

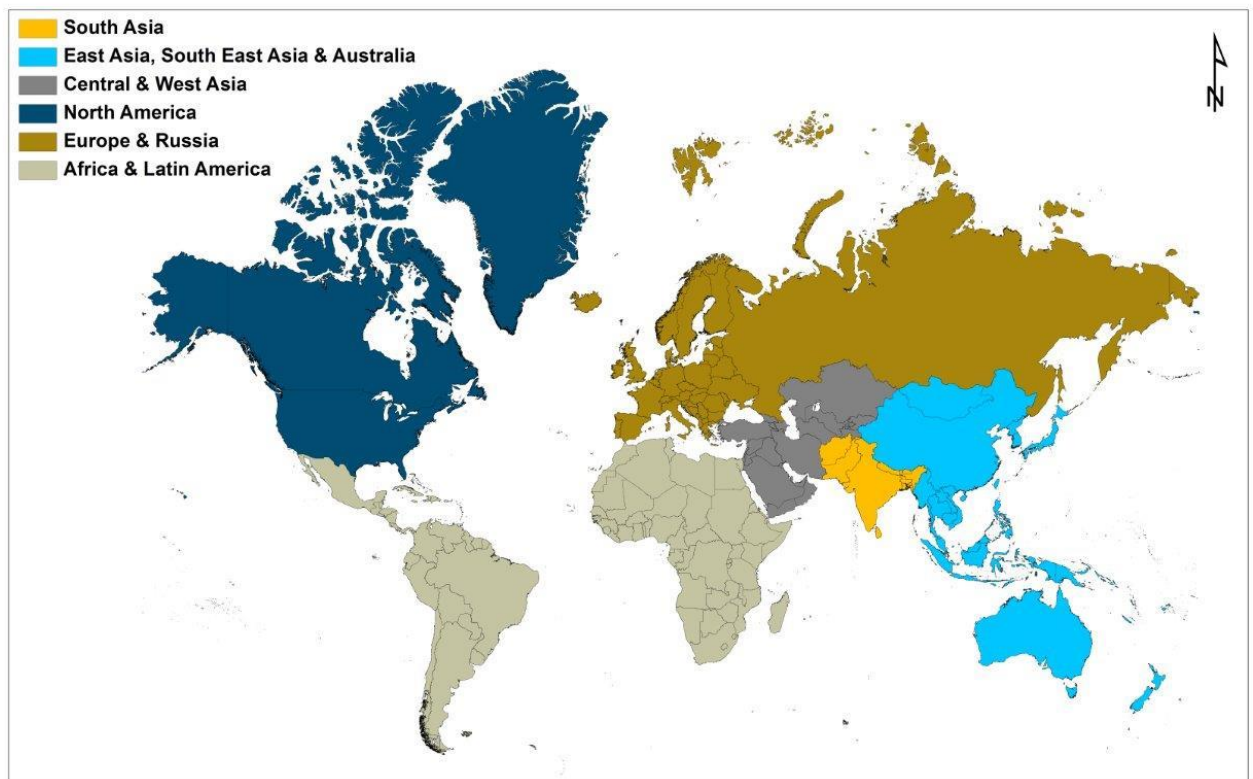


# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



Volume V, Issue 18 | April 30, 2021

Delhi Policy Group

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## DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH Volume V, Issue 18

### 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

#### [French Indian Naval Exercise VARUNA 2021 Concludes](#)

April 28, 2021, Naval News

The French Navy participation included the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and its carrier air wing (Rafale Marine fighter jets, E-2C Hawkeye AEW aircraft, NH90NFH Caïman and Dauphin naval helicopters), the Provence FREMM frigate, Chevalier Paul air defense frigate, and Var command and supply ship.

#### [US defense secretary Austin directs Pentagon to provide material support to Indian healthcare workers](#)

April 26, 2021, The Hindustan Times

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J Austin III directed Pentagon to use its resources in order to provide material support to frontline Indian healthcare workers who are fighting against the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

#### [US imposing sanctions on India for S-400 deal with Russia will hurt ties, ex-envoy Juster says](#)

April 28, 2021, The Print

Imposing sanctions on India under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) over its planned purchase of Russian S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile systems has the potential to "damage" its ties with the US, and Washington should keep in mind its larger policy objectives with New Delhi, Kenneth I. Juster, former US envoy to India, has written in a report.

#### ["Deeply Appreciative": Rajnath Singh On Singapore's Support During Covid](#)

April 29, 2021, NDTV

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to his Singapore counterpart Ng Eng Hen about "reinforcing capacities" to fight the second wave of coronavirus that has hit India.

#### [Rajnath Talks to Singapore Defence Minister About Reinforcing Capacities to Fight Covid in India](#)

April 29, 2021, News 18

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to his Singapore counterpart Ng Eng Hen about "reinforcing capacities" to fight the second wave of coronavirus that has hit India. Singapore had sent a consignment of oxygen cylinders to support India's COVID-19 pandemic response.

### ['Over 40 countries to help India in fight against Covid-19': Harsh Shringla](#)

April 29, 2021, The Hindustan Times

India is set to receive support packages from more than 40 countries, mostly oxygen-related equipment and consignments of critical medicines, to help bolster the country's response to an "unprecedented second wave" of Covid-19 infections, foreign secretary Harsh Shringla said.

