



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



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Delhi Policy Group

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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

[Indian Navy retrieves 14 bodies after barge sinks into Arabian sea due to cyclone Tauktae; 184 rescued](#)

May 19, 2021, Hindustan Times

Indian Navy has retrieved 14 bodies from the Arabian sea during a search and rescue operation in the aftermath of cyclone Tauktae. Even as the process of identification of the deceased is ongoing it is not yet clear as to which vessels they were from.

[Beijing, Dhaka and the Quad: How China's new diplomatic swagger is hitting India's neighbours](#)

May 18, 2021, The Indian Express

The comments of the Chinese envoy in Dhaka last week warning Bangladesh against joining the Quad point to the new kind of challenges that the Subcontinent – including Beijing's friends and foes – will face from the assertive superpower at its doorstep. The Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh, Li Jiming, added that Dhaka will risk "significant damage" to its relationship with Beijing if it warms up to the Quad, or the quadrilateral framework that brings Australia, India, Japan and the US together.

[Global politics competitive, India will use all tools to stay strong: Jaishankar](#)

May 21, 2021, The Indian Express

The remarks come a day after Army Chief General M M Naravane said that de-escalation along the border in eastern Ladakh is yet to take place, after the first step at Pangong Tso in February, and till that happens the entire border with China across all sectors will see enhanced troop presence.

[India-China ties at crossroads... tensions continue on LAC': Jaishankar](#)

May 20, 2021, Hindustan Times

The India-China relationship is at the crossroads and New Delhi cannot think of cooperating with Beijing in other areas as long as tensions continue on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), external affairs minister S Jaishankar said.

[Indian Army's Increased Deployment Along LAC Likely to Become a Permanent Fixture](#)

May 21, 2021, The Wire

The Indian Army's (IA's) deployment and high state of operational alert along the disputed line of actual control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh is likely to become

permanent for the foreseeable future to foreclose any further military adventurism by China.

#### [India, Oman renew MoUs on military cooperation, maritime issues](#)

May 20, 2021, Yahoo News

The Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on military cooperation were renewed on Thursday between India and Oman along with its annexure as well as on maritime issues, informed the Defence Ministry.

### **Pakistan**

#### [Moeed Yusuf made National Security Adviser](#)

May 19, 2021, Dawn

Prime Minister Imran Khan has appointed Dr Moeed Yusuf as the National Security Adviser. According to a May 17 notification issued by the cabinet division, Dr Yusuf would, in the capacity of NSA, enjoy the status of a federal minister. Dr Yusuf was previously serving as special assistant to the prime minister on national security and strategic policy planning. He held the SAPM's position from Dec 24, 2019 till his elevation. His status was then equivalent to that of a minister of state.

#### [Pakistan desires strong ties with EU: Bajwa](#)

May 18, 2021, Dawn

Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa said that Pakistan desired strong ties with the European Union. Talking to Ambassador of European Union Androulla Kaminara, who called on him at the General Headquarters, Gen Bajwa, according to the ISPR, said: "Pakistan values its relations with EU and earnestly looks forward to enhance mutually beneficial multi-domain relations based on common interests."

#### [Pakistan wants broad-based partnership with US, Blinken told](#)

May 17, 2021, Dawn

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi emphasised the need for expanded bilateral ties and cooperation with the United States. Talking to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken over phone, Mr Qureshi said Pakistan desires "a broad-based and comprehensive" partnership with America.

#### [Pakistan for boosting bilateral ties with Ukraine: COAS](#)

May 21, 2021, The News

Pakistan COAS Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa has said Pakistan attaches great importance to boosting bilateral ties with Ukraine and believes that both

nations would develop meaningful and long-term relationship through enhanced cooperation. Gen Bajwa said this while talking to prime minister of Ukraine and other cabinet members during his visit to the country. The COAS visited Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, where he held separate meetings with Shmyhal Denys - prime minister of Ukraine and Uruskyi Oleh - deputy prime minister and minister for strategic industries of Ukraine.

