

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



GEOSTRATEGIC SCAN

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CHINA (Geo-Strat, Geo-Politics & Geo-Economics)

China Says its Massive Loans, Projects did not Push Sri Lanka to Bankruptcy

<https://theprint.in/world/china-says-its-massive-loans-projects-did-not-push-sri-lanka-to-bankruptcy/1059406/>

In response to the criticism of China's projects and policies towards Sri Lanka by the USAID administrator Samantha Power (on 27 July in New Delhi), Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian defended China's massive infrastructure ventures and investments in crisis-hit Sri Lanka and said, "Chinese projects have boosted Sri Lanka's economic development, and brought tangible benefits to the Sri Lankan people".

Comments. Even when cornered, rather than being defensive, under the leadership of Xi Jinping Chinese have been following "Wolf Warrior diplomacy". They straight away put the blame on Sri Lanka; Zhao Lijian told the media, "The China-Sri Lanka practical cooperation has always been led by Sri Lanka with scientific planning and thorough verification with no strings attached". Refuting the allegations, Zhao said, "there are multiple components to Sri Lanka's foreign debt, where China-related debts take far less share than the international capital market and multilateral development banks." "Besides what China provides for Sri Lanka almost preferential loans with low-interest rates and long terms, which have played a positive part in improving Sri Lanka's infrastructure and livelihood," he said.

Whereas the whole world knows that Beijing's unproductive projects and opaque loan deals at higher interest rates than other lenders are among the major reasons for the country's bankruptcy. China's unproductive projects in Sri Lanka, including the Hambantota port, which Beijing took over on a 99-year lease as a debt swap, has come under sharp criticism. China, which accounts for 10 per cent of Sri Lanka's debt, is reported to have resisted offering a debt cut.

Samantha Power praised India and had said that India reacted "really swiftly" with an absolutely critical set of measures to help Sri Lanka tide over its economic crisis, but calls to China to provide significant relief had gone unanswered.

Zhao Lijian sought to blame the US policies including the sudden interest rate hikes, unilateral sanctions and massive stimulus policies which had seriously impacted many developing countries like Sri Lanka. He said, "US's unilateral sanctions and tariff barriers have undermined the security of industrial chains and have worsened the price surge of energy, food and other commodities. This has further aggravated the financial and economic situation of many developing countries, including Sri Lanka".

Chinese Military Says: India, China Reach Four-Point 'Consensus' in 16th Round of Military Talks.

<https://www.timesnownews.com/india/india-china-reach-four-point-consensus-in-16th-round-of-military-talks-says-chinese-military-article-93200649>

Talking about the 16th round of the China-India Corps Commander-Level Meeting, Senior Colonel Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defence, said on 29 July (on China military online, the official portal of the Chinese military), that the two sides discussed issues in a "constructive and forward-looking way, and reached four-point consensus". These four points are:-

1. To adhere to the political guidance and earnestly implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries.
2. To focus on the overall situation and maintain the resumption momentum of bilateral relations.
3. To effectively manage and control differences, as well as safeguard the security and stability in border areas until the issue is solved.
4. To maintain communication and dialogue, and reach a mutually acceptable solution as soon as possible.

Comments. In the military talks, held on July 17, India and China failed to make any breakthrough in resolving outstanding issues on the remaining friction points in Eastern Ladakh. However, both the side agreed to maintain dialogue to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution at the earliest. There appears to be no resolution in the near future, at least till Xi Jinping is affirmed for his third term. After that it will depend on his political will combined with China's economic and social stability.

China Announces Military Exercise Opposite Taiwan

<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/07/30/china-announces-military-exercise-opposite-taiwan-000488103>

China said it was conducting military exercises w.e.f. 30 July, off its coast opposite Taiwan after warning Speaker Nancy Pelosi to scrap plans to visit the island democracy, which Beijing claims as part of its territory. The People's Liberation Army was conducting "live-fire exercises" near the Pingtan islands off Fujian province from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m from 04 Aug to 07 Aug. The Maritime Safety Administration warned ships to avoid the area.

