

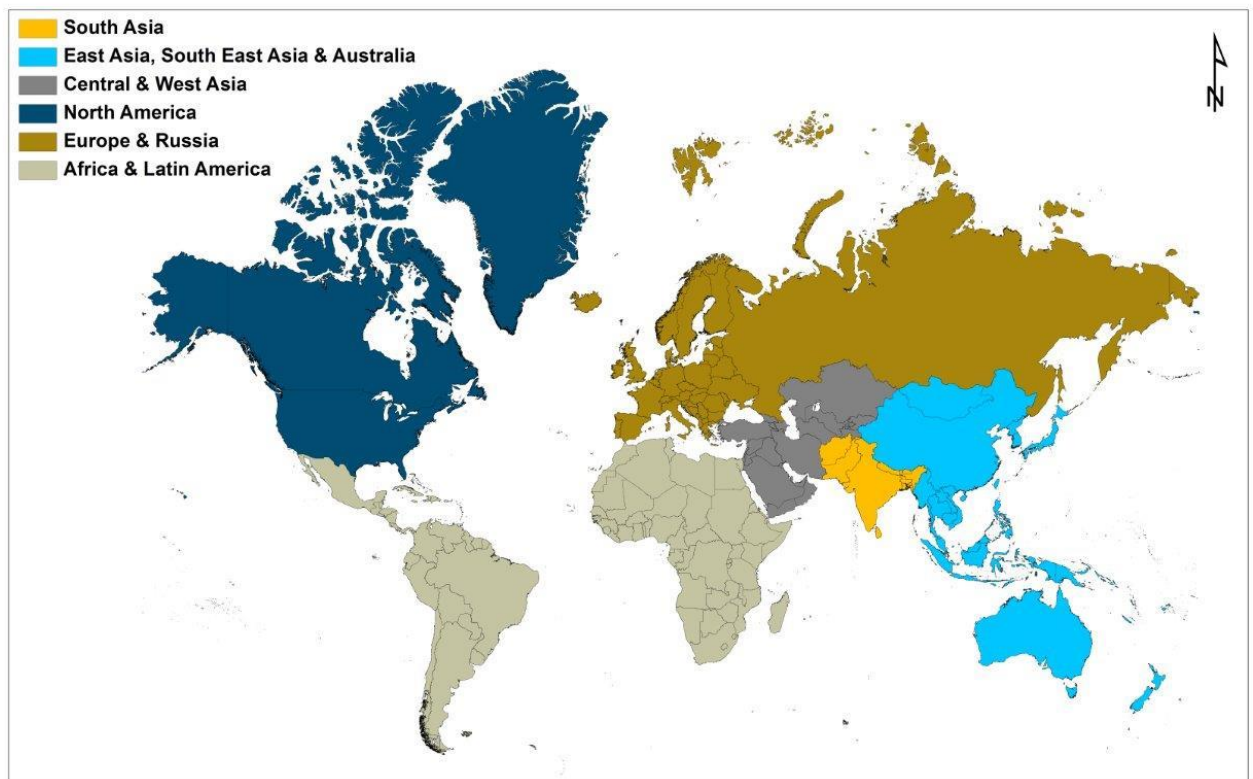


# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



Volume V, Issue 14 | April 3, 2021

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 14

### 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

#### [India-France-Australia meet on April 13; maritime security, Indo-Pacific top agenda](#)

April 3, 2021, The Hindustan Times

The foreign ministers of India, France and Australia will hold a trilateral dialogue in Delhi on April 13 to discuss steps to strengthen maritime security and collaborate on shared challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, people familiar with the development said.

#### [We see Indian Navy as global security provider of Indo-Pacific: Fayard](#)

April 2, 2021, Business Standard

While the French Navy is all set to lead 'La Perouse' Navy exercise where four nations - India, the US, Australia and Japan - are taking part, Rear Admiral Jacques Fayard has said that French Navy see Indian Navy as global security provider of Indo-Pacific region.

#### [India, US kick off two-day naval exercise in eastern Indian Ocean Region](#)

March 29, 2021, India Today

India and the US began a two-day naval exercise in the eastern Indian Ocean Region. The Indian and US navies were part of joint drills in a passage exercise (PASSEX) conducted earlier in the day, with Indian Air Force fighters being part of such an exercise for the first time.

#### [Russia looks to ramp up engagement with India on Afghanistan](#)

April 1, 2021, The Times of India

Russia will look to address some of India's concerns about the peace process in Afghanistan with foreign minister Sergey Lavrov visiting India next week, accompanied by Russian special envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov.

#### [India Committed to Cooperation Under BIMSTEC Framework: S Jaishankar](#)

April 1, 2021, News 18

India remains committed to further building the momentum of regional cooperation under the framework of BIMSTEC and make it a stronger, vibrant and result-oriented grouping, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said.

### [Covid-19 crisis demonstrated that rise of India is good for world: Shringla](#)

March 31, 2021, Deccan Herald

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said India will need to calibrate its external supplies of coronavirus vaccines keeping in mind its domestic needs as the rise in Covid-19 cases highlighted the need for an accelerated vaccination programme.

