. The region is more central to U.S. prosperity and security than ever. Seeking a balanced and secure regional order—without war traps, Thucydidean or otherwise—is a challenging task. America and its allies are sure to make some mistakes. But if allies sometimes doubt U.S. wisdom, the American commitment to the region is so deeply grounded in history and the structure of U.S. interests that walking away from the region is the one thing Washington is least likely to do.

## [The Hole in Biden's China Strategy: Central Asia](#)

March 16, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The brewing competition between the U.S. and China is the defining conflict of the 21st century. The White House's recent Interim National Security Strategic Guidance Document, crafted to convey President Biden's vision for how America will engage with the world, is all about the U.S. vs. China. Yet it fails to mention the region where America has its lightest footprint on the planet: Central Asia.

## Europe & Russia

### Europe

#### [UK seeks more influence in Indo-Pacific as 'moderating impact' on China](#)

March 16, 2021, Reuters

Britain wants to expand its influence among countries in the Indo-Pacific region to try to moderate China's global dominance, a document laying out post-Brexit foreign and defence policy priorities said.

#### [Boris Johnson to Visit India in April to 'Unlock Opportunities' in Indo-Pacific](#)

March 16, 2021, The Wire

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will visit India at the end of April on his first major international tour following the UK's exit from the European Union, Downing Street has announced, as Britain seeks to "unlock" the opportunities in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.

#### [Japan a key player in UK's tilt to the Indo-Pacific](#)

March 16, 2021, Politico

Britain's tilt to the Indo-Pacific region comes as ministers seek to build trade and geostrategic ties with Tokyo.

#### [Japan and Germany to sign intel-sharing pact in coming weeks](#)

March 18, 2021, Nikkei Asia

Japan and Germany are set to sign an agreement on sharing defense-related information as early as this month, as the two countries pursue closer defense cooperation, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### [Oil slump deepens as Europe faces pandemic lockdowns](#)

March 19, 2021, Reuters

Oil prices fell , extending losses for a sixth day as a new wave of COVID-19 infections wash across Europe, spurring new lockdowns and dampening hopes for a recovery in demand for fuels anytime soon.

#### [Exclusive: EU halts sanctions on Turkey oil executives as ties improve](#)

March 18, 2021, Reuters

The European Union has frozen plans to blacklist more senior executives at Turkey's state-owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO), four diplomats said, in the clearest sign that a diplomatic offensive by Ankara this year is bearing fruit.



## Russia

### [Russian FM discusses Middle Eastern affairs with Hezbollah](#)

March 15, 2021, AP News

Russia's foreign minister discussed the situation in Lebanon and the Middle East with a delegation from the militant Hezbollah group, which paid a rare visit to Moscow. The visit by the four-member Hezbollah delegation comes as Lebanon is mired in its worst economic crisis in decades and stuck in political stalemate over the formation of a new Cabinet.

### [Kremlin says referendum on Crimea's status in 2014 was absolutely legitimate](#)

March 16, 2021, TASS

The 2014 referendum on the status of Crimea was legitimate from the standpoint of international law and Ukrainian legislation, Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the media. Peskov recalled that in Ukraine Crimea enjoyed a special status, which was clearly described in the Ukrainian Constitution, including "all legislative and other initiatives of the Crimean legislators."

### [Russia's economic growth to be below 3% in 2021-2023 – Accounts Chamber](#)

March 17, 2021, TASS

The annual growth of the Russian economy will not exceed 3% in 2021-2023, the Russian Accounts Chamber said in its report. "The Accounts Chamber believes that the growth of the Russian economy will not exceed 3% in 2021-2023. If the global economy recovers at a slower pace, and additional quarantine measures are imposed in a number of states, [the annual growth] will remain at around 2%," the chamber said.

### [G7 Says It Will Not Recognize Russia's 'Occupation' of Crimea](#)

March 18, 2021, The Moscow Times

The G7 group of leading economic powers said it would not accept Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, in a statement marking seven years since the takeover. "We unequivocally denounce Russia's temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol. Russia's attempts to legitimize it are not, and will not, be recognized," it said.

