



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH



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Delhi Policy Group

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

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ABOUT US

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DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH

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South Asia

India

[India, France to hold naval drills](#)

February 23, 2021, The Hindustan Times

India and France will cement their defence cooperation in April when the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier strike force will conduct exercises with INS Vikramaditya in two phases in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, according to people familiar with the matter.

[Turkey to help build naval vessels at Vizag shipyard](#)

February 23, 2021, The Hindustan Times

Visakhapatnam-based Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) is expecting an order from the Indian Navy by the year-end for building five mammoth naval support vessels with transfer of technology from a Turkish shipbuilding firm, people familiar with the development said.

[India, Maldives sign agreements for developing naval harbour, boosting defence](#)

February 21, 2021, The Hindustan Times

India on Sunday extended a \$50-million line of credit to the Maldives for defence projects and the two countries signed an agreement to develop and maintain a key naval facility for the armed forces of the Indian Ocean archipelago.

[Maritime India Summit: port signs a slew of MoUs](#)

February 25, 2021, The Hindu

The Maritime India Summit – 2021 being organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways between March 2 and 4 will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

[India reserves \\$9.3 B for local defense purchases](#)

February 22, 2021, Andolou Agency

India has reserved 63 % of its capital allocation in the defense budget for local procurement, the country's Defense Minister said.

[S Jaishankar's 75-Minute Call with Chinese Minister After Disengagement](#)

February 26, 2021, NDTV

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar discussed the situation along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh and issues related to overall India-China relations, with his

Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during a telephonic conversation that lasted for 75 minutes.

[India has reason to be anxious about China stance on J&K – foreign policy analyst Raja Mohan](#)

February 25, 2021, The Print

India has reason to be anxious about China's position on the Jammu and Kashmir issue with Pakistan, given the Narendra Modi government's 2019 decision to alter the constitutional status of its territories, according to Dr C. Raja Mohan, director of the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore.

Pakistan

[Illegal funding to US politicians: Pak-origin American lobbyist gets 12 years in jail](#)

February 21, 2021, The News

The American Federal Court in California has convicted Ammad Zuberi guilty for violation of 'Foreign Act' and has awarded twelve years in prison along with a hefty penalty of \$1.75 million. In November 2019, Zuberi pleaded guilty to a three-count information charging him with violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) by making false statements on a FARA filing, tax evasion, and making illegal campaign contributions.

[Four women killed in attack on NGO vehicle in N Waziristan](#)

February 23, 2021, The News

Four women were killed, and a driver sustained injuries when unidentified gunmen opened fire on the vehicle of a NGO in Ipi village in Mir Ali tehsil of North Waziristan tribal district.

[ITFC loans \\$1.1bln to Pakistan for oil, LNG imports](#)

February 25, 2021, The News

The International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), a member of the Islamic Development Bank Group, on Wednesday agreed to loan \$1.1 billion to Pakistan for import of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) this year.

[FATF gives 4th extension to Pakistan to fully implement 'action plan'](#)

February 25, 2021, The Express Tribune

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) gave fourth extension to Pakistan to fully implement a 27-point action plan and "strongly urged" it to meet the

remaining three conditions about terror financing investigations and the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

[CPEC's power projects did not incur debt burden on Pakistan: China](#)

February 26, 2021, The Express Tribune

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson has said that power projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) did not incur debt burden on Pakistan because they are investment projects.

[Pakistan backs Russian bid for Afghan peace](#)

February 22, 2021, The Express Tribune

Pakistan is attending a crucial meeting later this month in Moscow, which is being convened by Russia with an aim to restart the stalled Afghan peace process. Russia has launched a diplomatic initiative to arrange a meeting of Pakistan, the US, China, and Iran in order to develop a "collective mechanism" for the Afghan peace efforts.

[Pakistan offers \\$50m credit line to Sri Lanka for defence ties](#)

February 25, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan has offered a \$50 million new credit line to Sri Lanka for cooperation in the field of defence and security. The announcement was made by Prime Minister Imran Khan, who concluded his two-day official visit to the island nation, said a joint communique issued by the foreign ministries of the two countries from Colombo and Islamabad.

[Pakistan, India agree on LoC ceasefire](#)

February 25, 2021, Dawn

Pakistan and India said that they had recommitted themselves to the 2003 ceasefire arrangement at the Line of Control and agreed to address the 'core issues' that could undermine peace and stability. The surprise announcement was made in a joint statement by the militaries of the two countries on a 'hotline contact' between their directors general military operations (DGMOs), which had apparently taken place a day earlier.