### [PM Modi accepts Joe Biden's invitation to attend climate summit: MEA](#)

April 3, 2021, India Today

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi accepted US President Joe Biden's invitation to attend Leaders' Summit on Climate.

### [India and Tajikistan agree to further enhance economic partnership during talks on bilateral cooperation in Dushanbe](#)

March 31, 2021, Newonair

External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar held talks with his Tajik counterpart Sirojiddin Muhridin in Dushanbe on all aspects of the bilateral agenda, including development cooperation. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of interest. Both leaders agreed to focus on further enhancing the economic partnership.

## **Pakistan**

### [Saudi prince calls PM Imran, invites him to Riyadh](#)

March 30, 2021, Dawn

Prime Minister Imran Khan received a telephone call from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who invited the premier to visit Saudi Arabia. Both leaders discussed bilateral ties. Meanwhile, the prime minister wrote a letter to Saudi royals, lauding their "Saudi Green Initiative and Green Middle East Initiative".

### [Qureshi, Cavusoglu discuss bilateral ties, regional peace](#)

March 30, 2021, Dawn

Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu discussed bilateral ties, regional peace and other issues of mutual interest. The meeting between the two foreign ministers was held on the sidelines of 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) Ministerial Conference being held on March 30 in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe.

### [Pakistan test-fires Shaheen missile](#)

March 27, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan conducted a successful flight test of Shaheen-1A surface-to-surface ballistic missile, having a range of 900 kilometres. The test flight was aimed at re-validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system, including advanced navigation system.

### [World Bank, Pakistan ink deals for \\$1.3bn aid](#)

March 27, 2021, Dawn

The World Bank signed agreements with Pakistan to provide \$1.336 billion worth of assistance which would boost the country's foreign exchange reserves and help support social sectors.

### [Pakistan Navy participates in Asad Al Bahr-II exercise in Qatar](#)

March 29, 2021, The Express Tribune

Pakistan Navy Ships (PNS) Alamgir and Azmat visited Port Hamad in Doha, Qatar during overseas deployment, and participated in bilateral exercise Asad Al Bahr-II with Qatar Emiri Naval Forces (QENF).

### [Russian FM to visit Pakistan to discuss Afghan peace, regional politics](#)

April 2, 2021, The Express Tribune

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will travel to Pakistan next week on a visit that appears to be focused on the Afghan endgame and how Islamabad and Moscow can work together in the changing regional dynamics.

### [Pakistan, Afghanistan extend transit trade deal](#)

April 2, 2021, The Express Tribune

Pakistan and Afghanistan have signed a protocol for three-month extension of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) 2010.

### [Relations with India: PM calls high-level meeting](#)

April 2, 2021, The News

Prime Minister Imran Khan had called a high-level meeting on April 2 with regard to relations with India. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and the officers concerned of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also invited.

### [Pak-India commanders discuss LoC ceasefire](#)

March 27, 2021, The News

A flag meeting of brigade commanders was held at the Rawalakot-Poonch crossing point as a follow-up to understanding reached between Directors

General Military Operations (DGMOs) of Pakistan and India to restore peace at the Line of Control (LoC), last month.

### [Pakistan, China mull bilateral framework under CPEC](#)

April 2, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan and China are expected to sign a bilateral framework agreement on industrial cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) even though Islamabad has declined negotiated divestment of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) to Chinese firms.

## **Afghanistan**

### [S Jaishankar Meets Ashraf Ghani, Discusses Afghan Peace Process](#)

March 30, 2021, NDTV

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani on March 29 and had a discussion on the Afghan peace process on the sidelines of the Heart of Asian Conference.

### [US Wants Taliban Approval to Extend May 1 Deadline: Sources](#)

March 30, 2021, Tolo News

The United States reportedly asked the Taliban to agree to the continued presence of American forces for three or six months in Afghanistan after the May 1 deadline. The Taliban has so far not made their final decision about the request; however, the group has apparently insisted that first their 7,000 prisoners should be released, and names of Taliban officials should be dropped from the UN blacklist.

### [Heart of Asia Declaration Calls for Further Afghan Talks](#)

March 30, 2021, Tolo News

Delegates from participating and supporting countries as well as representatives from international organizations at the Heart of Asia--Istanbul Process conference held in Dushanbe issued a 30-points approach to promote peace and security in Afghanistan. Delegates announced in the declaration that they support the ongoing efforts for the peace process and the continuation of the negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

### [Three female health workers shot dead in Afghanistan](#)

March 31, 2021, Dawn

Gunmen killed three female polio vaccination workers in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad. A blast had also rocked the provincial health department headquarters but left no casualties.

## [Mohib: Hasty US Withdrawal Could Trigger Civil War](#)

March 27, 2021, Tolo News

National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib warned that Afghanistan could slide into an all-out civil war if the US withdraws its forces without a peace agreement. He reiterated that the Taliban will not succeed to take over the power through military pressure and war.