Comments. Such exercises usually involve artillery. The one-sentence announcement gave no indication whether Saturday's exercise also might include missiles, fighter planes or other weapons.

President Xi Jinping warned his U.S. counterpart, Joe Biden, in a phone call on 29 July, against "external interference" in Beijing's dealings with the island. China says Taiwan has no right to conduct foreign relations. It sees visits by American officials as encouragement for the island to make its decades-old de facto independence official. The Ministry of Defense warned Washington this week not to allow Pelosi, who is Biden's equal in rank as leader of one of three branches of government, to visit Taiwan. The PLA has flown growing numbers of fighter planes and bombers near Taiwan and has in the past fired missiles into shipping lanes to the island.

A spokesman said the PLA would take unspecified "strong measures" to stop pro-independence activity. With the US and its NATO Allies having failed to stop Russian aggression against Ukraine, China finds an opportunity to coerce Taiwan and also deter the US from providing any assistance to Taiwan.

Illegal and Unacceptable': India Slams China, Pak over Move to Involve Third Countries in CPEC Projects

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/illegal-and-unacceptable-india-slams-china-pak-over-move-to-involve-third-countries-in-cpec-projects/>

At a meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination on Friday, Pakistan and China decided to welcome interested third countries to join CPEC initiative. India criticised China and Pakistan for their efforts to encourage third countries to join projects relating to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). China and Pakistan are making efforts to extend the CPEC to Afghanistan.

Comments. India has consistently been critical of “projects in the so-called CPEC”, which are in Indian territory “illegally occupied by Pakistan”. Ministry of External Affairs’ spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said such activities under the CPEC are “inherently illegal, illegitimate and unacceptable”, and will be treated accordingly by India. Any such actions by any party directly infringe on India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. India firmly and consistently opposes projects in the so-called CPEC.

China will Focus on 'Unbalanced and Inadequate' Development in Next 5 Years: Xi

<https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/china-will-focus-on-unbalanced-and-inadequate-development-in-next-5-years-xi>

Chinese President Xi Jinping told senior leaders this week that CHINA must focus on addressing the problem of "unbalanced and inadequate development" in the next 5 years.

Comments. Xi had first mentioned the need to address "unbalanced and inadequate development" as a policy priority in 2017 when he presented a major political document at the ruling Communist Party's 19th Congress.

In fact, there is nothing new about Xi Jinping’s observation on China’s economy. In March 2007, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stated that “*There are structural problems in China’s economy which cause unsteady, unbalanced, uncoordinated and unsustainable development.*” He defined: “**unsteady development**” means overheated investment as well as excessive credit supply and liquidity and surplus in foreign trade and international payments; “**Unbalanced development**” means uneven development between urban and rural areas, between different regions and between economic and social development; “**Uncoordinated development**” means that there is lack of proper balance between the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors and between investment and consumption. Economic growth is mainly driven by investment and export; “**Unsustainable development**” means that we have not done well in saving energy and resources and protecting the environment. All these are pressing problems facing us, which require long-term efforts to resolve”.

These economic problems were there in China in 2007 and even before. If Xi could not resolve these in his two terms, then he does not have a magic wand to do in next five years. These are slogans for winning a third term.

IOR & SCS (MARITIME)

A US Aircraft Carrier and its Strike Group are Headed into the Hotly Contested Waters Around Taiwan Ahead of a Possible Visit by Nancy Pelosi to the Island.

<https://www.businessinsider.in/international/news/a-us-aircraft-carrier-and-its-strike-group-are-headed-into-the-hotly-contested-waters-around-taiwan-ahead-of-a-possible-visit-by-nancy-pelosi-to-the-island/>

A US aircraft carrier and its strike group are now in the South China Sea in what could potentially become a tense standoff in hotly contested waters near Taiwan. Speaking to Insider, US Navy spokesperson Mark Langford confirmed that the vessels were on the move and operating in the South China Sea.