Afghanistan

[Taliban Violence 'Must Decrease Now': US Defense Secretary](#)

February 20, 2021, Tolo News

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said that an end to the US military involvement in Afghanistan hinges on a reduction in Taliban attacks. "The

violence must decrease now," he told reporters in his first press conference as Pentagon chief. Austin said there would be no "hasty" withdrawal.

[Afghan civilian casualty figures spiked following start of peace talks, despite overall drop in 2020](#)

February 23, 2021, Stars and Stripes

Civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan rose sharply in the final months of 2020, reversing a downward trend for much of the year. More than 3,000 civilians were killed in the war last year and nearly 5,800 others were injured, marking the first time since 2013 that the combined figure was below 10,000, the U.N. said in a report.

[US Hands Over Hundreds of Vehicles to Afghan Security Forces](#)

February 24, 2021, Tolo News

The United States handed hundreds of military vehicles and other equipment to the Afghan Ministry of Defense as part of Washington's commitments for continued support until 2024. The aid package includes 400 Humvees, 230 motorcycles, 23 ambulances and 43 Ford Ranger vehicles.

[German cabinet agrees to extend Afghanistan mission](#)

February 24, 2021, DW

German troops are likely to stay on in Afghanistan as the government agreed to extend its military mandate in the country by 10 months. The new draft mandate still needs the approval of the Bundestag, the lower house of parliament. The current mandate is set to expire at the end of March.

[Atmar Travels to Moscow to Discuss Afghan Peace: MoFA](#)

February 24, 2021, Tolo News

Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar on February 24 left Kabul for Moscow at the invitation of Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov for a three-day visit. The trip's aim is to expand bilateral relations and strengthen regional and international support for Afghan peace and to increase cooperation in the joint fight against terrorism and organized crime in the region, the MoFA said in a statement.

[Ghani Meeting Key Afghan Leaders to 'Form Consensus on Peace'](#)

February 24, 2021, Tolo News

President Ashraf Ghani has been meeting with prominent Afghan political leaders over the past week in an attempt to gather support and build a national consensus on the Afghan peace process.

Bangladesh

[India, Bangladesh to start bi-weekly passenger train from March 26](#)

February 25, 2021, The Hindustan Times

India and Bangladesh on Wednesday announced a bi-weekly train between New Jalpaiguri (NJP) in north Bengal and Dhaka in Bangladesh starting March 26, the day the neighbouring country begins the golden jubilee celebrations of its independence.

[Indian coast guard find 81 Rohingya adrift at sea, asks Bangladesh to take them](#)

February 26, 2021, Reuters

India's coast guard found 81 survivors and eight dead on a boat crammed with Muslim Rohingya refugees adrift in the Andaman Sea, and were repairing the vessel so that it can return safely to Bangladesh, Indian officials said.

[Modi to visit Dhaka in first post-covid trip](#)

February 25, 2021, Live Mint

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Bangladesh, his first visit abroad in more than a year largely because of the covid-19 pandemic, on 26-27 March. The two countries may take a step towards launching talks on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) during the visit, which is primarily to take part in the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence and 50 years of Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations.

Nepal

[India closely watching Nepal developments](#)

February 24, 2021, The Economic Times

India is closely watching the developments in neighbouring Nepal where the Supreme Court's decision to reinstate the parliament that was dissolved at the recommendation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has brought on a fresh political crisis.

[Nepal ruling party on verge of formal split](#)

February 25, 2021, The Times of India

With the Nepal Supreme Court having reinstated the parliament the door has opened to political deal-making in Kathmandu and the first step could see a formalising of the split in the split in the Nepal Communist Party. The Prachanda-Madhav Nepal faction, opposed to PM K P Sharma Oli, not only

commands more seats but sources said they may welcome breakaways from the Oli faction.

Sri Lanka

[Imran Khan in Sri Lanka: Multiple facets of a relationship India is watching](#)

February 25, 2021, The Indian Express

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's two-day visit to Sri Lanka, starting Tuesday, has attracted a fair amount of controversy because of a cancelled invitation to address the Sri Lankan parliament. But ties between the two countries are on much more solid footing than immediately apparent, and this is unlikely to become a sticking point in a long and steady relationship.

East & South East Asia

China

[China's Reckless Labs Put the World at Risk](#)

February 23, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The Chinese Communist Party is obsessed with viruses. Its army of scientists claim to have discovered almost 2,000 new viruses in a little over a decade. It took the past 200 years for the rest of the world to discover that many. More troubling is the party's negligence on biosafety. The costs and the risk to world health are enormous, as evidenced by a novel coronavirus that escaped Wuhan. This situation can't continue. The world must hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable and punish Beijing if it fails to uphold global biosafety standards, including basic transparency requirements.