## **Bangladesh**

### [Indo-Bangladesh ties have deepened. But some issues remain](#)

March 29, 2021, The Indian Express

One very positive reflection in the discussions, hopefully indicative of the road travelled, is Bangladesh's suggestion of India providing additional road connectivity to Nepal and rail to Bhutan. This should be provided without reservations by India, keeping at bay the ever-suspicious security agencies.

### [Indian Army to participate in military exercise in Bangladesh from April 4-12](#)

April 2, 2021, The Economic Times

The Indian Army will participate in a four-nation ( India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka) military exercise in Bangladesh from April 4 to 12 which is being organised to mark the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 50 years of that country's liberation war, officials said.

## **Nepal**

### [India to provide USD 50 million to rebuild 71 schools damaged by 2015 earthquake in Nepal](#)

April 2, 2021, The New Indian Express

India has committed USD 50 million, approximately NRs 5800 million, for the reconstruction of 71 educational institutions across eight districts of Nepal damaged by the devastating 2015 earthquake.

### [As Nepal struggles to continue vaccine drive, India denies export restrictions](#)

April 3, 2021, The Kathmandu Post

Amid reports that India has put a hold on exports of AstraZeneca vaccine, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, the Ministry of External Affairs of India has said that they have not imposed restrictions as such and that New Delhi is just trying to prioritise the demand at home.



## Sri Lanka

### [Sri Lanka Releases All 54 Indian Fishermen Arrested This Week: Report](#)

March 27, 2021, NDTV

Sri Lanka has released all 54 Indian fishermen arrested this week for allegedly fishing in the country's territorial waters, Indian officials confirmed. [TN leaders urge India to vote in favour of UN resolution against Sri Lanka](#)

March 31, 2021, The New Indian Express

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has conveyed his "heartfelt gratitude" to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping for China's vote against a recent UNHRC resolution on the island nation's rights record. India was among 14 countries that abstained from voting, while China and Russia were among the 11 members who voted against it.

## East & South East Asia

### China

#### [China justified to counterattack Western smears](#)

April 1, 2021, Global Times

As China rises on the international stage, some Western countries feel that China is being increasingly offensive. China's moves that fight for its own interests and even objectively state facts will be regarded as "wolf warrior diplomacy" or even "arrogant." In their minds, China should swallow its anger, insults and smears, or at least not be on par with the West. These Western elites still believe this is the time when they can act capriciously.

#### [Frequent interactions with Asian countries shows China's 'unshakable role as regional stabilizer'](#)

April 1, 2021, Global Times

Asia is facing regional challenges and external impacts, as the Myanmar unrest is worsening and the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue is also being affected by the so-called Indo-Pacific Strategy of the US, and China's "role of stabilizer" for the region is getting more and more important, as Asian countries, including some US allies, have sent envoys to Beijing to coordinate hot spot issues with China.

#### [India-China border row: Air forces hold formation in Ladakh](#)

March 31, 2021, The Hindustan Times

As India and China negotiate a complex disengagement process to pull back their troops and weapons from friction points in eastern Ladakh, the air forces of both countries remain to be deployed in the theatre just as they were when the border row was at its peak last year, people familiar with the developments said.

#### [How a new rail line in China will pose a security challenge to India](#)

April 2, 2021, The Hindustan Times

China's 14th Five-Year Plan, approved in the recent National People's Congress's (NPC) annual session, outlines the Sichuan-Tibet railway line near the China-India border as a key strategic priority.

#### [India should not seek closer ties with US at expense of relationship with China](#)

April 1, 2021, Global Times

A view in New Delhi's strategic circle argues that China benefited greatly from its engagement with the US from 1972 to around the year 2000, and thus, India should learn from China to use the US chariot to achieve its own development.

[GT Voice: Japan shouldn't bow to US pressure to sanction China](#)

March 31, 2021, Global Times

As Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is scheduled to visit the US for a summit with US President Joe Biden on April 9, it is reported that Tokyo is facing intensifying pressure from Washington to join the latter's sanctions against China. Some in Japan is also reportedly pressuring Suga to join the US and some Western countries to impose sanctions on China.

[India's Tech Could Gain Big From China-US Tension: Report](#)

March 31, 2021, NDTV

Friction between the U.S. and China could give India the boost it needs to become a global tech hub, as long as the South Asian nation addresses longstanding roadblocks including excessive red tape and government inefficiency.

[Officials, business representatives call for China-US cooperation on auto industry](#)

April 2, 2021, Global Times

Business representatives from both China and the US expect closer ties to jointly develop the auto industry that is directed at smart electric vehicles (EVs). They are calling for an open and fair business environment despite the ongoing tensions between the world's two largest economies.

[Facebook Staff Fret Over China's Ads Portraying Happy Muslims in Xinjiang](#)

April 2, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Facebook Inc. FB 1.40% is blocked in China, but Beijing is a big user of the platform to spread its political views to hundreds of millions of people overseas, sometimes via advertisements. Now, some Facebook staff are raising concerns on internal message boards and in other employee discussions that the company is being used as a conduit for state propaganda, highlighting sponsored posts from Chinese organizations that purport to show Muslim ethnic minority Uyghurs thriving in China's Xinjiang region, according to people familiar with the matter.