### [Counter 'one-sided' world media narrative on govt's pandemic 'failure', Jaishankar tells Indian diplomats](#)

April 30, 2021, The Indian Express

In a virtual meeting with Indian ambassadors and high commissioners posted across the world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed the message that the "one-sided" narrative in international media – that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government had failed the country by their "incompetent" handling of the second Covid-19 wave – must be countered.

### [First policy shift in 16 yrs: India open to foreign aid, ok to buying from China](#)

April 29, 2021, The Indian Express

In what marks a major shift in policy in 16 years, India has now started accepting gifts, donations and aid from foreign nations as the country reels under a massive shortage of oxygen, drugs and related equipment amid a surge in Covid cases.

### [India-China Standoff: Army Chief Reviews Operational Preparedness in Siachen, Eastern Ladakh](#)

April 27, 2021, News 18

Army Chief Gen MM Naravane visited Siachen and eastern Ladakh and reviewed the operational preparedness in the strategically key sectors. He was accompanied by two top military commanders – Lt Gen YK Joshi, Army Commander of the Northern Command, and Lt Gen PGK Menon, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Leh-based Fire and Fury Corps.

## **Pakistan**

### [Ulema warn against removing Islamic content from textbooks](#)

April 24, 2021, The News

The Ittehad Tanzeem-i-Madaris Pakistan has rejected removal of Islamic content from textbooks by the Punjab Curriculum Text Board in the light of the one-man commission report.

### [\\$370m debt deferral agreement signed](#)

April 28, 2021, Dawn

Japan and Pakistan agreed on debt deferral amounting to \$370 million (40 billion yen) for making fiscal space to fight against Covid-19 in the country. Under the agreement signed in Islamabad, repayments for the debt and interest due between May 1, 2020 and Dec 31, 2020 will be rescheduled after June 15, 2022. This is in line with the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) agreed on April 15, 2020.

### [Gen Bajwa, Gen Austin discuss matters of mutual interest](#)

April 29, 2021, The News

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa and US Secretary of Defence General (r) Lloyd J. Austin had a telephonic conversation. During the conversation, matters of mutual interest, regional security situation including latest developments in Afghan Peace Process, draw down and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed.

### [Islamabad, Riyadh to ink loan deal](#)

April 30, 2021, The Express Tribune

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia will sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for a \$500 million loan during next week's visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan, as both countries seek to revive ties after passing through a difficult year.

## **Afghanistan**

### [US aircraft carrier to help protect troops during Afghan pullout](#)

April 24, 2021, Dawn

The Pentagon has decided to keep an aircraft carrier in the Middle East to help provide protection for American and allied troops during their planned withdrawal from Afghanistan in coming weeks.

### [US embassy staff ordered to leave Kabul](#)

April 28, 2021, Dawn

The United States ordered non-essential staff to leave its Kabul embassy, citing increased threats as Washington prepares to end its 20-year war. The State Department in a travel advisory said it had "ordered the departure from US embassy Kabul of US government employees whose functions can be performed elsewhere."

### [China Encourages Companies to Invest in Afghanistan: Envoy](#)

April 25, 2021, Tolo News

Chinese envoy in Kabul Wang Yu said that cooperation between Afghanistan and China in the implementation of the Belt and Road initiative will benefit the people of the two countries. He said that Chinese companies will be encouraged to take part in Afghanistan's reconstruction.

#### [US begins troop withdrawal process in Afghanistan, Army commander says](#)

April 26, 2021, New York Post

The United States has begun the troop withdrawal process in Afghanistan, a top Army commander revealed, after President Biden this month announced a full removal by September 11. Speaking to reporters at a news conference in Kabul, US Army Gen. Scott Miller, commander of foreign forces in Afghanistan, made the revelation after being asked if American troop withdrawal had begun.

#### [Pakistanis Assure Afghan Govt of Taliban's Return to Talks](#)

April 26, 2021, Tolo News

The Pakistani delegation led by special envoy Mohammad Sadiq during their two-day visit to Kabul has assured the Afghan government of the meaningful participation of the Taliban at the Istanbul summit, according to an Afghan official who met with the delegation. Umer Daudzai, President Ghani's special envoy for Pakistan, said that his Pakistani counterpart also assured them that the Taliban will agree on a reduction in violence and ceasefire with their participation at the peace summits.

#### [Taliban Sends Letters to Afghan Leaders Calling for Direct Talks](#)

April 28, 2021, Tolo News

The Taliban has sent letters to a number of Afghan political leaders, calling on them to enter into direct talks with the group. Meanwhile, the office of Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the High Council of National Reconciliation (HCNR), confirmed that it had received a letter from the Taliban, however Abdullah's office said that the letter is aimed to create discord on the republic side.

#### [FM Maas Meets Afghan Leaders, Pledges Continued German Support](#)

April 29, 2021, Tolo News

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in a Kabul meeting with the chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah communicated Chancellor Merkel's message that Germany will stand by the people of Afghanistan and "shall continue its support in different fields including to the ANDSF".