[How Xi Jinping Is Reshaping China and What It Means for the West](#)

February 23, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Xi Jinping has brought more change to China than any leader since Deng Xiaoping. Beijing officials believe his autocratic leadership approach is superior to Western-style democracy. Last year, The Wall Street Journal explored how Mr. Xi's political model is reshaping China, and why it has set him on a collision course with the West. Here are some of the key findings.

[Amicable Sino-Indian relations benefit both: China Daily editorial](#)

February 24, 2021, China Daily

India will reportedly clear 45 investment proposals from China now tensions have eased on the western section of the border following the disengagement of front-line troops.

[PLA bombers practice maritime strike amid foreign provocations in S. China Sea](#)

February 24, 2021, Global Times

At least 10 bombers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theatre Command recently held maritime strike exercises in a move that showed China has more than anti-ship ballistic missiles to deter hostile vessels, analysts said on Wednesday. The drills come at a time when countries from outside the region, including the US and France, are making provocations in the South China Sea.

[West's Xinjiang claims lies and false statistics: China Daily editorial](#)

February 25, 2021, China Daily

In a futile bid to defame China, some anti-China forces in the West continue to fabricate lies about China committing "atrocities" in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

[Biden's China policy smacks of Trumpism: China Daily editorial](#)

February 25, 2021, China Daily

After four years of tumultuous Sino-US relations under Donald Trump, there has been high hope that the new US administration under Joe Biden would soon start to work together with China to reopen their lines of communication and put bilateral ties back on track.

[Chinese drone firm honors employees involved in Galwan conflict](#)

February 25, 2021, Global Times

A Chinese drone company whose products are used by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in border defence missions honoured two employees who were involved in the conflict between Chinese and Indian troops in the Galwan Valley in June last year, as they fearlessly supported the PLA in dangerous reconnaissance missions.

[China and Singapore conduct joint naval exercise in South China Sea to 'address risks'](#)

February 25, 2021, Global Times

The joint military drill between China and Singapore in the South China Sea shows the two countries are jointly addressing risks and challenges with the determination to safeguard regional peace and stability, Chinese military researchers said.

[China's Campaign to Crush Democracy in Hong Kong Is Working](#)

February 25, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Just eight months after Beijing imposed a new national security law to quell a pro-democracy movement, this freewheeling former British colony has all but been brought to heel. Moving with a scope and speed few here anticipated, authorities have used the law to stamp out street protests, ban activists from lobbying foreign governments, gut the city's legislature and arrest most of the opposition.

Japan

[Coast Guard could shoot at foreign vessels aiming to land on Senkaku: gov't officials](#)

February 26, 2021, Japan Today

The Japan Coast Guard could directly fire a weapon against foreign official vessels aiming to land on the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, ruling party members said Thursday, citing government officials.

[Tokyo seals deal on costs to host U.S. forces in FY2021](#)

February 25, 2021, Japan Today

Japan and the United States on Wednesday signed an agreement to maintain Tokyo's costs to keep U.S. forces stationed in the country at around the current level for fiscal 2021, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said.

[China says Japan-U.S. security treaty a product of Cold War](#)

February 25, 2021, Japan Today

China called the Japan-U.S. mutual security pact a product of the Cold War following U.S. criticism of the presence of Chinese coast guard vessels in Japanese-claimed territorial waters over the weekend.

[Blinken says he and Biden eager to visit Japan](#)

February 24, 2021, Japan Today

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that he and President Joe Biden hope to visit Japan as the two countries continue to deepen their ties, issuing a message of congratulations for the Japanese emperor's 61st birthday.

[New Chinese law raises pressure on Japan around Senkaku Islands](#)

February 24, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Emboldened by a law allowing wider weapons use, the Chinese Coast Guard has repeatedly, and more brazenly tested Japan's resolve to avoid escalating tensions around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

[Japan PM: won G7 unanimous support for holding Olympics this summer](#)

February 20, 2021, The Asahi Shimbun

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said on Saturday Group of Seven leaders gave unanimous support for his bid to hold the Tokyo Olympics this summer, as the country struggles to contain the coronavirus and to inoculate its citizens swiftly.

[Japan's Indo-Pacific vision is a template for Canada](#)

February 25, 2021, The Japan Times

Since the Abe administration, Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision continues to evolve as conditions demand but at its core it stresses the pursuit of a rules-based order in the region, including the maritime security domain. It also aims to contribute to the region's stability through supporting its sustainable, transparent, and rules-based development. It includes supporting infrastructure and connectivity, strengthening good governance and championing human rights.

Korea

[Discussions still under way on upcoming S. Korea-US combined exercise: defense ministry](#)

February 25, 2021, The Korea Herald

South Korea and the United States have yet to finalize the schedule and other details of a planned combined springtime military exercise, the defense ministry said.