## [China's Unrestricted War on India](#)

April 2, 2021, Foreign Affairs

On October 12, 2020, the electricity went out in India's biggest city. Mumbai faced its worst power cut in decades, with businesses crippled, the stock market shut down, thousands of commuters stranded, and hospitals scrambling to ensure backup supply for their COVID-19 patients...Indian officials revealed in March that they might have found the cause of the power cut: a foreign cyberattack that targeted the servers of state power companies...Chinese hackers, officials suggested, had trained their sights on bringing down Mumbai's electric grid—and they had succeeded.

## [China Rewrites Hong Kong Election Rules to Keep Opponents Out](#)

March 30, 2021 The Wall Street Journal

China's top lawmaking body rewrote electoral rules for Hong Kong to give Beijing decisive control over how the city chooses its leader and legislators, putting pro-establishment politicians firmly in charge of the former British colony. The changes, approved Tuesday, will curtail democratic representation in Hong Kong by slashing the share of directly elected seats in the local legislature, while giving unelected political bodies more influence over the city's governance. Local national-security officials will also get effective veto power over election candidates, allowing authorities to bar opposition figures from elected office.

## [The Wuhan Whitewash](#)

March 30, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The World Health Organization on Tuesday finally released its report on the origins of the coronavirus, and the result wasn't worth the wait. The document is best understood as a whitewash heavily influenced by the Chinese Communist Party and Westerners with conflicts of interest. The report—based primarily on an international team's visit this year to the city of Wuhan, where Covid-19 was first detected—has little new information. But the team analyzes four origin scenarios.

## [An Alliance of Autocracies? China Wants to Lead a New World Order](#)

March 29, 2021, The New York Times

President Biden wants to forge an "alliance of democracies." China wants to make clear that it has alliances of its own. Only days after a rancorous encounter with American officials in Alaska, China's foreign minister joined his Russian counterpart last week to denounce Western meddling and sanctions. Although officials denied the timing was intentional, the message clearly was. China hopes to position itself as the main challenger to an

international order, led by the United States that is generally guided by principles of democracy, respect for human rights and adherence to rule of law.

### [Behind the curtain of vaccine diplomacy](#)

April 03, 2021, Taipei Times

It has been more than a year since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is still no light at the end of the tunnel. Should we or should we not take the COVID-19 vaccine? If we should, how do we choose which one? This is a big question, and as it is a matter of life and death, it must be kept within the realm of science rather than politics. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is opposed to purchasing Chinese vaccines, while the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) is promoting it, although there are no concrete scientific data to support it.

## Japan

### [U.S., Japan, South Korea agree to keep pressure on North Korea](#)

April 3, 2021, Japan Today

The United States, South Korea and Japan agreed in high-level security talks to work together to keep up pressure on North Korea to give up its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

### [Japan suspends new aid to Myanmar over coup](#)

April 1, 2021, Japan Today

Japan has halted new aid to Myanmar in response to the coup, according to the country's foreign minister, but is stopping short of sanctions imposed by some nations on military and police commanders.

### [Japan slams China's changes to Hong Kong elections](#)

March 31, 2021, Japan Today

Japan's top government spokesman criticized China's sweeping changes to Hong Kong's election rules as a "major setback" for the semi-autonomous territory.

### [Suga willing to meet N Korean leader Kim](#)

March 31, 2021, Japan Today Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is still willing to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Japan's top government spokesman said, after the White House ruled out a summit between Kim and U.S. President Joe Biden in the near future.

### [India, Japan sign 4 pacts to support healthcare projects under GGP scheme](#)

March 30, 2021, Mint

India and Japan signed four agreements under which Tokyo is to support health care projects funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GGP) scheme in India.

### [US Prez, Japan PM to discuss concerns on China expansionist moves in April](#)

April 2, 2021, Business Standard United States President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga will meet in April to discuss shared concerns about China's expansionist moves.

## **Korea**

### [Denuclearization will be at center of new North Korea policy: US](#)

April 2, 2021, The Korea Times

Denuclearization of North Korea will be at the center of any new U.S. policy toward the reclusive nation, a State Department spokesman said, adding the country's policy review will soon be concluded.

### [Top diplomats of S. Korea, China hold talks on NK nuke, regional, global issues](#)

April 3, 2021, The Korea Herald

South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, held talks in the south-eastern Chinese city of Xiamen to discuss North Korea's nuclear problem and regional and global issues.

### [US will hold North Korea accountable for 'egregious' human rights violations: official](#)

March 31, 2021, The Korea Times

The United States will hold North Korea accountable for its "egregious" human rights violations, a State Department official said, as it released an annual human rights report.

### [Steam detected at North Korea's plutonium reprocessing plant: US think tank](#)

March 31, 2021, The Korea Times

Recent satellite imagery showed steam from the plutonium reprocessing plant at North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear complex, a U.S. think tank said, an indication of activity at the facility used to extract the key nuclear weapon ingredient.