Comments. The Aircraft Carrier USS Ronald Reagan has departed Singapore after making a scheduled port call at Singapore. The Aircraft Carrier is presumably continuing its normal, scheduled operations as part of her routine patrol in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. The news comes less than a day after a report emerged about the Pentagon's preparations to protect Speaker Nancy Pelosi with fighter jets and ships if she were to visit Taiwan. If Pelosi does visit Taiwan, she would be the highest-ranking US official to visit the island since Republican Newt Gingrich made the trip in 1997. China has issued a warning of a possible military response if Pelosi's trip took place. It appears, if the US insists on taking its own course, the Chinese military will never sit idle and it is likely to take strong actions to thwart any US's interference.

SRI LANKA

New Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe Sworn in, Police Clear Protest Site

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/new-sri-lankan-president-ranil-wickremesinghe-sworn-in-police-clear-protest-site/articleshow/93041117.cms>

Veteran politician Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in as Sri Lanka's new president to take charge of a nation bitterly angry that he will remain in power amid an unprecedented economic crisis. Sri Lankans have taken to the streets for months to demand their top leaders step down to take responsibility for economic chaos that has left the nation's 22 million people struggling with shortages of essentials, including medicine, fuel and food. While the protesters have focused on the Rajapaksa political dynasty, Wickremesinghe has also drawn their ire as a perceived Rajapaksa surrogate.

Comments. Ranil Wickremesinghe appointment received mixed reactions, with some supporters lighting firecrackers while protesters continued to demand that he resign. Wickremesinghe has wide experience in diplomatic and international affairs and has been overseeing bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund. During demonstrations in Sri Lanka, crowds set his personal residence on fire and occupied his office. Protest leaders that they don't accept Wickremesinghe's appointment and urged him to step down immediately. A large number of army and police personnel arrived in trucks and buses, removing tents and protest banners and making arrest. Wickremesinghe is a divisive figure, unpopular among Sri Lankans fed up with shortages of food, fuel and medicine. Few view Wickremesinghe as a real change from the government that was toppled earlier this month when Rajapaksa fled the country as angry crowds stormed his office. But critics accuse him of protecting members of the Rajapaksa family, who are widely blamed for leading the nation into ruin, from allegations of corruption and other wrongdoing.

Presidents in Sri Lanka are normally elected by the public. The responsibility falls to Parliament only if the presidency becomes vacant before the term officially ends. It has happened once before, in 1993, when then-Prime Minister Dingiri Banda Wijetunga was chosen by Parliament uncontested after former President Ranasinghe Premadasa, father of the current opposition leader, was assassinated.

The Indian approach, so far, has been sensible. Be seen as non-interventionist as far as politics is concerned. Step up support as far as economics and relief is concerned. But in both respects, more needs to be done. Sri Lanka needs a variant of a Marshall Plan to

rebuild its economy. India should consider how it can step up its assistance and whether, in consultation with Sri Lanka authorities, it can offer a massive medium-term, multi-sectoral assistance package that helps Sri Lanka rebuild its finances and economy. Stability in the island is essential for regional security. Goodwill through aid will win geopolitical points in the context with China, which is down but not out.

Dinesh Gunawardena Appointed Sri Lanka's New Prime Minister

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/sri-lanka-crisis-news-live-updates-july-22/liveblog/93037932.cms>

Dinesh Gunewardena who has previously been the foreign minister and education minister of the island nation, took oath as the new Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The oath ceremony was done in the prime minister's office on Flower Road, Colombo, where huge military and police were present amid the protest.

Comments. Dinesh Gunewardena is one of the faces with whom there are high hopes of making the situation better. As the country is facing the worst downturn in the economy with the citizens suffering due to a shortage of essentials. The government will contact the IMF to gain help for the financial restructuring to get rid of foreign debt and bankruptcy. The Sri Lanka government is ready to listen to the demands of democratic public protesters and said that the acts of terrorism will not be tolerated. With Sri Lanka in the middle of a severe economic crisis, both Gunawardena and Wickremesinghe have their work cut out for them. Inflation rates are at an all-time high and the country has not had enough cash to pay for the import of essential items, including food and medicines.