## **Bangladesh**

### [Bangladesh, China agree to increase military cooperation](#)

April 28, 2021, CGTN

Bangladesh's President Abdul Hamid met with visiting Chinese State Councilor and Minister of National Defense Wei Fenghe and the two sides agreed to advance bilateral military cooperation.

### [India Thanks Bangladesh For Extending Support In Fight Against COVID-19](#)

April 29, 2021, NDTV

The High Commission of India in Bangladesh thanked the Dhaka government [for expressing solidarity with COVID-19 cooperation among South Asian](#)

April 26, 2021, The Economic Times

Bangladesh will join a China-led South Asian foreign ministers meeting on COVID-19 cooperation during which deliberations will be held on setting up coronavirus vaccine storage facilities in the region and other measures to fight the pandemic, Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen said.

## **Nepal**

### [Security officials of Nepal, China hold talks at Miteri Bridge amid COVID-19](#)

April 30, 2021, Khaburhub

Representatives of Nepal and China governments have discussed the latest situation of COVID-19 in Nepal at a time when the second wave of the pandemic is taking toll across the world.

### [Scrambling for jabs, Nepal in talks with Russia, China, US](#)

April 30, 2021, The Kathmandu Post

When Nepal launched its vaccination drive against the coronavirus on January 27, the number of new infections was already in decline. There were few hospitalisations. It looked like the country had returned to a near normal situation. An over-enthusiastic KP Sharma Oli, the prime minister, at the time declared that everyone in the country would be vaccinated within three months.

### [Avoid travelling to Nepal for onward journey to third countries: Indian embassy](#)

April 27, 2021, The Economic Times

The Indian Embassy here advised its citizens to avoid travelling to Nepal for the purposes of onward journeys to third countries after Kathmandu banned all foreign nationals from using the Himalayan nation as a transit point as part of its effort to combat the surge in the coronavirus cases. Nepal's Ministry of



Home Affairs issued a notification banning all foreign nationals from using the Tribhuvan International Airport as a transit point for third countries.

## **Sri Lanka**

[Chinese defence minister calls on Sri Lanka's top leadership; discusses steps to boost bilateral ties](#)

April 29, 2021, The Economic Times

Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe called on Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and discussed ways to further cement bilateral ties, including defence cooperation and post-pandemic economic recovery.

## East & South East Asia

### China

[EU report accusing China, Russia of vaccine disinformation 'thief crying stop thief'](#)

April 29, 2021, Global Times

Chinese observers called an EU report "a thief crying 'stop thief,'" as the report that accused Chinese and Russian media of "disinformation" while ignoring the West's preposterous smears of China on, but not limited to, COVID-19-related issues.

[China, US differences continuing as Washington holds on to 'misunderstandings': Wang](#)

April 25, 2021, The Economic Times

The differences between the US and China are continuing as Washington is yet to find the right way to deal with Beijing while holding on to "misunderstandings", Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said, warning that playing the "Taiwan card" is "playing with fire".

[China will do its utmost to provide help to India: Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Covid crisis](#)

April 29, 2021, The Print

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi promised to do the utmost in supporting India's fight against the COVID-19 surge and said that anti-pandemic materials produced in China were entering India at a faster pace.

[China-India bilateral trade shows strong resilience: MOFCOM](#)

April 29, 2021, Global Times

The China-India bilateral trade is showing strong resilience as the trade volume decline between the two countries remains much lower than India's decline in global trade in 2020. Bilateral trade has been continuously increasing in the first quarter of 2021, said the spokesperson of the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM)

[China stresses high-quality development in border ethnic regions](#)

April 28, 2021, CGTN

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for more efforts to break new grounds in promoting high-quality development in border ethnic regions.

[China condemns frequent activities of U.S. warships and aircraft near China](#)

April 30, 2021, CGTN

The frequent activities of U.S. warships and aircraft in waters and airspace near China are leading to the militarization of the region and threatening peace and stability, the Chinese Ministry of Defense said.

### [A 'new Cold War' between China, US far from inevitable](#)

April 29, 2021, China Daily

Whether or not a new cold war between China and the US is emerging is yet to be seen. Yet observers and media outlets have been predicting this way is on a sharp rise. Indeed, the Biden administration plans to build a network of alliances against China in cyberspace and the risks of technological conflict. However, despite the hype, a new Cold War is far from inevitable, said Shashi Tharoor, an Indian author and former diplomat, in an opinion piece in the Indian magazine Week on April 22.

### [Beijing, Berlin pledge to boost cooperation](#)

April 29, 2021, China Daily

China and Germany reached consensus on the importance of solidarity and cooperation in jointly fighting COVID-19 and promoting the global economic recovery, as leaders from the two sides held talks in the sixth round of intergovernmental consultation.

### [China Warns Large Tech Firms as Industry Faces Rising Oversight](#)

April 29, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

China is reining in the ability of the country's internet giants to use big data for lending, money-management and similar businesses, ending an era of rapid growth that authorities said posed dangers for the financial system. On Thursday, China's central bank and other regulators ordered 13 firms, including many of the biggest names in the technology sector, to adhere to much tighter regulation of their data and lending practices.

### [China issues landscape survey of Diaoyu Islands amid tensions with Japan](#)

April 29, 2021, The Hindustan Times

China has released a landscape survey of a group of islands administered by Japan to reinforce its territorial claims in the East China Sea region amid tensions with Tokyo. The survey of the Diaoyu Islands - known as the Senkakus in Japan - was released on Monday by China's Ministry of Natural Resources and covers the main island and two smaller nearby islets, South China Morning Post reported.