[Iran likely to release seized S. Korean tanker, captain as early as next week: source](#)

April 2, 2021, The Korea Herald

Iran is likely to release a seized South Korean oil tanker and its captain as early as next week, a diplomatic source said, noting "considerable progress" in the negotiations to end nearly three months of the seizure.

[Cheong Wa Dae seeks Moon-Biden summit in April: sources](#)

April 2, 2021, The Korea Herald

South Korean President Moon Jae-in may hold his first face-to-face summit talks with US President Joe Biden as early as this month, an informed source here said.

## **Southeast Asia**

[Vietnamese exporters cut prices to compete with India, Thailand](#)

April 2, 2021, The Indian Express

Vietnamese rice exporters cut prices this week to match more competitive offers from top Asian hubs India and Thailand, while Bangladesh stepped up imports to shore up domestic stocks.

[Myanmar: US calls on China to hold junta accountable](#)

March 31, 2021, DW

The US said China should use its influence to hold Myanmar's military leadership accountable for the unrest that has so far claimed over 500 lives. Separately, the UN envoy on Myanmar warned that the country was on the brink of a civil war.

[At UN, India sheds Myanmar ambiguity, condemns violence](#)

April 2, 2021, The Times of India

In its strongest statement on Myanmar so far, India shed some of the ambiguity that marked its reactions to the overthrow of the NLD regime and condemned violence witnessed in the country since the military coup, urged maximum restraint and sought release of detained leaders.

['We see great potential for deeper cooperation in digital economy with India,' says Singapore minister](#)

April 2, 2021, Times Now

"We see great potential for deeper cooperation in the digital economy. Singapore is pioneering a network of digital economy agreements that

establishes frameworks for digital trade and innovations. We look forward to having such a Mechanism between Singapore and India that will allow us to set standards and promote cross-border innovation in areas such as artificial intelligence and digital trade documentation," Chee Hong Tat, Singapore's senior minister of state at the India Economic Conclave recently said.

### [China tells Singapore it supports ASEAN approach to Myanmar crisis](#)

April 1, 2021, Nikkei Asia

China is the focus of a flurry of diplomacy this week, as foreign ministers from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and South Korea make successive visits against the backdrop of a Myanmar crisis and rising Sino-American tensions.

### [China-Thailand high-speed railway sees entire phase one contract signed](#)

March 30, 2021, GCR

A number of Chinese construction companies have signed a construction agreement with Thai transportation authorities for the first phase of the long-discussed high-speed railway between the Thai capital, Bangkok, and the Chinese city of Kunming, running through Laos.

### [US, Philippines raise concerns over China maritime militia at disputed reef](#)

April 1, 2021, Business Standard

The United States and the Philippines have raised concerns over the presence of China's maritime militia vessels near the disputed Whitsun Reef in the South China Sea, the White House said.

### [Japan, Indonesia sign arms transfer pact amid China concerns](#)

March 31, 2021, Defense News

Japan and Indonesia signed a pact allowing the transfer of Japanese defense equipment and technology to Jakarta as the two countries strengthen their military ties in the face of China's increasingly assertive activity in the region.



## Central & West Asia

### Central Asia

#### [Anti-China Protests Staged Across Kazakhstan; At Least 20 Detained](#)

March 27, 2021, RFE/RL

Kazakh authorities detained at least 20 people as demonstrators staged anti-China protests in towns and cities across the Central Asian nation on March 27. The protesters rallied against China's increasing influence and economic power in the former Soviet republic. Activists also denounced the mass incarceration of members of indigenous Turkic-speaking communities in China's Xinjiang region.

#### [Turkmenistan's Authoritarian Leader Wins Senate Seat With '100 Percent' Of Vote](#)

March 29, 2021, RFE/RL

Turkmenistan's authoritarian leader Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has been elected as a member of a newly established senate, in a vote in which there was no opposition and only indirect suffrage. State media in the tightly controlled and isolated state reported Berdymukhammedov received "100 percent" of the vote in the election, giving him a new position as a lawmaker in the upper chamber.

#### [Uzbekistan tightens rules for media as president braces for re-election](#)

March 31, 2021, Eurasianet

The criminal code in Uzbekistan has been amended to make insulting the president an offense punishable by up to five years in prison. Under the provision approved by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on March 30, the sanction is envisioned for people committing the offense through the internet or other forms of telecommunication.

#### [Uzbekistan starts mass vaccination against COVID-19](#)

April 02, 2021, The Times of Central Asia

Health authorities in Uzbekistan kicked off a mass vaccination campaign against COVID-19 on April 1 with the first residents of Tashkent and regional capitals getting their shots. The Health Ministry said on Telegram that people in district capitals and smaller settlements will start getting vaccinated on May 1, while vaccine doses will arrive in more remote areas in June.

### [Russia sends humanitarian aid to Turkmenistan](#)

April 02, 2021, Trend News Agency

Russia has sent 12 tons of medical devices to Turkmenistan as humanitarian aid, Trend reports with reference to Turkmenportal information portal. In particular, aid, medicines, sets of protective clothing, masks and medical equipment will be delivered to Turkmenistan from Russia as part of the humanitarian aid.