A political old-timer, Gunawardena is the leader Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP), which is a constituent party of Sri Lanka's ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP). The Gunawardena family has played a prominent role in Sri Lanka's political history. A hard-core leftist, Gunawardena belongs to a prominent political family in Sri Lanka that played a role in India's freedom struggle. The prime minister's father, Philip, interacted closely with Jawaharlal Nehru and Krishna Menon. In 1942, facing pushback for his participation in the anti-colonial movement, Philip fled to India. He is believed to have participated in India's struggle for freedom.

Sri Lanka Asks China for Help with Trade, Investment and Tourism

<https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/world/story/sri-lanka-asks-china-for-help-with-trade-investment-and-tourism-342678-2022-07-26>

Sri Lanka has asked China to help with trade, investment and tourism to help it grow sustainably, Colombo's envoy to Beijing said as it negotiates for an emergency \$4 billion package to help it emerge from an economic meltdown. Ambassador Palitha Kohona's emphasis on China as a key to Sri Lanka's economic recovery reflects Beijing's status as one of Sri Lanka's two largest foreign creditors, along with Japan. China also holds some 10% of Sri Lanka's external debt.

Comments. Colombo wants China to ask its companies to buy more Sri Lankan black tea, sapphire, spices and garments and to make Chinese import rules more transparent and easier to navigate. In addition, Sri Lanka would like to see more Chinese tourists, whose numbers fell from 265,000 in 2018 to almost zero after the 2019 suicide attacks and the pandemic. There is no fundamental change in the new government's policy towards China. China is finding it hard to act quickly to help Sri Lanka now because as a major

global creditor and it is also financially exposed to many other countries in financial difficulty.

For several months, Sri Lanka had been in talks in China for a \$4 billion aid package, consisting of a loan of \$1 billion to repay a roughly equivalent amount of Chinese debt due this year. It is also asking for a \$1.5 billion credit line to pay for Chinese imports. Sri Lanka also hopes to persuade China to activate a \$1.5 billion bilateral currency swap. Discussions on financial aid with China are underway, but no date for the next meeting has been set. The Chinese foreign ministry said it is willing to work with other countries and international financial institutions to "play a positive role" to help Sri Lanka. Beyond financial aid, Sri Lanka also hopes China can help it buy fuel, fertilizer and other urgently needed supplies. China pledged 500 million yuan (\$74.09 million) of emergency support for Sri Lanka.

With this spectrum of complex political dynamics and uncertainties, India needs to move cautiously in Sri Lanka. India has huge stakes in Lanka's political stability and economic growth as it is geostrategically and civilisationally closer to the island than any other major Asian powers. The creeping expansion of Chinese strategic and economic presence in Sri Lanka has been matter of concern for India in recent years. India has focused its policies so far on providing relief to the people for fuel, food and medicines, while distancing itself from the corrupt regime. India has invested \$3.8 billion to that end. It also pleaded with the IMF and other international agencies to help Sri Lanka withstand its economic difficulties.

India Says it will Protect its Interests as Chinese Boat Heads to Sri Lanka

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-07-28/india-says-it-is-monitoring-reports-of-chinese-vessels-planned-visit-to-sri-lanka>

India, which is trying to expand its influence in crisis-hit Sri Lanka after China made deep inroads there. The planned visit of a Chinese vessel to a Sri Lankan port on 11 August. Shipping data from Refinitiv Eikon showed research and survey vessel Yuan Wang 5 was en route to the southern Sri Lankan port of Hambantota.

Comments. Yuan Wang 5 would be in Hambantota for a week and will conduct space tracking, satellite control and research tracking in the north-western part of the Indian Ocean region through August and September. Sri Lanka formally handed over commercial activities in its main southern port to a Chinese company in 2017 on a 99-year lease after struggling to repay its debt. China is one of Sri Lanka's biggest lenders and has also funded airports, roads and railways, unnerving India, which is now trying to claw back lost ground. Beijing is pouring more money into vast China-backed projects in Hambantota and Colombo.