### [Russia holds Afghan peace summit amid push for ceasefire](#)

March 18, 2021, Deutsche Welle

Russia hosted a peace conference between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Moscow, as the Kremlin pushes for a ceasefire and power-sharing agreement in the war-ravaged nation. The talks come after negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban have stalled in the Qatari capital of Doha, while Turkey is due to hold another peace conference in April.

### [Russia warns it will 'have to react' if Bosnia moves to join NATO](#)

March 18, 2021, Reuters

Russia will react if Bosnia takes steps towards joining NATO because Moscow would perceive this as a hostile act, the Russian embassy in Bosnia said in a statement. Bosnia has long proclaimed integration with NATO and the European Union as strategic goals. But the Bosnian Serbs, led by pro-Russian Milorad Dodik who currently chairs the country's tripartite presidency, want the country to remain neutral and stay out of the U.S.-led military alliance.

### [Russian Navy to get three nuclear-powered submarines by year-end](#)

March 19, 2021, TASS

The Project Borei-A strategic underwater cruiser Knyaz Oleg and the Project Yasen nuclear-powered submarines Kazan and Novosibirsk will enter service with the Russian Navy until the end of this year, Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov said.

## Africa & Latin America

### Latin America

#### [Mercosur 26th March summit to be held on line, because of sanitary situation in the region](#)

March 15, 2021, MercoPress

The Mercosur face-to-face presidential summit scheduled for 26th March originally planned to take place in Argentina that currently holds the rotating chair of the block, will be held online because of the sanitary situation in the region

#### [Falklands: begin second phase to identify Argentine soldiers remains](#)

March 18, 2021, MercoPress

The accord for the second phase of the humanitarian initiative to identify the remains of Argentine combatants buried at the Argentine military cemetery in the Falkland Islands is scheduled to be signed this in Geneva.

#### [Argentine President attacked and stoned while visiting areas devastated by Patagonia forest fires](#)

March 15, 2021, MercoPress

Argentina is not an easy country to manage, particularly when institutions are weak and governments lack credibility. Such was the experience of president Alberto Fernandez during a visit to Patagonia to announce support for residents that suffered the devastation caused by forest fires in the region.

#### [Brazilian economic activity recovers to pre-pandemic level](#)

March 17, 2021, MercoPress

Brazilian economic activity rose sharply in January, a central bank index showed, indicating that Latin America's largest economy has not only recovered all its pandemic-related decline but is now back to the size it was over five years ago.

#### [CONMEBOL announces schedule for Copa America 2021](#)

March 15, 2021, Prensa Latina

The South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) announced the schedule for the Copa America tournament, to be held in several cities in Argentina and Colombia between June 13 and July 10.

### [Argentine Economy Minister to pay official visit to the United States](#)

March 18, 2021, Prensa Latina

Argentine Economy Minister Martín Guzmán will begin an official visit to the United States, where he will meet with members of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and financial and investor groups.

## **Africa**

### [Suhulu to be sworn as the President of Tanzania](#)

March 19, 2021, Africa Times

Samia Suluhu Hassan, the vice president of Tanzania, will be sworn in as president following the death of John Magufuli. The 61-year-old Suluhu has been serving as acting president since, when she announced to the nation that Magufuli had died.

### [Zimbabwe's slow inflation rate might be a calm before the storm](#)

March 17, 2021, African Report

Zimbabwe's inflation slowdown in February may reflect the impact of COVID-19 restrictions imposed in January rather than a genuine downward trend. But prospects of a good harvest and improving confidence from business leaders points to relief down the road.

### [Nigeria's opposition PDF faces a tough choice: Atiku or Makinde?](#)

March 17, 2021, African Report

The PDP is in a bind; it has a powerful northern candidate in Atiku, but an election where the candidate is expected to come from the South. While they have a potential winner in the shape of Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde, the ruling APC is trying to lure him across to their camp

### [Africa's COVID-19 vaccination gains pace, nearly 7 million doses given](#)

March 18, 2021, ReliefWeb

Nearly 7 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in Africa. Countries have accessed vaccines through the COVAX Facility, bilateral deals and donations. Altogether 38 African countries have received more than 25 million COVID-19 vaccines and 30 have started vaccination campaigns.



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