### [Biden to push G7 on Uighur forced labour in China's Xinjiang](#)

April 24, 2021, Aljazeera

The United States will urge its Group of Seven allies to increase pressure on China over the use of forced labour in its northwestern Xinjiang province, home to the Muslim Uighur minority, a top White House official has announced. US President Joe Biden will attend a meeting of the G7 advanced economies in person in the United Kingdom in June, where he is expected to

focus on what he sees as a strategic rivalry between democracies and more authoritarian states, particularly China.

## Japan

### [Japan to send oxygen concentrators, ventilators for India's Covid-19 response](#)

April 30, 2021, The Hindustan Times

Japan said it will provide a consignment of 300 oxygen concentrators and 300 ventilators to support India's efforts to counter a devastating second wave of Coronavirus infections, joining a growing list of countries around the world that are sending much-needed aid. Japan said it will provide a consignment of 300 oxygen concentrators and 300 ventilators to support India's efforts to counter a devastating second wave of Coronavirus infections, joining a growing list of countries around the world that are sending much-needed aid.

### [Is Japan Distancing itself from China?](#)

April 30, 2021, Tokyo Review

During the Japan-U.S. summit in Washington last week, Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide and President Joe Biden announced an ambitious and broad "U.S.-Japan global partnership for a new era". Yet their agreement to cooperate on the challenges posed by China attracted the most attention. The joint leaders' statement featured unprecedented criticism towards China's assertiveness in the East and South China Sea, human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and China's coercive tactics which they deemed "inconsistent with the international rules-based order". Interestingly, for the first time in 30 years the document also mentioned Taiwan.

### [Japan's defense ministry to open mass vaccination centre in Tokyo](#)

April 27, 2021, Reuters

Japan will open a mass vaccination centre in central Tokyo next month, officials said, part of the country's bid to speed up its COVID-19 inoculation campaign as the Olympic Games looms.

### [US-Japan Statement Raises Issue of Taiwan Defense Against China](#)

April 24, 2021, VOA

A joint statement by U.S. President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga from their recent meeting at the White House has left officials and analysts in Taiwan wondering how far Japan might be willing to go to help defend the island against an attack from China.

### [Japan welcomes UK plan to deploy aircraft carrier in Indo-Pacific](#)

April 28, 2021, Times Now

Japan has welcomed the United Kingdom's plan to deploy a fleet led by its new flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth, to the Indo-Pacific region. Japanese Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo said that he is confident that Britain will promote peace and stability in the region by demonstrating its involvement in defence to maintain and strengthen a free and open Indo-Pacific, NHK reported.

### [China boosts power of maritime authorities, fanning tensions](#)

April 29, 2021, The Japan Times

China passed legislation to strengthen the power of its maritime safety authorities, state-run media reported, sparking fears that tensions between the Asian nation and other countries, including Japan, will escalate in the nearby waters.

### [Britain's Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier to visit Japan, S Korea on maiden deployment](#)

April 26, 2021, Reuters

Britain's HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier will lead a flotilla of Royal Navy ships through Asian waters on port visits to Japan and South Korea on its maiden deployment, the British embassy in Tokyo said.

### [China criticizes Japan over Fukushima treated water release](#)

April 29 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

China renewed its criticism of Japan's decision to release treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean.

### [Japan walking a tightrope amid U.S.-China economic tussle](#)

April 26, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Japan is caught in the middle as the United States and China ratchet up their struggles to gain the upper hand not only in defense, but also economics.

### [The myth of China-Japan decoupling](#)

April 23, 2021, Asia Times

Yoshihide Suga isn't known for his acrobatic skills. Nor is kabuki theatre the Japanese prime minister's thing. But Suga is proving his proficiency in both disciplines as he joins hands with US President Joe Biden against China. Data released on April 16, the same day Suga was at the White House meeting Biden, showed China grew a world-beating 18.3% year-on-year in the first quarter. A surge in Chinabound shipments, particularly tech-sector goods, produced Japan's biggest export jump in more than three years. Exports rose an above-consensus 16.1% in March from a year earlier.

## Korea

### [Seoul reviewing additional measures for South Koreans in virus-hit India](#)

April 30, 2021, The Korea Times

As a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc in India, the government here is considering increasing the number of flights to repatriate South Korean residents there, while raising its travel alert to the country by one notch, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

### [Seoul, Washington still fine-tuning summit agenda](#)

April 30, 2021, The Korea Times

Cheong Wa Dae and the White House are still fine-tuning agenda items for the first summit between President Moon Jae-in and U.S. President Joe Biden, with their meeting set for May 21 in the United States.

### [Defector group sends propaganda leaflets into North Korea in defiance of ban](#)

April 30, 2021, The KOrea Times

A North Korean defector group claimed it has sent anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border in defiance of a ban enacted recently over concern such a leafleting campaign could provoke the North and endanger the safety of people in border regions.