## **Afghanistan**

### [Keeping Kabul airport open – a key test in NATO forces withdrawal](#)

May 20, 2021, Dawn

As foreign troops eye the exit door, Afghanistan's special forces are seen as the only local contingent capable of managing the task. But if the Taliban continues its offensive, these troops would most likely be required elsewhere to help stave off a collapse of the government. US and European officials say several other options are being mooted to try to protect the airport. These include getting civilian contractors to handle security, individual countries agreeing to stay on independent of NATO, or turning to the United Nations.

### [Fighting resumes in southern Afghanistan as ceasefire ends](#)

May 16, 2021, The Strait Times

Fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces resumed on May 16 in the restive southern province of Helmand, officials said, ending a three-day ceasefire agreed by the warring sides to mark the Eid al-Fitr holiday. There were clashes on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand, which has seen intense fighting since the United States began its final troop withdrawal from Afghanistan on May 1, an Afghan military spokesman and a local official said.

### [Sources: Taliban open to Istanbul Summit but wants talks in Doha](#)

May 16, 2021, Tolo News

The Taliban has agreed to begin substantive talks with the Republic team in Doha in the coming days, which would end the peace process stalemate. The group plans to attend the Istanbul summit, but wants the end negotiations to take place in Doha.

### [Chinese FM says ready to facilitate internal talks among Afghan parties](#)

May 18, 2021, Xinhua

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China is ready to facilitate internal negotiations among various parties in Afghanistan, including creating necessary conditions for negotiations in China. In a

telephone conversation with Hamdullah Mohib, national security advisor to Afghan president, Wang said China and Afghanistan are traditional friendly neighbors, and China adheres to the principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs in its relations with Afghanistan.

#### [Atmar to Pakistan: Practical Steps Needed for Afghan Peace](#)

May 18, 2021, Tolo News

Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar while speaking on a recent trip of a high-level Pakistani delegation to Kabul, said the two sides reached agreements about the peace process in Afghanistan, but the two countries now need to take practical steps to expand bilateral cooperation on peace in Afghanistan. Atmar made it clear that Afghanistan will not trust any sort of commitment unless practical steps are taken.

#### [Taliban maintains close ties with al Qaeda, DIA reports](#)

May 19, 2021, FDD's Long War Journal

The Taliban has "maintained close ties with al Qaeda" and is "very likely preparing for large-scale offensives against population centers and Afghan government installations," according to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). The DIA's analysis is cited in a report prepared by the Department of Defense's Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan.

## **Bangladesh**

#### [Bangladesh reaches out to India, US for vaccine doses](#)

May 19, 2021, The Indian Express

Faced with a shortage of vaccines, Bangladesh has reached out to India and the US for supplying surplus AstraZeneca vaccines to Dhaka.

#### [China's Warning to Bangladesh on the Quad](#)

May 18, 2021, The Diplomat

The comments from the Chinese ambassador show Beijing's insecurities on the issue.

## **Nepal**

#### [China Removes Pillars Demarcating Border, Nepal Sees Red: Report](#)

May 19, 2021, NDTV

Beijing has turned the heat alongside the borders of its neighbouring country Nepal with border pillars vanishing in the Daulkha district of the Himalayan

nation. It appears to be yet another example of growing Chinese belligerence and a complete disregard to the international border by Beijing.

### [India only country to send liquid oxygen to Nepal amid Covid surge](#)

May 19, 2021, India Today

After India, Nepal is the worst affected country in South Asia with the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic wreaking havoc in the Himalayan nation.

### **Bhutan**

### [China building villages all along Tibet border, disputed with India, Bhutan](#)

May 21, 2021, The Hindustan Times

China building villages all along Tibet border. China has systematically pumped in money for nearly a decade to build "villages of moderate prosperity" all along the 4,000km border of Tibet, a large part of which aligns with the disputed boundary with India and Bhutan.

### **Sri Lanka**

### [Sri Lanka Defends China's Hambantota Port Project; Vows To Protect Indian Security](#)

May 20, 2021, The Eurasian Times

As diplomatic tensions between India and China escalate and many neighboring nations are feeling the heat, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has pledged to balance diplomatic ties between India and China while defending Chinese infrastructure projects in the country.

### [Sri Lankan parliament passes controversial Bill on China-backed Port City](#)

May 20, 2021, The Hindu

The Sri Lankan Parliament on Thursday passed a controversial Bill on laws governing the China-backed Colombo Port city, with a majority of 149 legislators – in the 225-member House – voting in its favour.