## **West Asia**

### [Iran and China Sign 25-year Cooperation Deal](#)

March 27, 2021, Middle East Eye

Iran and China signed a 25-year "strategic cooperation" agreement as Beijing expands its trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative.

### [Suez Canal Reopens after Giant Stranded Ship is Freed](#)

March 31, 2021, BBC News

Traffic has resumed in Egypt's Suez Canal after a stranded container ship blocking it for nearly a week was finally freed by salvage crews.

### [Suez Canal Blockage Costs \\$9.6bn in Trade Per Day](#)

March 25, 2021, Middle East Monitor

According to Lloyd's List calculations, westbound traffic travelling through the vital waterway is worth about \$5.1 billion per day and eastbound traffic roughly \$4.5 billion.

### [India Will Keep Its Strategic and Economic Interests in Mind While Sourcing Crude Oil: Dharmendra Pradhan](#)

March 26, 2021, Mint

India, the world's third-largest oil importer said that it will source crude oil from any country that offers cheaper and favourable terms. While articulating India's position, petroleum and natural gas minister Dharmendra Pradhan said India will take a decision while keeping its strategic and economic interests in mind.

### [Final Israeli Election Results Confirm Deadlock](#)

March 26, 2021, AL Jazeera

Final election results have shown Israel in a political deadlock once again, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his opponents falling short of a governing majority.

### [India Terms Saudi Arabia's Response to Call for More Oil Supplies 'Undiplomatic'](#)

March 27, 2021, The Economic Times

Indian oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan described his Saudi counterpart's advice to reduce oil stores to tackle high crude prices as "undiplomatic".

### [Mideast States back China's Xinjiang Stance](#)

March 25, 2021, Global Times

Saudi Arabia expressed support for China, opposing Western forces driving a wedge between China and the Islamic world and backing China's legitimate position on the affairs related to Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

### [Much at Stake as UAE Steps into India-Pakistan's Perennial War Theatre, Seeks New Role as Peacemaker](#)

March 28, 2021, The Economic Times

Reportedly the Emiratis brokered the negotiations between India and Pakistan that led to an unexpected February 25 announcement that the South Asian rivals would respect their 2003 cease-fire agreement, despite heightened tensions between them. Further, it is aiming to secure a viable understanding on Kashmir, which has been the flashpoint for several wars.

### [Indian Air Force Takes Part in Multination Exercise Hosted by the UAE](#)

March 03, 2021, The Diplomat

India's participation in the Desert Flag VI provides an additional data point illustrating the country's deepening defense ties with Middle Eastern powers.

### [How to Bring Peace to the New Middle East](#)

March 29, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The old peace process developed at a time when the U.S. had no serious rival for world leadership, the Middle East mattered more to the global economy than it does today, and Arab states were more powerful in the region than they are now. Under those circumstances, promoting the peace process was a necessary aspect of America's diplomatic balancing act that helped maintain Washington's alliances with the Arab world while supporting Israel.

## United States

### United States

#### [Biden Allows Trump's Freeze On Skilled Worker And Other Visas To Expire](#)

April 1, 2021, NPR

President Biden has allowed a ban on H1-B and other kinds of foreign work visas to expire, bringing to a close a dramatic clampdown on legal immigration put in place by the Trump administration last year as part of its response to the coronavirus pandemic.

#### [What's in Biden's \\$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan?](#)

March 31, 2021, Reuters

The infrastructure plan U.S. President Joe Biden will roll out in Pittsburgh includes \$2.3 trillion in investments aimed at everything from fixing 10,000 bridges to tearing lead pipes out of millions of homes in the United States.

#### [Antony Blinken says the US will 'stand up for human rights everywhere'](#)

March 30, 2021, The Guardian

The United States will speak out about human rights everywhere including in allies and at home, secretary of state Antony Blinken has vowed, turning a page from Donald Trump as he bemoaned deteriorations around the world.

#### [U.S. State Department Confirms the Finding Of the Uyghur Genocide, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Denies Yet Again](#)

April 2, 2021, Forbes

The 2020 Human Rights Report provides a long list of human rights violations in China, including several specifically referring to the treatment of the Uyghurs.

#### [Commentary: What Southeast Asia wants from Joe Biden](#)

April 2, 2021, Channel News Asia

Concerns over sharp swings in US foreign policy, its focus on democracy and whether ASEAN countries could be asked to choose between the US and China weigh heavy on the region's minds, says Dewi Fortuna Anwar.

#### [Blinken at UN calls for opening of border crossings for Syria aid](#)

March 29, 2021, Al Jazeera

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has urged the United Nations Security Council to reopen border crossings into Syria blocked by Russia, saying world powers should be ashamed by their inaction.

### [U.S. and Iran Agree to Resume Talks on Nuclear Deal](#)

April 2, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Negotiations to restore the 2015 Iran nuclear deal will take place among all parties in Vienna next week, senior Western diplomats said the first serious effort to rescue the agreement since President Biden took office in January.