[US generals warn against rush for OPCON transfer](#)

February 21, 2021, The Korea Herald

South Korea's push to take over its wartime operational command from the US, which has been responsible for it since the 1953 Korean War armistice, has taken a more serious hit after a former US commander openly challenged the plan.

[Unification minister urges review of negative impact of sanctions](#)

February 26, 2021, The Korea Herald

Unification Minister Lee In-young called Friday for efforts to ensure that international sanctions on Pyongyang do not result in unintended negative effects on the lives of ordinary North Korean people.

[NK Cabinet reviews ways to grant businesses more autonomy at plenary session](#)

February 26, 2021, The Korea Herald

North Korea convened an extended plenary session of its Cabinet to discuss ways to give businesses greater independence as part of efforts to achieve the economic goals set forth at last month's rare party congress, state media said.

[Korea to deploy light aircraft carrier by 2033](#)

February 22, 2021, The Korea Times

South Korea will push to deploy a light aircraft carrier by 2033 to boost the country's defense capabilities, the arms procurement agency said.

[South Korea raises wartime sex slavery issue at UN](#)

February 24, 2021, The Korea Times

South Korea stressed, Tuesday, that Japan's wartime sex slavery issue must be addressed in a way that focuses on the victims, adding that Seoul will make efforts to restore their dignity.

Southeast Asia

[Brunei thanks China for assistance in conversation with Wang Yi](#)

February 21, 2021, The Star

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation with Bruneian Second Minister of Foreign Affairs Erywan bin Pehin Yusof on bilateral ties and the situation in Myanmar.

[Rohingya vessel in Indian waters, UNHCR calls for 'immediate' rescue](#)

February 22, 2021, Telangana Today

A boat carrying 90 Rohingya refugees and three Bangladesh crewmen drifted into India's territorial waters on Monday, with calls for immediate rescue mounting from UN agencies and humanitarian groups.

[Can a Dam Deal Buy Beijing's Support for Myanmar's Junta?](#)

February 23, 2021, Foreign Policy

As part of the ongoing military coup in Myanmar, junta leader Min Aung Hlaing recently announced the resumption of unnamed currently stalled hydropower projects. His announcement immediately prompted concern that this might include the massive, and massively unpopular, Chinese-funded Myitsone Dam, construction of which has been suspended since 2011.

[Malaysian court halts Myanmar deportation after outcry](#)

February 23, 2021, WION

A Malaysian court ordered a temporary halt to a controversial plan to deport 1,200 Myanmar detainees to their homeland Tuesday weeks after a coup, following a last-ditch legal challenge.

[India, ASEAN Agree to Review FTA Scope, Address Uneven Market Access](#)

February 23, 2021, Thailand Business News

The 8th East Asia Summit (Economic Ministers' Meeting) was held virtually on Friday, followed by the 17th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers Consultations on August 29.

[India's Muted Response to Myanmar Military Coup Seen as a Strategic Move](#)

February 23, 2021, The Irrawaddy

It may seem quite odd that India, the world's largest democracy, has not been very forthcoming about its position vis-à-vis Myanmar ever since the country's military seized power on Feb. 1. The United States and Europe have expressed strong reactions against the arrest of country's de facto leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and President U Win Myint.

[Jakarta denies report it backs new elections in Myanmar](#)

February 23, 2021, Nikkei Asia

Indonesia's foreign ministry denied a report it is devising a plan to hold Myanmar's military junta to its promise of holding new elections.

[Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's Phone Call With Thailand Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Prayut Chan-o-cha](#)

February 24, 2021, Mirage News

Austin III spoke with Thailand Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Prayut Chan-o-cha on the phone today to reaffirm the importance of the alliance and defense cooperation.

[Philippines opens its first defense attaché office in the Gulf](#)

February 24, 2021, Rappler

Citing opportunities for a closer relationship, the Philippines has officially opened a defense attaché's office in the UAE's capital city of Abu Dhabi.

[China and Singapore start joint naval drills as Beijing boosts ties in Asia](#)

February 24, 2021, SCMP

Covid-19 pandemic disrupted China's plans for greater military cooperation with its neighbours to counter US pressure. Beijing aims to counter growing challenge from Washington to its claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea.

Central & West Asia

Central Asia

[Uzbekistan orders fresh probe into K2 base contamination claims](#)

February 19, 2021, Eurasianet

Uzbekistan's government has said it will conduct a fresh investigation into the territory of a former U.S. base over new claims it was a site of chemical and radiation contamination.