## East & South East Asia

### China

[China provides 60% of India's lifeline but Indian logistics jams threaten timely domestic delivery](#)

May 21, 2021, Global Times

As India struggles with the worst COVID-19 outbreak yet with record infection cases and deaths and dire shortages of crucial supplies, some in the country have resorted to knee-jerk reactions - blaming China groundlessly for suspending flights, controlling exports of raw materials to India and raising prices.

[China offers new type of mediation, more effective solution to Palestine-Israel conflict: former diplomat](#)

May 20, 2021, Global Times

China is continually making efforts to mediate the ongoing Palestine-Israel conflict as the Chinese special envoy for Middle East affairs spoke with Palestinian and Egyptian officials and will also reach out to other parties including Israel, Russia and the EU, with a former Chinese diplomat saying that China is trying to offer a new type of mediation and to find a fairer solution to the decades-long conflict.

[China eyes intelligent manufacturing amid external risks](#)

May 20, 2021, Global Times

From dancing robots and 5G appliances, to solutions for smart factories and logistics, "intelligent transformation" was the key word during the ongoing fifth World Intelligence Congress (WIC) in North China's Tianjin Municipality.

[EU Parliament pleases itself halting China deal](#)

May 20, 2021, Global Times

The European Parliament passed a motion with overwhelming majority on Thursday to freeze discussions on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI). Even though the motion cannot determine the ultimate fate of the CAI, it means the European Parliament will halt relevant ratification, an intermediate step for the agreement to take effect.

[Hong Kong remains 'go-to' place for investors, official says](#)

May 21, 2021, China Daily

Hong Kong's chief investment promotion officer has expressed full faith in the city's future economic development, as the newly enacted National Security

Law for Hong Kong and improvements to its electoral system bring stability to the city's business environment.

#### [Beijing envoy to Tokyo calls for balanced manner](#)

May 21, 2021, China Daily

Chinese Ambassador to Japan Kong Xuanyou urged Tokyo to handle its relationship with China and the United States in a balanced manner, and should not spark regional rivalries or become entangled in confrontations between major powers.

#### [Xi, Putin to launch nuclear energy projects as recovery efforts intensify](#)

May 19, 2021, China Daily

President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin will take part in an online ceremony on Wednesday to launch construction of nuclear energy projects, as the two countries intensify cooperation amid the global economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Japan**

#### [Russia 'ready' to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Japan, ambassador says](#)

May 20, 2021, The Japan Times

Russian Ambassador to Japan Mikhail Galuzin on Thursday reiterated his country's readiness to begin exports to and production in Japan of the Russian-made Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine.

#### [Japan and Australia affirm security ties over China's assertiveness](#)

May 19, 2021, The Japan Times

The defense ministers of Japan and Australia affirmed their commitment Wednesday to oppose unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China seas through closer ties amid Beijing's increasing assertiveness in the region, the Japanese Defense Ministry said.

#### [US blocked Uniqlo shirts over Xinjiang forced-labor concerns](#)

May 19, 2021, The Japan Times

The United States' customs agency blocked a shipment of Fast Retailing Co.'s Uniqlo shirts in January for violating an order prohibiting imports of items suspected to be produced by forced labor from China's state-owned Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

### [Japan warns Sumitomo after SDF weapon blueprints leaked to China](#)

May 21, 2021, Japan Today

The Japanese government has issued warnings to Sumitomo Heavy Industries Ltd and a subcontracted firm after the latter leaked blueprints for parts of a military-use prototype machine gun to a Chinese company, the company and the government spokesman said.

### [Amphibious Exercise ARC 21 Underway With Australia, France, Japan, United States](#)

May 16, 2021, Naval News

This exercise brings together service members from each nation's military in a combined effort to enhance interoperability in pursuit of common regional security goals. Service members from participating units plan, coordinate and conduct operations over land and at sea.

### [Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and U.S. Navy Prepare to Celebrate Fleet Week Japan – Fleet Week New York](#)

May 19, 2021, Mirage

Sailors from the United States Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) will find a new way to give a special shout-out during Fleet Week Japan and Fleet Week New York, which are being held virtually May 26 – 31.