As Sri Lanka now battles its worst economic crisis in seven decades, India this year alone has provided it support of nearly \$4 billion. India is worried that the Chinese-built and leased Hambantota port will be used by China as a military base in India's backyard. The \$1.5 billion port is near the main shipping route from Asia to Europe. India has already lodged a verbal protest with the Sri Lankan government against the ship's visit. The Indian government is carefully monitors any developments having a bearing on India's security and economic interests, and takes all necessary measures to safeguard them. Sri Lanka angered India in 2014 when it allowed a Chinese submarine and a warship to dock in Colombo. We will keep monitoring the developments.

India Committed to Assist Lanka's Economic Crisis: President Murmu

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-committed-to-assist-sri-lankas-economic-crisis-president-droupadi-murmu-writes-to-ranil-wickremesinghe-3207570>

Newly-elected President Droupadi Murmu while extending felicitations to Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe said that India has been committed to assist the people of Sri Lanka in overcoming the challenges posed by the economic crises. President Murmu in a letter to Sri Lanka President Wickremesinghe emphasized on India's neighbourhood first policy. President Murmu in the letter hoped that the long-standing bilateral partnership, between the two countries, based on the shared heritage and deep people-to-people ties, will further strengthen.

Comments. India under its 'Neighbourhood First' policy, India has always helped the debt-ridden island country. Recently, India has extended 8 Lines of Credit (LOCs) to Sri Lanka amounting to USD 1,850.64 million in the past 10 years. Government of India has extended 8 Lines of Credit (LOCs) to Sri Lanka amounting to USD 1.85 billion in sectors including railways, infrastructure, defence, renewable energy, petroleum and fertilizers in the past 10 years. In January 2022, India extended a USD 400 million currency swap to Sri Lanka under the SAARC Framework. A Line of Credit of USD 500 million was extended to Sri Lanka for importing fuel from India. More than 25 tons of drugs and medical supplies which were donated by the government and people of India during the last two months. This is in addition to the economic assistance of around USD 3.8 billion and supply of other humanitarian supplies such as rice, milk powder, and kerosene.

These humanitarian supplies are in continuation of the government of India's ongoing support to the people of Sri Lanka in multiple forms such as financial assistance, forex support, material supply, and many more. India is becoming a stronger and more mutually beneficial partner to Sri Lanka.

BHUTAN

New Satellite Images Reveal Chinese Village in Doklam Plateau: Report

<https://www.wionews.com/india-news/new-satellite-images-reveal-chinese-village-in-doklam-plateau-report-499048>

Five years after the Indian and Chinese troops faced off at the Doklam plateau—an area surrounded by India, China and Bhutan—new satellite images have come to the fore indicating a Chinese village built nine kilometres east of the region on the Bhutanese side, according to local media reports. The new satellite images released by Maxaar, the village has been named Pangda and is currently inhabited by cars parked at the doorstep of virtually every home. The new satellite images reveal that a second village in the Amo Chu river valley is now virtually complete while China has stepped up construction of a third village or habitation further South.

Comments. The Doklam plateau is considered an important area for India's strategic interest. The new report comes at a time when the Indian Army has repeatedly flagged concerns of increased construction activity along the India-China border at the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh where the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been locked in an over two-year standoff with the Indian Army. India considers the Doklam tri-junction an important strategic route from the point of view of its security interests. New Delhi had raised objection to the road construction at the tri-junction area as it would have impacted its interests.

In 2017, Chinese and Indian armed forces were locked in a stand-off at the Doklam tri-junction for 73 days after China tried to extend a road in the area that Bhutan claimed belonged to it. Bhutan said the area belonged to it and India supported the Bhutanese claim. The India-China face-off was resolved following several rounds of talks.

In October last year, Bhutan and China signed an agreement on a "three-step roadmap" to expedite negotiations to resolve their festering boundary dispute. Bhutan shares an over 400-km-long border with China and the two countries have held over 24 rounds of boundary talks in a bid to resolve the dispute.