[Kazakhs Continue Picket of Chinese Consulate For Release Of Xinjiang Relatives](#)

February 22, 2021, RFE/RL

About a dozen people, mainly women, have picketed the Chinese Consulate in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty, to continue to push their demands for the release of relatives held in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang.

[Kyrgyz President Meets with Putin In First Trip Abroad](#)

February 24, 2021, RFE/RL

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kyrgyz counterpart Sadyr Japarov have discussed bilateral ties in Moscow as Kyrgyzstan emerges from a political crisis. Japarov, who was elected president on January 10, arrived in the Russian capital on his first foreign trip as the Central Asian state's leader on February 24.

[Jaishankar meets Uzbekistan counterpart](#)

February 25, 2021, Central Asia News

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his Uzbekistan counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov on Thursday and discussed various bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest. The Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that during Kamilov's two-day visit to New Delhi on February 24 and 25, both sides took stock of various aspects of bilateral cooperation between India and Uzbekistan.

[US and Kazakhstan partner to strengthen regional energy cooperation](#)

February 26, 2021, The Times of Central Asia

On February 25, the United States Government through its Agency for International Development, in partnership with the Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan, launched a new five-year, \$39 million regional energy program "USAID Power Central Asia".

West Asia

[India May Turn to Iran, Venezuela for Oil Imports](#)

February 22, 2021, Hindustan Times

India may make diplomatic efforts to organise oil-consuming countries against the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+) as producers keep crude prices artificially high by restricting supply, and also plans to resume import of cheaper energy from countries such as Iran and Venezuela to counter the oil cartel.

[India Leases Four Heron Drones from Israel to Keep a 'Hawk-Eye' on 'Retreating' China](#)

February 18, 2021, Eurasian Times

The Indian Army has acquired four Heron TP drones on lease for \$200 million from Israel. The UAVs are likely to be used for surveillance along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh from where India and China are currently withdrawing their troops after a protracted military standoff.

[Disinfo Lab Report Reveals How Pakistan and Turkey Use the U.S. for Information War against India](#)

February 19, 2021, Greek City Times

A recent report has stirred a massive global interest towards an information war launched against New Delhi to create political instability and by converging anti-India forces within the country, as well as across the world. A Disinfo Lab report titled "The Unending War: From Proxy War to Info-War" has exposed the design in which foreign elements are using the U.S. to attack India.

[Israel: US Paving Path to Iranian Nuclear Bomb with Push to rejoin JCPOA](#)

February 19, 2021, The Jerusalem Post

"Israel remains committed to preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons and its position on the nuclear agreement has not changed," the Israeli Prime Minister's Office said.

[US Bombs Facilities in Syria used by Iran-backed Militia; Monitor Counts 17 Killed](#)

February 26, 2021, Arab News

The United States launched airstrikes in Syria on Thursday, targeting facilities near the Iraqi border used by Iranian-backed militia groups.

[IAEA, Iran Agree Temporary Deal for Inspections with Less Access](#)

February 21, 2021, AL Jazeera

UN Nuclear watchdog says Iran will begin offering its inspectors 'less access' but still allow the agency to monitor atomic program for up to three months.

[iCreate and Start-Up Nation Central \(SNC\) Kickoff Accelerator Program with 6 Israeli Startups](#)

February 22, 2021, BW Businessworld

iCreate (International Centre for Technology and Entrepreneurship), India's leading startup incubator and Start-Up Nation Central (SNC), have announced the commencement of its India-Israel Innovation Accelerator, enrolling six top startups from Israel as a part of the MoU signed between the two nations in September 2020.

[Israel Moves to Buy More F-35 Jets, KC-46 Refuelling Planes, Munitions: Official](#)

February 16, 2021, Reuters

"A ministerial procurement committee has approved the purchase of a new F-35 squadron, four new refuelling planes, and a large quantity of munitions," an Israeli official said.

[Qatar Looks to be World's Top LNG Producer for Decades](#)

February 17, 2021, Oilprice.com

Qatar Petroleum sanctioned the North Field East Project (NFE), which is set to raise Qatar's LNG production capacity from 77 million tons per annum (mmtpa) to 110 mmtpa. The project, expected to start production in the fourth quarter of 2025, will cost US\$28.75 billion. Qatar also plans another expansion phase at the North Field, set to further increase Qatar's LNG production capacity from 110 mmtpa to 126 mmtpa, with an expected production start date in 2027.

[Saudi Arabia Eyes Russian Arms: Report](#)

February 01, 2021, Mehr News Agency

A Russian newspaper (Gazeta) reported that the Saudis are seeking to buy Russian weapons after the US system failed to repel attacks on Saudi oil facilities and Biden stopped selling some weapons to the country. Riyadh plans to buy the S-400 missile system and Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets, says the report.