### [Japan Offers to Jointly Build Warship with Indonesia](#)

May 21, 2021, Japan Forward

The Japanese government hopes to enter into a contract with Indonesia for joint manufacturing of maritime vessels based on the design of a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyer, it was learned on May 11.

### [Japan Launches \\$3 Billion R&D Project for Hydrogen Transportation](#)

May 19, 2021, Maritime Executive

The Japanese government will prove more than \$3 billion in funding for a long-term research project designed to build a large-scale hydrogen supply chain and demonstration of hydrogen power generation technology.

### [Japan walks on a tightrope with its China policy](#)

May 20, 2021, East Asia Forum

Over the past decade, Japan has actively promoted cooperation among Quad countries under the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' framework to counter China's rising influence. It has also played a leading role in promoting high-quality trade rules through concluding the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Japan-EU Economic

Partnership Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Importantly, Japan has maintained a delicate balance to ensure security tensions do not hold back economic cooperation.

## **Korea**

### [US welcomes chance to discuss vaccine cooperation](#)

May 21, 2021, The Korea Times

The United States welcomes the opportunity to discuss ways to help South Korea's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and how they can work together to help the rest of the world, a White House spokesperson said.

### [US will build on Singapore agreement with North Korea: Campbell](#)

May 19, 2021, The Korea Times

The U.S. administration of President Joe Biden will build on a 2018 summit agreement with North Korea, White House Asia czar Kurt Campbell said, extending overtures to Pyongyang after completing a month long policy review on the North.

### [Moon, Biden set for talks on vaccine, economic ties and North Korea](#)

May 21, 2021, The Korea Times

South Korean President Moon Jae-in will hold one-on-one talks with U.S. President Joe Biden at the White House, as the allies have a range of pending issues to coordinate, especially on North Korea, COVID-19 vaccines and global supply chain resilience.

### [Korean captain and four others of fishing boat kidnapped near Ghana: report](#)

May 21, 2021, The Korea Times

A Korean captain and four crew members of a fishing boat have been kidnapped in waters off Ghana, in west Africa, a report said.

### [Korea to join US, Japan for Red Flag Alaska air drills](#)

May 18, 2021, The Korea Times

South Korea will take part in an annual U.S.-led multinational air force exercise for the first time in three years next month, joining Japan and other countries in the manoeuvres designed to improve interoperability, the Air Force said.

### [Moon meets Pelosi, discusses alliance, N. Korea, vaccines](#)

May 21, 2021, The Korea Herald

South Korean President Moon Jae-in reaffirmed Seoul's commitment to a stronger alliance with Washington during a meeting with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional leaders.

### [S. Korea, US can cooperate on building 'trusted' supply chains to reduce Chinese dependence: report](#)

May 18, 2021, The Korea Herald

Developing trusted supply chains is one area that South Korea and the United States can work together to reduce economic dependence on China, a joint report by Korean and American experts showed.

## **Southeast Asia**

### [India launches probe against China, Thailand and Vietnam](#)

May 17, 2021, Financial Express

The commerce ministry has initiated an anti-dumping investigation against the import of solar cells from China, Thailand and Vietnam. The investigation was triggered by an application by the Indian Solar Manufacturers' Association (ISMA).

### [China, US argue over naval activity in South China Sea](#)

May 20, 2021, Financial Express

A statement from the Chinese People's Liberation Army's Southern Theatre Command said the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur illegally intruded into its territorial waters surrounding the Paracel island group in the South China Sea. It said Chinese forces mobilised to track and monitor the ship and warned and expelled it.

### [A complex history and layered present: What determines India's response to military rule in Myanmar](#)

May 20, 2021, The Indian Express

Myanmar has been under military rule since February 1, with the country witnessing the most violent uprising in the country since the Saffron Revolution of 2007. As of May 11, at least 783 people have been killed and a total of 3859 people are under detention, with 20 of them facing death sentences.

[Estimated 4,000-6,000 refugees from Myanmar sought safety in India: UN](#)

May 20, 2021, The Indian Express

An estimated 4,000 to 6,000 refugees from Myanmar have sought safety in India, a spokesperson for the UN chief has said, as the world body voiced concern over the rising levels of displacement of people since the military coup in the country.