### [US, Greece defence chiefs reaffirm commitment to security in eastern Mediterranean, NATO's southern flank](#)

April 2, 2021, ANI

US, Greece defence chiefs reaffirm commitment to security in eastern Mediterranean, NATO's southern flank, the Defence Department said in a release.

### [Biden affirms U.S. 'unwavering support' for Ukraine in call -statement](#)

April 2, 2021, Reuters

President Joe Biden expressed strong U.S. support for Ukraine in a call with the country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the White House said.

### [Kerry Headed to India, U.A.E. for Climate Talks](#)

March 30, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

U. S. climate envoy John Kerry is planning to travel to India and the United Arab Emirates in the coming days to increase the Biden administration's pursuit of deeper international commitments to address climate change, according to people familiar with the matter.

### [US exporters continue to encounter significant trade barriers in India, claims report](#)

April 1, 2021, The Print

The Biden administration has alleged that US exporters continued to encounter significant tariff and non-tariff barriers that impede the imports of its products into India.

## Europe & Russia

### Europe

#### [Three more Rafale jets arrive in India from France](#)

March 31, 2021, The Hindu

The fourth batch of three Rafales landed on March 28, flying directly from the Istres Air Base in France, the IAF said. This takes the number of Rafales in service to 14.

#### [Irish PM calls on UK and EU to 'reset' relations](#)

April 1, 2021, Financial Times

Ireland's prime minister has called on the UK and EU to "reset" their relationship so they can work together to fine-tune the Northern Ireland protocol that governs post-Brexit trade between Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

#### [Time to get tough with China on global trade, UK tells G7 allies](#)

March 31, 2021, The Economic Times

Britain will push G7 allies to get tough on China over "pernicious practices" that undermine the international trading system, calling for an overhaul of outdated and ineffective World Trade Organization rules.

#### [UK says it is gravely concerned about Russian military activity threatening Ukraine](#)

April 2, 2021, Reuters

British foreign minister Dominic Raab said Britain was gravely concerned about Russian military activity which threatened Ukraine.

#### [Some states seek to complicate relations between EU, Moscow, says Russian envoy to Italy](#)

April 2, 2021, TASS

Some EU countries seek to complicate relations between Russia and the European Union, Russian Ambassador to Italy Sergei Razov said in an interview with the Rai News24 TV channel.

#### [EU condemns 'harassment' of foreign media in China](#)

April 2, 2021, The Hindu

The European Union condemned the "harassment" of foreign journalists in China after a BBC correspondent left the country in the face of legal threats and pressure from authorities.

### [Germany to propose Beirut port reconstruction with 'strings attached'](#)

April 2, 2021, Reuters

Germany will next week present a multi-billion-dollar proposal to Lebanese authorities to rebuild the Port of Beirut as part of efforts to entice the country's politicians to form a government capable of warding off financial collapse, two sources said.

### [Dutch PM Mark Rutte narrowly survives no-confidence vote](#)

April 2, 2021, Deutsche Welle

Opposition party leaders accused Rutte of lying and called on him to resign. After surviving the latest no-confidence vote, he is on track to become the longest-serving prime minister in the Netherlands.

## **Russia**

### [Russian Ambassador to US Yet to Brief Putin on Current State of Bilateral Ties, Kremlin Says](#)

March 29, 2021, Sputnik News

Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov has not yet briefed Russian President Vladimir Putin on the current state of relations with Washington, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Antonov arrived in Moscow from Washington for consultations earlier in March. Last week, Peskov said Putin was not currently planning a meeting with the diplomat.

### [Kremlin Critic Navalny Announces Prison Hunger Strike](#)

March 31, 2021, The Moscow Times

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny announced that he is going on hunger strike in protest of conditions that he says are causing his health to deteriorate. Navalny's lawyers warned last week that his life may be in danger after he reported suffering from weeks of severe back pain and a loss of sensation in one of his legs. Prison authorities said Navalny, 44, is in "stable and satisfactory" condition, a claim dismissed by his allies.

### [Moscow offered to restore military contacts within Russia-NATO Council](#)

March 31, 2021, TASS News Agency

Russia is not refusing to work in the Russia-NATO Council and offers to restart military contacts, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a special session of the Middle East conference at the Valdai international discussion club. However, NATO member states "are flatly refusing to discuss military confidence measures we have proposed, including the proposal to agree on the

pull-out drills from the contact line to an agreed distance, to agree on the maximum approach distance for aircraft and ships," Russia's top diplomat said.

[Russia to make Northern Sea Route cheaper than Suez Canal as country seeks to benefit from Ever Given blockage & climate change](#)

April 01, 2021, Russia Today

The Russian government is making plans to turn the Northern Sea Route into an alternative to the Suez Canal, with the country's deputy prime minister revealing that state subsidies could be used to reduce transportation costs. The 3,500-mile shipping route stretches almost the entire length of Russia, and has become a commercially viable path for vessels to take, as the Arctic's melting ice caps open up spaces for large ships to pass through. [New Russia Threat Amid Rising Tensions With Ukraine](#)

April 01, 2021, RFE/RL

Amid allegations from Ukraine that Russia has been massing troops at their shared border, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned that any attempts at a "new war" in eastern Ukraine would end up destroying that country. The threat lands as Moscow and Kyiv trade blame over a recent spike in violence in the years long conflict between Ukrainian government forces and Russia-backed separatists.