[Saudi Arabia Set to Raise Oil Output Amid Recovery in Prices](#)

February 17, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

Saudi Arabia plans to increase its oil output in the coming months, reversing a recent big production cut, say advisers to the Kingdom, a sign of growing confidence over an oil-price recovery.

[Biden Looks to Recalibrate Relationship with Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman](#)

February 20, 2021, NBC News

The White House press secretary Jen Psaki said that when President Biden makes his first official call to Saudi Arabia as president, it will be to the 85-year-old King Salman – and not his 35-year-old son who runs the country day to day.

[As Biden Seeks End to Yemen War, Rebels Press Offensive for Strategic Province](#)

February 22, 2021, The Washington Post

The military escalation in Marib, the last northern stronghold of the internationally recognized Yemeni government, threatens to displace hundreds of thousands of Yemenis, many of whom have already fled violence multiple times. That would significantly worsen a humanitarian crisis already described by the United Nations as the world's most severe, say U.S. and U.N. officials and aid workers.

United States

United States

[Biden signs executive order to address chip shortage through a review to strengthen supply chains](#)

February 24, 2021, CNBC

President Joe Biden signed an executive order Wednesday meant to address a global chip shortage impacting industries ranging from medical supplies to electric vehicles.

[U.S. partners in Asia may not wait around as Biden prioritizes domestic issues](#)

February 25, 2021, CNBC

President Joe Biden's administration has indicated that trade talks are not high on its agenda for now – but that may be what the U.S. needs to get closer to its partners in Asia-Pacific, said two former American trade officials.

[Amid Shortfalls, Biden Signs Executive Order to Bolster Critical Supply Chains](#)

February 24, 201, The New York Times

The order is intended to help insulate the economy from future shortages of critical imported components by making the United States less reliant on foreign supplies.

[China seems to be living up to trade deal pledges, Biden's Agriculture secretary says](#)

February 25, 2021, CNBC

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack believes China is making good on promises it made as part of the landmark phase one trade deal it signed with the U.S. last year.

[US Sec State Blinken Says China 'Will be Held to Account' For Xinjiang Abuses at UN Rights Council](#)

February 24, 2021, Radio Free Asia

U. S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that Washington will hold China to account for "atrocities" committed in its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) during an address to the United Nations rights agency, as other nations piled on Beijing for its treatment of the Uyghur people.

[Biden admin says no 'final decision' on boycotting Beijing Olympics as momentum grows in Congress](#)

February 25, 2021, Fox News

White House press secretary Jen Psaki left open the possibility of a boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing Thursday as pressure grows in Congress to punish China over its oppression of Uyghur Muslims in the country's Xinjiang region.

[White House: China and WHO Need To 'Step Up' On Investigation Into Origin Of Pandemic](#)

February 21, 2021, NPR

President Biden's national security adviser said Sunday that the administration has concerns over the data China has provided to the World Health Organization regarding the origins of the coronavirus pandemic.

[Biden administration says human rights will be 'central' to ties with Egypt](#)

February 24, 2021, The Times of Israel

In call with Egyptian counterpart, Secretary of State Antony Blinken also stresses US concerns over potential Egyptian purchase of fighter jets from Russia.

[U.S. Secretary of State vows 'firm action' against Myanmar military](#)

February 21, 2021, CNBC

The United States will keep up "firm action" against Myanmar authorities violently cracking down on opponents of a military coup, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Sunday, after two protesters were shot dead over the weekend.

[Senate Can't Vote On \\$15 Minimum Wage, Parliamentary Rules](#)

February 25, 2021, NPR

The Senate parliamentarian ruled that a plan to gradually increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025 does not fit the complicated rules that govern budget bills in the Senate. House Democrats included the measure in a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill that is expected to be the first major legislative act for President Biden.

[U.S. welcomes India-Pakistan joint statement on ceasefire](#)

February 26, 2021, The Hindu

The United States has welcomed India and Pakistan's announcement that they would observe the 2003 ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and called on the two countries to reduce tensions and violence along the Line of Control.

[Joe Biden speaks to Saudi Arabia's King Salman before release of Khashoggi murder report](#)

February 25, 2021, The Guardian

Joe Biden has spoken with Saudi Arabia's King Salman for the first time as president, ahead of the publication of a US intelligence report expected to implicate the Saudi crown prince in the 2018 murder of dissident and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

Europe & Russia

Europe

[EU leaders vow to speed up vaccine production at Covid-19 summit](#)

February 25, 2021, France24

European Union leaders sought to inject new energy and a fresh sense of unity into the bloc's lagging coronavirus vaccination efforts Thursday as concern mounts that new variants might spread faster than authorities can adapt.