[Myanmar Regime Reorganizes Committees to Press Ahead With BRI Projects](#)

May 18, 2021, The Irrawady

Myanmar's military regime has reorganized three crucial committees as it pushes ahead with plans to implement giant infrastructure projects that are a key part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), despite the political crisis caused by the junta's coup and protests against China over its suspected support for the regime.

## Central & West Asia

### Central Asia

#### [Kyrgyz Parliament Supports Seizure Of Canadian-Run Gold Mine](#)

May 17, 2021, RFE/RL

Kyrgyzstan's parliament has backed a plan to temporarily seize the country's largest gold mine after its Canadian operator, Centerra Gold, announced it was taking the government to an international court. Bishkek has regularly accused the Canadian mining company of cheating on the money it owes the government for gold production at the giant Kumtor mine.

#### [China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway: Who is going to pay?](#)

May 17, 2021, Eurasianet

The elusive China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project has been spoken about since before Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled his grand vision for the Belt and Road Initiative. But after a quarter-century of chin-wagging, the challenges remain the same. Difficult and mountainous terrain, lack of money and no clear notion of how to make the railroad pay for itself.

#### [Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Agree To Joint Security Controls Along Disputed Border](#)

May 18, 2021, RFE/RL

Kyrgyz and Tajik officials have agreed to jointly control law and order along a disputed segment of the border to ease tensions following deadly clashes late last month. Officials in Kyrgyzstan's southern region of Batken said on May 18 that a joint checkpoint has been established between the Kyrgyz village of Ak-Sai and Tajikistan's Vorukh district for law enforcement and border guards in the two Central Asian nations to control safety and security in the volatile area.

#### [Uzbek Opposition Party Denied Registration As Presidential Poll Nears](#)

May 18, 2021, RFE/RL

An Uzbek opposition politician says his party has begun a new signature drive to get registered for an autumn presidential election after its first attempt was rejected. Khidirnazar Allaqulov said that Uzbekistan's Justice Ministry last week rejected his application to register his Haqiqat va Taraqqiyot Social Democratic Party, claiming many of the signatures collected by party activists for registration were invalid.

### [Kazakhstan: People continue protests for release of relatives in Xinjiang for 100th day](#)

May 19, 2021, The Times of Central Asia

Rallies in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty, by demonstrators demanding their relatives be released from prisons and so-called reeducation camps in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang entered the 100th day on May 18.

### [Perspectives | Xi'an meeting marks a new chapter for China in Central Asia](#)

May 20, 2021, Eurasianet

At a gathering last week in central China, Foreign Minister Wang Yi promised his Central Asian counterparts all sorts of investments and new initiatives. But nothing on his list promises to be as symbolic as the nature of the meeting itself. Held in Xi'an, the traditional starting point of the ancient Silk Road, the May 12 get-together was the first time the foreign ministers of the six countries met in person without other mediators.

## **West Asia**

### [Israel Announces Unconditional Ceasefire with Hamas, Ending Gaza Combat](#)

May 21, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

The security cabinet unanimously agreed to a "mutual and unconditional" cessation of hostilities, according to a statement from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office.

### [Iran Deal Talks Continue as Its Proxy Hamas Bombs Israel](#)

May 16, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

Talks for the US and Iran to return to the 2015 nuclear deal continued in Vienna over the weekend, even as Iranian proxies Hamas and Islamic Jihad continued to bombard Israel's cities with rockets.

### [Arab World Condemns Israeli Violence but Takes Little Action](#)

May 14, 2021, The New York Times

The Arab world is unified in condemning Israeli airstrikes in Gaza and the way the Israeli police invaded Jerusalem's Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites. Governments have spoken out, protests have taken place, social media is aflame. But by and large the condemnation is only words, not actions.



### [Saudi Arabia Condemns Israel's 'Flagrant Violations' of Palestinian Rights](#)

May 16, 2021, Reuters

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, addressing a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as hostilities between Israel and militants in Gaza entered a seventh day, condemned what he called the violation of the sanctity of Islamic holy sites.