### [Military chiefs of South Korea, US, Japan vow to strengthen cooperation](#)

April 30, 2021, The Korea Times

The top uniformed officers of South Korea, the United States and Japan held talks in Hawaii and vowed to strengthen their trilateral cooperation amid concerns over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

### [S. Korea, US and Japan discuss expanding security ties](#)

April 30, 2021, The Korea Herald

The South Korean, US and Japanese military chiefs discussed deepening security cooperation amid a growing threat from North Korea to promote peace and stability in the region, at their first in-person three-way talks in Hawaii since the COVID-19 outbreak in January a year earlier.

### [Unification minister pins hopes on Moon-Biden summit to revive diplomacy with North Korea](#)

April 29, 2021, The Korea Herald

Unification Minister Lee In-young stressed the importance of the upcoming South Korea-US summit, pinning hopes on the meeting as a chance to revive the stalled Korean Peninsula peace process.

### [Korea to Support U.S.-Led Anti-China Alliance](#)

April 30, 2021, The Chosun Ilbo

Korea has settled for a half-in, half-out solution under pressure to join the U.S.-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad, an informal anti-China alliance with Australia, India and Japan.

## **Southeast Asia**

### [India welcomes ASEAN call to end violence in Myanmar](#)

April 25, 2021, Mint

India said it welcomed a Southeast Asian nations' led initiative to end violence in Myanmar that has shot up since the military dismissed the government headed by Aung San Suu Kyi in February.

### [Explained: Up in arms against junta, the unquiet border states of Myanmar](#)

April 29, 2021, The Indian Express

Protests against the military coup in Myanmar have assumed new dimensions with some "ethnic armed organisations" (EAOs) mounting their own resistance against the junta, and the generals hitting back with airstrikes — a sign that they are ready to use the most brutal means to crush opposition.

### [Thousands of Myanmar Villagers Poised to Flee Violence to Thailand, Group Says](#)

April 29, 2021, VOA

Thousands of ethnic Karen villagers in Myanmar are poised to cross into Thailand if, as expected, fighting intensifies between the Myanmar army and Karen insurgents.

### [Indonesia approves Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use](#)

April 30, 2021, Reuters

Indonesia's drug regulator approved the COVID-19 vaccine of China's Sinopharm, which it will use in a private immunisation scheme where companies buy government-procured vaccines to inoculate their staff.

### [Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte refuses to stop South China Sea patrols](#)

April 29, 2021, The Economic Times

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has said he will not withdraw navy and coast guard boats patrolling the disputed South China Sea, insisting the country's sovereignty over the waters is not negotiable.



### [India seeks to boost exports to Cambodia](#)

April 30, 2021, Khmer Times

India is seeking to increase exports to Cambodia, with the two countries reportedly preparing for talks on bilateral free trade agreement.

### [Myanmar unity government tells ASEAN no talks until prisoners freed](#)

April 28, 2021, The Indian Express

Myanmar's pro-democracy unity government, which includes members of parliament ousted by the military coup, has told Southeast Asia's regional bloc that it will not engage in talks until the junta releases all political prisoners.

## Central & West Asia

### Central Asia

#### [Will Central Asia Host U.S. Military Forces Once Again?](#)

April 23, 2021, RFE/RL

Some recent media reports suggest the U.S. military will seek to reposition some of its troops in Central Asia after its big decision to withdraw from Afghanistan after nearly two decades in the country. The New York Times reported on April 15 that U.S. officials had been in contact with Kazakh, Uzbek, and Tajik authorities about the possibility of using bases in the region.

#### [US, Central Asian foreign ministers hold C5+1 summit](#)

April 23, 2021, Anadolu Agency

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hosted on April 23 a convening of the foreign ministers from five Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. During the C5P+1 virtual summit Blinken "emphasized continued U.S. commitment to the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the C5," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

#### [Uzbek, Tajik, And Kyrgyz Governors Hold Landmark Forum In Ferghana Valley](#)

April 27, 2021, RFE/RL

A meeting occurred in Central Asia on April 23 that apparently hasn't ever happened before. The governor of Uzbekistan's eastern Ferghana Province met with the Tajik and Kyrgyz governors of the adjoining provinces for talks on economic cooperation. Nearly 30 years after the three countries became independent, the meeting marked the first time the heads of the three neighboring provinces had ever gathered.

#### [India-Kyrgyzstan Hold Bilateral Military Exercise Khanjar](#)

April 28, 2021, The Diplomat

Despite the devastating rise in COVID-19 cases in India, on April 16 Kyrgyzstan welcomed a contingent of Indian troops for the 8th India-Kyrgyz Joint Special Forces Exercise "Khanjar." The two-week exercise was first initiated in December 2011, in Nahan, India. Broadly, it focuses on high-altitude and mountain operations, in the context of a counterterrorism mission.

#### [Tempers flaring as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan come to deadly blows](#)

April 29, 2021, Eurasianet

The armed forces of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan engaged in their most vicious bout of fighting in years on April 29, exchanging automatic rifle, machine gun and artillery fire in an hours-long battle over a strategic water facility. At least

five people have reportedly been killed and several dozen injured in the clashes across a disputed border where southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan intersect.