[EU-China investment deal faces backlash in European Parliament](#)

February 24, 2021, South China Morning Post

The European Commission was forced to defend its investment deal with Beijing from intense criticism in the European Parliament on Wednesday, signaling the challenge it faces in getting it over the line next year.

[Europe to Tip Toward U.S.'s Tougher Stance on Russia, China](#)

February 22, 2021, The Wall Street Journal

The European Union will impose fresh sanctions on Russian officials over the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and will move ahead with measures to challenge Beijing over its crackdown in Hong Kong, signaling a shift in the bloc's position on the two countries toward the U.S.

[Dutch parliament: China's treatment of Uighurs is genocide](#)

February 25, 2021, Reuters

The Dutch parliament on Thursday passed a non-binding motion saying the treatment of the Uighur Muslim minority in China amounts to genocide, the first such move by a European country.

[Armenia in an Uproar, as Its Prime Minister Warns of an 'Attempted Military Coup'](#)

February 25, 2021, The New York Times

Armenia, which lost a bloody war with its neighbour Azerbaijan last fall, slipped on Thursday into a political crisis after what its prime minister called an "attempted military coup."

[Arrest of Opposition Leader in Georgia Raises Fear of Growing Instability](#)

February 24, 2021, The New York Times

Major opposition parties in the South Caucasus nation of Georgia vowed on Wednesday to boycott Parliament until the government releases a prominent opponent detained recently.

[Johnson Lays Out a Cautious Path for Leaving the Lockdown](#)

February 22, 2021, The New York Times

Britain, hit hard by the coronavirus but surprisingly successful in the race to vaccinate its people, embarked Monday on a new, more hopeful phase of the pandemic, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a step-by-step plan to reopen the economy, starting with schools on March 8.

[MEPs urge EU to fire ambassador to Cuba](#)

February 25, 2021, Politico

A cross-party group of 16 MEPs, including senior lawmakers, urged EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell to sack the bloc's ambassador to Cuba for allegedly siding with the country's Communist leadership.

[Germany Will Never Back Down on Its Russian Pipeline](#)

February 25, 2021, Foreign Policy

Nord Stream 2 is a pipeline that, if completed, will pump gas directly from Russia into Germany, at the expense of Central and Eastern Europe and over the objections of the EU. Germany remains committed to ambitious climate targets, but the more pressing needs of German industry, the consumption habits of German voters, and Merkel's mismanagement of energy policy have cemented German dependence on Russia.

[What should be Germany's role in the world?](#)

February 25, 2021, Deutsche Welle

What kind of foreign policy would reflect how Germany's citizens see the world? A group of more than 150 'ordinary people' spent two months drawing up their recommendations for the country's politicians.

Russia

[Russia Detects First Case of H5N8 Avian Flu in Humans](#)

February 20, 2021, The Moscow Times

Russia said its scientists had detected the first case of transmission of the H5N8 strain of avian flu to humans and had alerted the World Health Organization. In televised remarks, the head of Russia's health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, Anna Popova, said scientists at the Vektor laboratory had isolated the strain's genetic material from seven workers at a poultry farm in southern Russia, where an outbreak was recorded among the birds in December.

[Russian opposition figure Alexey Navalny handed \\$11,500 fine after being found guilty of defaming elderly WWII veteran in tweet](#)

February 20, 2021, Russia Today

A Moscow court has ruled that activist Alexey Navalny must pay a 850,000 ruble (\$11,500) fine after finding that he libelled a 94-year-old World War II veteran last summer by smearing him as a "corrupt lackey" and a "traitor." The judge opted to give Navalny less than the maximum fine allowed by law, which is 950,000 rubles (\$13,000).

[Channeling ex-US president Obama, Russian FM Lavrov describes relationship between Europe's largest country & EU as 'in tatters'](#)

February 20, 2021, Russia Today

Communication between Brussels and Moscow has deteriorated so badly that it has completely fallen apart, according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who believes that the EU sees the country as an "outsider." Speaking to the RBK television channel in a video, Lavrov adopted a phrase used by former US president Barack Obama in his 2015 State of the Union address when he falsely described the Russian economy as falling apart.

[Putin warns of unnamed foreign efforts to destabilize Russia](#)

February 25, 2021, AP News

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his nation's top counterintelligence agency to redouble its efforts to address what he described as Western attempts to destabilize Russia. Speaking at a meeting of top officials of the Federal Security Service, or FSB, the main KGB successor agency, Putin pointed at the "so-called policy of containment of Russia," charging that it includes efforts to "derail our development, slow it down, create problems alongside our borders, provoke internal instability and undermine the values that unite the Russian society."