### [Kuwait Sends Medical Aid to India amid Battle with COVID-19; Consignment Arrives in Mumbai](#)

May 15, 2021, Republic World

Amid undulating COVID-19 figures on the graph and a medical crisis witnessed by the nation, Kuwait has lent a hand of support to India's ongoing Coronavirus battle. A Kuwaiti Ship arrived at Nhava Sheva Mumbai. The consignment included 3 semi-trailers of Liquid Medical Oxygen (25 Metric Tonnes each) and 1000 Oxygen cylinders onboard.

### [Oman Sends Special Medical Assistance to Support India's Fight against Covid-19](#)

May 12, 2021, Times of Oman

The government of Oman dispatched special medical assistance for India's fight against COVID-19 on 12th May 2021 aboard a Royal Air Force (RAFO) plane. The Government of India expressed its deep gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and the Government & people of Oman for their support to India during the difficult time of COVID-19 pandemic.

### [US Contractor Lockheed Martin Leaves Iraq Base over Rocket Attacks](#)

May 11, 2021, Arab News

US contractor Lockheed Martin has withdrawn its staff from an Iraq base where it had been maintaining the Iraqi army's F-16 fighter jets, military sources said, after a spate of rocket attacks.

### [COVID-19: Egypt Sends 30 Tonnes of Medical Supplies to India](#)

May 11, 2021, The Economic Times

As India battles a severe wave of coronavirus pandemic, Egypt has sent 30 tonnes of medical supplies, including 300 oxygen cylinders, 50 oxygen concentrators and 8,000 vials of Remdesivir.

## United States

### United States

#### [Biden Cites His Team's Quiet Diplomacy In Cease-Fire Plan Between Israel And Hamas](#)

May 20, 2021, NPR

Speaking at the White House an hour before an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire was set to go into effect in Israel and Gaza, President Biden expressed gratitude for the deal — which, if successful, would put at least a temporary halt to rocket attacks, airstrikes and other violence that has killed more than 200 Palestinians, as well as at least a dozen Israelis.

#### [Blinken set to visit Israel, region to strengthen truce, discuss Gaza aid](#)

May 21, 2021, The Times of Israel

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will arrive in the Middle East in the coming days to visit Israel, the West Bank, Egypt and Jordan, according to the Walla news site.

#### [Nord Stream 2: Biden waives US sanctions on Russian pipeline](#)

May 20, 2021, BBC

The Biden administration has waived sanctions on a company building a controversial gas pipeline between Russia and Germany. The US also lifted sanctions on the executive - an ally of Russia's Vladimir Putin - who leads the firm behind the Nord Stream 2 project.

#### [Blinken and Lavrov hold first high-level meeting of Biden's presidency as US-Russia tensions simmer](#)

May 20, 2021, CNN

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday, the first high-level encounter between the US and Russia since President Joe Biden took office.

#### [If Russia Acts Aggressively, the U.S. Will Respond: Blinken](#)

May 20, 2021, Bloomberg

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the U.S. will respond to any aggression from Russia.

### [Secretary of state confirms the U.S. does not want to buy Greenland](#)

May 20, 2021, The New York Times

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken on Thursday confirmed that the United States was no longer interested in buying Greenland, scuttling for good a quixotic 2019 proposal by the Trump administration to annex the self-governing Danish territory.

### [Antony Blinken In Iceland To Protect U.S. Interest In The Arctic](#)

May 18, 2021, NPR

U. S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has been continuing with talks about the Arctic during a visit to Iceland.

### [Relief for Indian companies as Biden admin removes Trump era rule restricting H-1B applications](#)

May 20, 2021, The Economic Times

The Joe Biden administration will formally remove a proposed rule which aimed to narrow the definition of specialty occupation, which would restrict who would be eligible to apply for an H-1B work permit.

## Europe & Russia

### Europe

#### [EU parliament freezes China deal ratification until Beijing lifts sanctions](#)

May 21, 2021, Reuters

The European Parliament halted on Thursday ratification of a new investment pact with China until Beijing lifts sanctions on EU politicians, deepening a dispute in Sino-European relations and denying EU companies greater access to China.