### [Uzbekistan Urged To Repeal New Legislation Further Restricting Online Speech](#)

April 29, 2021, RFE/RL

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is urging Uzbekistan to repeal recent legal amendments that the group says "deepen restrictions" on online speech ahead of a planned presidential election. "As October's presidential elections in Uzbekistan grow closer, authorities seem intent on strengthening their control over free expression with this new raft of legislative amendments," Gulnoza Said, CPJ's Europe and Central Asia program coordinator, said in a statement on April 28.

## **West Asia**

### [President Biden Recognizes Armenian Deaths as 'Genocide', Prompting Relief in Armenia and Fury in Turkey](#)

April 24, 2021, NBC News

Recognizing the historical massacre of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during World War One as genocide, Biden went further than any previous occupant of the White House and departed from decades of carefully calibrated language on the subject.

### ['We're Going to stay in Iraq,' Says Top US CENTCOM Commander](#)

April 23, 2021, Military Times

As the U.S. prepares to draw down its last 2,500 troops in Afghanistan, the head of Central Command told reporters that there are no current plans to begin a similar withdrawal of the last 2,500 in Iraq.

### [Iran Nuclear Deal Talks Advance as U.S. Offers Sanctions Relief](#)

April 21, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The Biden administration has signaled it is open to easing sanctions against critical elements of Iran's economy, including oil and finance, helping narrow differences in nuclear talks, according to people familiar with the matter.

### [U.S. Sees Major Differences with Iran in Nuclear Talks](#)

April 22, 2021, The Hindu

Serious differences persist between the United States and Iran over how they might resume compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal despite making some progress in their latest indirect talks in Vienna, a senior U.S. official said.

### [Iranian Fuel Tanker Attacked off Syria Amid Tensions with Israel](#)

April 25, 2021, The Arab Weekly

At least three people died when an Iranian tanker was attacked off Syria's coast, in the first assault of its kind since the war started a decade ago.

### [Qatar to Accept Covishield Vaccination Certificate for Quarantine Exemption: Indian Embassy](#)

April 23, 2021, The Peninsula Qatar

Residents coming into Qatar who have obtained Covishield Vaccine in India are eligible for quarantine exemption, stated the Indian Embassy in Doha.

### [Covid-19: Saudi Arabia to Ship 80 Metric Tonnes of Oxygen to India](#)

April 25, 2021, Business Standard

Saudi Arabia is shipping 80 metric tonnes of liquid oxygen to India as the country is running low on supplies due to an unprecedented spike in coronavirus cases.

### [Reliance-Aramco Deal Progressing Despite India-Saudi Oil Stand-off](#)

April 22, 2021, Business Today

Even as the stand-off between India and Saudi Arabia escalates with the kingdom increasing the crude oil price for Asia and India cutting imports from the Gulf nation, the state-run Saudi Aramco's stake purchase plan in Reliance O2C Ltd is unaffected, said sources in the know.

### [Iran-China partnership to raise Chabahar port's global status](#)

April 27, 2021, Teheran Times

Asked about the possible impacts of the Chinese investment in the port on the Islamic Republic's current cooperation with India, the official said: "The first and most important issue that the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) has taken into account when considering investment offers by foreign trade partners, is the port's economic independence." "India currently works with us as an operator in this port and the country does not have an exclusive right over any part of this port," he explained. "We have always welcomed other countries to come and participate in the development of this port beside India."

## United States

### United States

#### [Biden Calls for U.S. to Enter a New Superpower Struggle](#)

April 29, 2021, The New York Times

Competition with China and containment of Russia were the subtext of the president's call for action. But casting the struggle as "democracy versus autocracy" oversimplifies what lies ahead.

#### [Antony Blinken defends Trump-era moves against Chinese media outlets in the US](#)

April 29, 2021, South China Morning Post

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken defended the measures that his predecessor Mike Pompeo took against the American operations of Chinese media outlets, calling them out for "undermining democracy".

#### [US sees importance of open dialogue with Russia – Blinken](#)

April 28, 2021, TASS

The US administration believes that the open dialogue between Washington and Moscow would benefit bilateral relations, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told CNN, commenting on a possibility of a US-Russian summit.

#### [U.S. Military Begins Final Withdrawal from Afghanistan](#)

April 26, 2021, The New York Times

The U.S. military has begun its complete withdrawal from Afghanistan, the top American commander there said, marking what amounts to the beginning of the end of the United States' nearly 20-year-old war in the country.

#### [Pakistan, US Discuss Afghan Drawdown, Regional Security](#)

April 28, 2021, Voice of America

U. S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke by phone with Pakistan's top military official to discuss regional security and the foreign troop drawdown in neighboring Afghanistan.

#### [Media restrictions threat to freedom in Pakistan: Blinken](#)

April 30, 2021, Big News Network

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that media and content restrictions are a threat to the ability to exercise the right to freedom of expression and association in Pakistan.

### [Blinken says Turkey, others, should refrain from new purchases of Russian weapons](#)

April 29, 2021, Reuters

US. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Turkey and all U.S. allies should refrain from making further purchases of Russian weaponry, threatening the possibility of more sanctions.

### [Turkey Summons U.S. Envoy After Biden's 'Genocide' Statement](#)

April 23, 2021, Bloomberg

President Joe Biden commemorated the 106th anniversary of the mass killing of Armenians by twice calling it a "genocide" -- a word no U.S. leader since Ronald Reagan has used to describe the event for fear of alienating NATO ally Turkey.