[German charged with passing parliament floor plans to Russia](#)

February 25, 2021, AP News

A German man has been charged with espionage for allegedly passing information on properties used by the German parliament to Russian military intelligence, prosecutors said. The suspect, identified only as Jens F. in line with German privacy rules, worked for a company that had been repeatedly contracted to check portable electrical appliances by the Bundestag, or the lower house of parliament, federal prosecutors said in a statement.

[Russian Imprisoned for Handing 'State Secrets' to China](#)

February 25, 2021, The Moscow Times

A Russian national has been sentenced to 8 years in prison for treason by handing state secrets to China, a court in Siberia announced. Vladimir Vasilyev, 52, had pleaded guilty to passing state secrets to China's intelligence services, the state-run TASS news agency quoted an unnamed law enforcement source as saying. He is at least the third Russian citizen to be convicted of state treason this year and the 10th in the past two years.

[New EU sanctions against Russia to be approved next week](#)

February 26, 2021, TASS News Agency

New EU sanctions against Russia due to the situation around Alexey Navalny will be officially approved next week, President of the European Council Charles Michel said at a press conference following the first day of the EU online summit. According to him, this decision will be formalized next week as part of the sanctions regime for violations of human rights.

[Russian Diplomats Push Railway Handcar Home from North Korea](#)

February 26, 2021, The Moscow Times

Russian diplomats and their family members returning from North Korea were forced to push a handcar with their belongings over the border as the reclusive country remained closed due to the coronavirus, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on February 25.

Africa & Latin America

Latin America

[No chance at the moment for ratification of trade deal with Mercosur, says France](#)

February 23, 2021, MercoPress

France has shown serious concerns in ratifying the current version of trade deal with Mercosur. Although the agreement was reached in 2019, French concerns over dumping of Mercosur agricultural exports in Europe and climate change become an impediment towards its ratification.

[EU expels the Venezuela Ambassador among other diplomatic officials of the country](#)

February 26, 2021, MercoPress

The European Union has declared Venezuela ambassador in Brussels as a 'persona non grata' denying her the privilege of envoy to the bloc. This is a retaliatory diplomatic move after Venezuela expelled the EU's own envoy in the past.

[Venezuela President Maduro complains that sanctions are hurting country's abilities to fight the pandemic](#)

February 23, 2021, MercoPress

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro on Monday denounced international sanctions against his country, saying they have limited the government's ability to fight the health and economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis. European Union foreign ministers on Monday imposed new sanctions on 19 leading Venezuelan officials.

[Dispute over fuel prices and removal of Petrobras CEO trigger fears of economic populism in Brazil](#)

February 22, 2021, MercoPress

The leadership change at Petrobras followed a feud with Bolsonaro over fuel prices after Petrobras adjusted them to align with international rates. His abrupt move on Saturday may add to concerns about a wider shift away from market-friendly policy goals by the administration. Rising oil prices have been a mixed blessing for Petrobras historically because it has come under pressure from both business and labour friendly administrations to suppress fuel costs.

[Mexico-Argentina to reactivate Strategic Association mechanisms](#)

February 24, 2021, Presna Latina

Mexico and Argentina signed a roadmap to reactivate existing institutional mechanisms between two countries. At the meeting, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to enhance political dialogue and cooperation through Mexico-Argentina Strategic Association Agreement (SAA), made up of the Political Affairs, Cooperation and Economic, Trade and Investment Affairs committees.

Africa

[Made-in-India vaccines land in Cote d'Ivoire](#)

February 26, 2021, ANI

Keeping up with the commitment to assist during the pandemic, India shipped a consignment of COVID-19 vaccine to the capital Abidjan. Cote d'Ivoire has become the second country to receive a shipment of COVID-19 vaccines via COVAX, the global vaccine-sharing programme.

[Amidst the presidential elections in Niger, seven die in a fatal explosion](#)

February 22, 2021, Africa Times

Seven members of Niger's Independent National Election died in a bomb blast near the western region of the country. The explosion is seen as an attempt to delegitimize the elections by few fringe outfits in the country.

[French President Emmanuel Macron plans to make a visit to Kigali](#)

February 23, 2021, The African Report

President Macron would visit Rwandan capital Kigali during the highly symbolic period commemorating the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda. The visit could thaw a diplomatic rapprochement between the two countries.

[Mohamed Bazoum elected as the new President of Niger](#)

February 27, 2021, The African Report

According to provisional results announced by the Commission Electorale Nationale et Indépendante (CENI), Mohamed Bazoum won the second round of the presidential election held on 21 February. The President-elect faces many challenges, from education to security and the fight against corruption.



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