#### [German, Dutch diplomats urge stronger NATO-EU ties](#)

May 20, 2021, Politico

In the paper, published ahead of an upcoming NATO leaders' summit, the diplomats noted that both NATO and the EU were "engaged in strategic review processes" and that "we should seize this opportunity and embark on a journey towards joint leverage, which will benefit the EU and NATO" countries, "irrespective of whether they are members of the EU, NATO, or both organizations."

#### [Merkel: Germany to discuss 'common ground' on Russia with US](#)

May 20, 2021, Associated Press

Chancellor Angela Merkel said Thursday that Germany will discuss "necessary common ground" with the U.S. on relations with Russia after President Joe Biden opted not to punish the company overseeing a Russia-Germany pipeline project that Washington opposes.

#### [Hungary vetoes EU aid pact with poor countries](#)

May 21, 2021, EU Observer

Hungary has vetoed a new trade and development deal with 79 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries on grounds it would open the door to migrants.

#### [EU seeks migration deals with Libya and Tunisia](#)

May 20, 2021, Deutsche Welle

The European Commission is in talks with EU member states, as well as Libya and Tunisia, over ways to ease the number of migrants stuck in Italy, the Italian newspaper La Repubblica reported on Thursday.

### [EU-Turkey relations at 'historic' low point: European Parliament](#)

May 19, 2021, Deutsche Welle

Members of the European Parliament have urged other EU institutions to make accession talks with Ankara conditional upon democratic reform. Turkey rejected the legislative body's report.

### [Europe Balks at Biden's Tax Plan](#)

May 19, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The Biden Administration hopes a new global minimum corporate tax will dampen the blow of its tax increases on the U.S. economy. But other governments in the EU and the UK are making it clearer by the day that they won't play along.

### [EU members agree on Covid-19 passes for summer travel](#)

May 21, 2021, France24

European Union legislators and member countries found a compromise for launching COVID-19 certificates before the height of the summer holiday season, a move aimed at boosting travel and tourism following the restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic.

## **Russia**

### [Russia Swiftly Moves to Block Navalny Aides, Supporters From Ballot](#)

May 18, 2021, The Moscow Times

Russia's lower house of parliament on May 18 approved draft legislation that would ban members of "extremist" organizations from being elected as lawmakers. The changes to Russia's election law would shut out jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's supporters from critical lower-house polls in September.

### [56% of Russians Would Back Putin if Presidential Elections Were Held This Week, Poll Shows](#)

May 18, 2021, Russia Today

If presidential elections were held in Russia this weekend, Vladimir Putin could expect to be re-elected for a fifth term in the Kremlin, a new poll has revealed, with leading opposition figures attracting single-digit support. The research, conducted by the Levada Center – Russia's most prominent polling company, which is registered as a 'foreign agent' by its Ministry of Justice over links to overseas funding – surveyed more than 1,600 people in urban and rural areas across the country.

### [Russian, Chinese leaders to formally launch construction of new nuclear reactors in China](#)

May 19, 2021, TASS News Agency

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin will take part in a video conference on May 19 to launch the construction of new Russian-designed reactors at the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) and the Xudapu NPP in China. The Tianwan NPP is the largest object of the Chinese-Russian economic cooperation. The first and the second power units were started in 2007. The third and the fourth power units were commissioned in 2018.

### [Russian Lawmakers, As Expected, Vote To Leave Open Skies Treaty](#)

May 19, 2021, RFE/RL

Russia's State Duma, the lower house of parliament, has voted to withdraw the country from an international treaty allowing surveillance flights over military facilities following the departure from the accord by the United States late last year. The May 19 vote to exit from the Open Skies Treaty must still be endorsed by the upper house of parliament and signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin to take effect.

### [Putin: We Will 'Kick in Teeth' of Any Country Trying to Bite Off a Piece of Russia](#)

May 20, 2021, Sputnik News

Russian President Vladimir Putin has criticised claims about Russia "unjustly" owning such a vast and resource-rich region as Siberia, saying statements like these are sometimes made in "public speeches". The president did not elaborate on whose speeches he was referring to, but warned about the consequences of taking such a course of action.