### [U.S. sending \\$100M in aid to India as country sets new COVID records](#)

April 29, 2021, Axios

The White House announced that the U.S. is sending more than \$100 million worth of supplies to India. Among the aid will be 15 million N95 masks, 1 million rapid diagnostic tests and an initial delivery of 1,100 refillable oxygen cylinders.

### [U.S. top diplomat Blinken to visit Ukraine next week -CBS News](#)

April 30, 2021, Reuters

U. S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Ukraine next week, CBS News reported, with tensions high between Ukraine and Russia.

### [A Liberalish New World Order](#)

April 26, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Simply put, the Biden doctrine holds that geopolitical competition must not be allowed to drive world history. Competition with China is real and must be vigorously pursued, but the essential goal of American foreign policy is to construct a values-based world order that can tackle humanity's common problems in an organized and even collegial way. When liberal internationalists talk about building world order, they assume that any effective one must be liberal. But what if that isn't true?

### [Washington Is Avoiding the Tough Questions on Taiwan and China](#)

April 28, 2021, Foreign Affairs

On China, U.S. policymakers have reached a near consensus: the country is a greater threat than it seemed a decade ago, and so it must now be met with increasingly competitive policies. What little debate does exist focuses on questions about how to enhance U.S. credibility, what role U.S. allies should play in balancing against China, and whether it is possible to blunt Beijing's economic coercion. But the most consequential question has been largely

overlooked: Should the United States trim its East Asian commitments to reduce the odds of going to war with China?.

## Europe & Russia

### Europe

#### [EU lawmakers vow to kill China investment deal over Beijing's sanctions](#)

South China Morning Post, April 29, 2021

Dozens of Brussels lawmakers have criticised China's efforts to "gag" European critics through sanctions and vowed to block the EU-China investment deal while the measures remain in place.

#### [EU should impose anti-corruption sanctions on Russians, lawmakers say](#)

Reuters, April 29, 2021

The European Union should follow Britain's example and impose new anti-corruption sanctions on Russians suspected of fraud and graft, the European Parliament said in a resolution that reflected hardening attitudes to Moscow.

#### [Europe Needs to Embrace China's Threat to the World](#)

April 29, 2021, Bloomberg

In its contest with China, America has a geographical problem: Its most powerful block of allies, the NATO countries, are on the other side of the world. That has led to a transatlantic awkwardness in dealing with China, and it's triggering debate on how European countries can best defend the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### [EU extends Myanmar sanctions, including against junta leader](#)

April 29, 2021, Star Tribune

The European Union has extended for a year sanctions against senior officials in Myanmar, including junta leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, and others involved in the military coup in February.

#### [EU ready to help restore democracy to Myanmar - high representative](#)

April 30, 2021, Reuters

The European Union is ready to offer its support to all parties to help restore democracy in Myanmar, the bloc's high representative told ASEAN states.

#### [UK Deploys Aircraft Carrier in the Indian Ocean](#)

April 30, 2021, The Diplomat

Apart from the main Quad countries – Australia, India, Japan, and the United States – many European countries are demonstrating a keener interest in playing a greater role in the Indo-Pacific, with the United Kingdom being the latest.



### [German military wraps up training mission in Afghanistan ahead of withdrawal](#)

April 30, 2021, Reuters

The German military in Afghanistan will finish training local forces and turn its attention to withdrawing from the country, as the United States and NATO wrap up their mission after almost two decades, the defence ministry in Berlin said.

### [China tells Germany to focus on trade, not human rights](#)

April 28, 2021, Politico

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang urged German Chancellor Angela Merkel to boost trade ties but stay out of "internal affairs" such as human rights and the political situation in Hong Kong.

### [EU channeling further support to India amid COVID-19 surge](#)

April 30, 2021, Big News Network

As India faces a major increase in coronavirus cases, the European Union (EU) is channeling further support via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. On April 27, the European Union announced initial offers of support made by Ireland, Belgium, Romania, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden.

## **Russia**

### [Top Kremlin Aide Signals Possible Biden-Putin Summit In June](#)

April 25, 2021, RFE/RL

Russian President Vladimir Putin may hold a summit with his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden in June, a top Kremlin aide said on April 25. Biden earlier this month proposed a face-to-face meeting with the Russian leader amid spiraling tensions between the two countries. The Kremlin has suggested it views the summit offer positively and initial discussions with Washington are underway.

### [RDIF to Deliver Sputnik V Vaccine to India, First Doses to Arrive on May 1](#)

April 26, 2021, Sputnik News

The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) will deliver Sputnik V vaccine to India amid a difficult situation with COVID-19, the first doses will arrive on May 1, the fund's CEO Kirill Dmitriev said in an interview with CNN. Dmitriev also stated that India would be one of the key producers of Sputnik V.

### [Russia Invites US to Start Strategic Stability Dialogue](#)

April 27, 2021, Sputnik News

Moscow has invited Washington to start a dialogue on strategic stability and to discuss the creation of an environment for a conflict-free coexistence, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said at a session of the Russian upper chamber's international affairs and defence committees, recalling that Russian President Putin tasked the government with initiating negotiations on strategic weapons and global stability in his recent address to the parliament.