[Russia Optimistic About Rising Demand As OPEC+ Agrees To Increase Oil Output](#)

April 02, 2021, RFE/RL

The OPEC+ group of oil producing countries, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, has agreed to increase oil output gradually over the next months. The OPEC+ group -- made up of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, including Russia -- has been coordinating about 7 million barrels per day (bpd) in production cuts to maintain prices in response to lower demand during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Africa & Latin America

### Latin America

#### [Latin America's COVID-19 Fiasco Is Also a Crisis of Regional Integration](#)

April 2, 2021, Foreign Policy

Latin America accounts for around a quarter of global COVID-19 deaths, despite being home to only 8 percent of the world's population. While blocs like the African Union, the European Union, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have coordinated on response protocols and negotiated vaccines for their member countries, Latin America is experiencing a "hollowing out" of regional political capacity.

#### [Explained: Why resignation of military chiefs spells trouble for Brazil](#)

April 2, 2021, The Indian Express

Many are on edge in Brazil after the chiefs of all three branches of its armed forces jointly resigned after embattled right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro appointed a new, like-minded defence minister as part of a major cabinet rejig. [Brazil regulator flags safety issues in Covaxin production, denies certificate](#)

April 1, 2021, The Indian Express

Brazil's health regulator has rejected an application to give Bharat Biotech's Covaxin a certificate of Good Manufacturing Practices following an inspection of the company's site in Hyderabad earlier this month. The move, which does not affect Bharat Biotech's application for emergency use authorisation of the vaccine in Brazil, could potentially still delay its ability to supply doses of the Covid-19 vaccine to the country until the issue is resolved.

#### [Where does China stand in Brazil's energy sector?](#)

March 31, 2021, BN Americas

One of the reasons behind the resignation of Brazil's foreign minister, Ernesto Araújo, earlier this week was the poor state of diplomatic relations with China after over two years of Jair Bolsonaro's term.

#### [Migration surged at US-Mexico border in March, data shows](#)

April 2, 2021, Al Jazeera

More than 171,000 migrants were caught trying to cross into the United States from Mexico in March, new border patrol data shows.

### [Mercosur trade deal threatens to wreck EU's climate credibility](#)

April 2, 2021, Euractive

With Portugal seemingly stepping up its efforts to find a route to ratification of the EU-Mercosur trade and cooperation deal before its presidency ends in June, now is the time to recognise that the deal in its current form is not fit for purpose, and threatens to fatally undermine the EU's leadership on climate, hard-won through the EU Green Deal.

### [Venezuela president offers 'oil for vaccines'](#)

March 29, 2021, Mint

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro offered "oil for vaccines" as his country, which is under economic sanctions affecting the oil sector in particular, faces a second wave of coronavirus.

## **Africa**

### [African Union approves Sudan's reform timeline](#)

April 1, 2021, The East African

Sudan has received a vote of approval on its transitional plan, including the gradual accommodation of former rebel fighters into the government, after a top security organ of the African Union toured Khartoum.

### [US promises 'new chapter' after Sudan compensates bombing victims](#)

April 1, 2021, The East African

The US has promised a "new chapter" with Sudan after Khartoum completed compensation payments to American victims of terror attacks in Kenya, Tanzania and Yemen.

### [US raises red flag over human rights violations in Zimbabwe](#)

April 1, 2021, The East AfricanThe United States has raised the red flag over alleged human rights violations in Zimbabwe, which include torture of government critics by security forces.

### [Algeria: Hirak carries on with protests, despite internal divisions](#)

April 1, 2021, The Africa Report

Algeria's grassroots protest movement, known as Hirak, has not petered out, but it has been struggling to find new ways to articulate its message and structure itself. Meanwhile, ideological discord has taken root.

[Egypt / Sudan/ Ethiopia: Will Tshisekedi calm the waters in the GERD dispute?](#)

March 31, 2021, The Africa Report

DRC's President Félix Tshisekedi, who took over the chairmanship of the African Union in February, is to host a first round of dialogue between Cairo, Khartoum and Addis Ababa over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam dispute.

[DRC: Faced with a growing crisis, Kabila's FCC is looking to reorganise itself](#)

April 2, 2021, The Africa Report

DRC's former President Joseph Kabila's 'Front Commun pour le Congo' (FCC) has been facing an unprecedented crisis ever since he broke with Félix Tshisekedi. Between feelings of resentment and a desire for reform, the former president's group is preparing to reorganise itself.

[African Union calls for 'urgent' action after Mozambique attack](#)

April 1, 2021, Al Jazeera

The African Union has called for urgent and coordinated international action after an attack by fighters that killed dozens and uprooted thousands in the northern Mozambican coastal town of Palma.



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