### [Putin to decide on Biden summit after weighing Lavrov-Blinken meeting result, says Kremlin](#)

May 20, 2021, TASS News Agency

Russian President Vladimir Putin will make a decision on a potential summit with his US counterpart Joe Biden after assessing the outcome of the meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

### [Russian, U.S. Security Chiefs to Meet Ahead of Possible Putin-Biden Summit – Reports](#)

May 20, 2021, The Moscow Times

Russia's security chief is set to meet his U.S. counterpart in Europe in the coming weeks to prepare for an anticipated summit between Presidents

Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden, the Kommersant business daily reported on May 19. The Putin-Biden summit will be a key item on the agenda at the talks between Russian Security Council chief Nikolai Patrushev and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, the outlet said."

## Africa & Latin America

### Latin America

#### [Brazil bans entry of foreign travellers from India due to rising number of covid-19 cases](#)

15 May 2021, MercoPress

The Brazilian government has banned the entry of travellers from India as a result of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the Asian country. President Jair Bolsonaro's administration reached this decision following a recommendation by the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa).

#### [Diplomatic rift with China results in shortage of active ingredient to produce vaccines in Brazil](#)

15 May 2021, MercoPress

São Paulo Governor Joao Doria blamed Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for a diplomatic crisis with China, which led to the suspension of supplies to manufacturing vaccines against the coronavirus.

#### [Chile going to polls this weekend to elect Constitutional Convention to replace Pinochet-era text](#)

15 May 2021, MercoPress

Chile is about to write another chapter in its history this coming weekend when members of an Assembly to write up a new constitution to replace the one left by the military regime of General Augusto Pinochet are elected.

#### [Costa Rica on the verge of joining OECD](#)

18 May 2021, MercoPress

Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado welcomed the approval by the Legislative Assembly to his country's joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

#### [OAS says Hamas is a terrorist group](#)

18 May 2021, MercoPress

The Organization of American States (OAS) added the Palestinian Islamist organization Hamas - founded in 1987- to the list of terrorist groups, following its recent rocket attacks against Israel, it was announced in Washington DC.



## [Brazil wants Mercosur to agree on a 20% reduction of the Common External Tariff](#)

20 May 2021, MercoPress

Brazil is determined that Mercosur's Common External Tariff, TEC, be reduced by 20% in two rounds of unilateral cuts, 10% immediately, and the other 10% in December. This is the official strategy and position of Brazil for the extraordinary meeting in June of the four founding members of the group.

## **Africa**

### [Tanzania: President Hassan makes a post-Magufuli U-turn on Covid response and vaccines](#)

17 May 2021, The African Report

The government of Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan has turned a page on the Covid-denialist policies of the late former president John Mugufuli by launching a national task force, which is recommending the country to purchase vaccines and cooperate with the World Health Organisation (WHO) by publishing statistics and taking other measures.

### [Chad: How N'Djamena managed to escape AU sanctions](#)

19 May 2021, The African Report

It took longer than expected to examine Chad's situation. However, on 14 May, the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) finally decided not to impose sanctions against N'Djamena and the transitional authorities led by General Mahamat Idriss Déby.

### [Africa-France: mini-summit on security, dinner at the Élysée Palace](#)

19 May 2021, The African Report

Invited to the summit on the financing of African economies, Sahelian heads of state took advantage of their presence in Paris to meet the day before, on 17 May, before meeting their counterparts at the Élysée for a wider discussion on debt.

### ['New Deal', SDRs, debt and vaccines... What emerged from the summit on financing African economies](#)

19 May 2021, The African Report

The summit aimed to find ways to boost the African economy. Emmanuel Macron, who received 21 heads of state and government from the continent, said the discussions had enabled the "launch of a profound dynamic". But the

final results fell short of a 'New Deal' for Africa, as no re-allocation of IMF special drawing rights was agreed.

[WHO's Tedros: 'Trickle down vaccination is not an effective strategy'](#)

15 May 2021, Africa Times

The head of the World Health Organization has made another appeal for the developed world to reconsider how COVID vaccines are being distributed because just 0.3 percent of the global supply is going to low-income countries. It is not only India that is seeing a spike in cases, as the troubling variant first seen there spreads into Algeria, Nigeria and dozens of other countries.



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