### [Russia Expels 7 EU Diplomats Over 'Solidarity' With Czechs](#)

April 28, 2021, The Moscow Times

Moscow expelled seven European diplomats after their countries ordered Russian diplomats to leave in solidarity with the Czech Republic, which is engulfed in a diplomatic row with Russia. The Czech government this month accused Russian security services of being behind a deadly explosion at an arms depot in eastern Czech Republic in 2014.

### [Russia compiling list of unfriendly countries – Lavrov](#)

April 28, 2021, TASS News Agency

Work to compile the list of unfriendly countries, which will be prohibited from hiring Russian citizens to work in their diplomatic missions, will not last long; the list will appear soon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters at a news conference.

### [Navalny Appears In Court, Blasts Russian President, Justice System As His Network Disbanded](#)

April 29, 2021, RFE/RL

Jailed opposition leader Aleksei Navalny has issued a scathing assessment of President Vladimir Putin and Russia's justice system at a court hearing as his regional network said it will disband amid a push by prosecutors to declare the main pillars of the Kremlin critic's political organization "extremist."

## Africa & Latin America

### Latin America

#### [Paraguay takes starker approach at Covid-19 with further restrictions](#)

26 April 2021, MercoPress

The government of Paraguay decided to impose tighter restrictions effective April 27 through May 10 in an attempt to slow down the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, which is reportedly reaching unprecedented records.

#### [Venezuela remains the most "miserable" country - Argentina not far behind](#)

26 April 2021, MercoPress

Venezuela easily held to the dubious honour of being at the top of the list of the 2020 Global Economic Misery Index, while Argentina was merely seven notches behind. Weighing inflation, unemployment, interest rates and variation of the GDP per inhabitant, Argentina totalled 95 points to end up among the nations going through civil wars and natural catastrophes.

#### [Brazil's Anvisa decides against the Russian Sputnik V vaccine](#)

27 April 2021, MercoPress

Brazil's National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) recommended against the import of the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine to fight the covid-19 pandemic, citing lack of proper documents required for approval as well as other health risks the antidote may imply.

#### [External tariffs discussed at Mercosur foreign ministers virtual meeting](#)

27 April 2021, MercoPress

The Government of Argentina submitted a proposal for the average reduction of the Common External Tariffs during a virtual meeting of Southern Common Market (Mercosur)'s Foreign Ministers.

#### [Argos granted extension to Falklands production licence](#)

29 April 2021, MercoPress

Argos Resources has successfully secured a 12-month extension to the second term of its Production Licence in the North Falkland Basin. The extension, which runs until 1 May 2022, was approved by the Falkland Islands Government's Executive Council on March 24.

#### [Venezuelan Parliament to debate special economic zones law](#)

27 April 2021, Prensa Latina

The National Assembly (Parliament) of Venezuela will hold the first debate on the Special Economic Zones draft bill, a legal initiative to promote the reactivation of production in the country. The draft bill is vital in the scenario caused by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States Government on this nation.

### [Argentina interested in collaborating with Cuban vaccine production](#)

29 April 2019, Prensa Latina

Argentine Foreign Minister Felipe Solá announced his country's possibility of collaborating with a proposal to finance a quick process for Cuban vaccine production. Solá received Cuban ambassador Pedro Pablo Prada with whom he spoke about Argentina's collaboration and also about the crisis and challenges imposed by the pandemic and the need for projects to give access to vaccines.

### [Chile's President indicted to International Criminal Court](#)

29 April 2019, Prensa Latina

Chile's President Sebastian Piñera was indicted today to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity since the onset of the social riots in October 2019.

## **Africa**

### [China warns U.S. against 'big-power competition' over Africa](#)

28 April 2021, Africa Times

China's foreign ministry spokesman warned against "big power" competition when asked about United States influence on the African continent, following diplomatic meetings in which President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria suggested that the U.S. relocate its African headquarters closer to its African operations.

### [Syria now a gateway for drugs and mercenaries to Libya](#)

26 April 2021, The African Report

There have been increased flights between Syria and Libya in recent months. This travel corridor, which primarily facilitates the transport of Syrian mercenaries, is growing proof of the alignment between Russian and Emirati interests in Libya.

### [Nigeria on high alert as Boko Haram approaches Abuja](#)

28 April 2021, The African Report

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari rode into power as an army general on a wave of goodwill after promising to fight insecurity, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency that has ruined lives in northeastern Nigeria. But after six years in office, the president now faces a bigger challenge as the insurgents are gradually spreading to other parts of the country, including Niger State which neighbors the seat of power.

### [Benin tells US recent comments on domestic affairs have 'paternalistic' tone](#)

28 April 2021, The African Report

Benin's foreign minister Aurélien Agbénonci has made it clear to US ambassador Patricia Mahoney that Cotonou is not impressed by Washington's

criticism of the West African country for "numerous arrests of opposition political leaders."

### [The Growth of Cryptocurrency in Africa](#)

29 April 2021, Hans India

It's easy to dismiss the effect of technology in Africa over the years due to how it's seen as a third-world continent. However, contrary to what most people think, the technology industry in Africa is growing and has significantly improved in the last decade. Digitalization has impacted every sector in Africa and has also contributed to economic growth.



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