Chief of Army Staff Gen Manoj Pande is visiting Bhutan amid China's persistent attempts to enhance infrastructure around Bhutanese territory in the Doklam plateau. After the images came out, India keeps a constant watch on all developments having bearing on national security and takes necessary measures to safeguard its interests. We will keep monitoring the developments.

MALDIVES

Ground Breaking Ceremony of Maldives Biggest Infra Project to be done During PrezSolih's Delhi Visit

<https://www.wionews.com/india-news/groundbreaking-ceremony-of-maldives-biggest-infra-project-to-be-done-during-prez-solihs-delhi-visit-502007>

The groundbreaking ceremony of Maldives' biggest infrastructure project, the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) will be done during President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's visit to India next week. The project is supported by New Delhi with a grant of \$100 million and a \$400 million line of credit, totalling \$500 million. Under the project, a 6.74 kilometres long bridge and causeway link will be built that will connect the national capital Male with three adjoining islands viz. Villingli, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi.

Comments. The agreement for the project was signed between India and Maldives government last year and the mega infrastructure is expected to be completed within two years. Focus will also be on other major projects that India is helping the Maldives government build. India is supporting 45 projects in the country with grant assistance of \$16.88 million or 260 million Maldivian rufiyaas. Of these 45 projects, 17 have been completed and inaugurated already. These projects cover diverse areas of socio-economic development including tourism, sustainable development, education, fisheries, healthcare, local infrastructure, sports and youth development. The projects are identified by the Maldivian government based on its development priorities and are implemented by local councils or concerned ministries.

The last state visit of Solih was in December 2018, just a month after taking charge. During that visit, India announced a \$1.4 billion economic package which included support for building ports, airport expansion, reclamation and cricket stadiums amongst other projects. Cricket diplomacy has been a key component of the ties as India is training members of the Maldives cricket team. The visit will provide an opportunity to review the progress made in this wide-ranging partnership.

ASEAN

Ninth ASEAN-India Meet on Transnational Crimes Held Virtually

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/jul/21/ninth-asean-india-meet-on-transnational-crimes-held-virtually-2479091.html>

The 9th ASEAN-India Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crimes (SOMTC) was held in a virtual mode on Thursday. The consultation was co-chaired by Mahaveer Singhvi, Joint Secretary (Counter Terrorism), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), from the Indian side and Puah KokKeong, Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore, from the ASEAN side. Both sides strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and emphasized the need to strengthen international cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational crimes in a comprehensive and sustained manner.

During the Consultation, both sides discussed ways to enhance cooperation inter alia, in the areas of terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, international economic crime and cybercrime under the framework of ASEAN-India Work Plan to combat Transnational Crimes. Institutional linkages and capacity building programmes between the two sides were also discussed.

Comments. The meeting is yet another collaborative effort between India and ASEAN nations addressing regional security issues, further cementing the relations. There is a need to pursue setting up of formalised institutions and mechanisms to more effectively address these transnational crimes.

ASEAN not in Favor of Excluding Russia, DFA Says

[\(https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2022/07/28/464701/asean-not-in-favor-of-excluding-russia-dfa-says/\)](https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2022/07/28/464701/asean-not-in-favor-of-excluding-russia-dfa-says/)

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of ASEAN said in a briefing that the ASEAN does not support efforts to isolate Russia and seeks to pursue further engagement with Moscow in the near future, including on matters of trade. The Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary for ASEAN Affairs, Daniel R. Espiritu said during an online briefing that Russia's Prime Minister is due to participate in upcoming ASEAN meetings, and that the bloc plans to organize "economic and socio-cultural activities" involving Russia. "Russia has been a partner for a long time of ASEAN, and so we have a lot of common cooperation projects," Mr. Espiritu said. He also said that, "We (ASEAN and Russia) are also working on a work program... on trade and investment between ASEAN and Russia, and that would still go towards helping economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic and of course the crisis in Ukraine." Regarding the impact on the regional economy from the Russia-Ukraine war, Mr. Espiritu said ASEAN "will not be hampered simply because of the economic crisis" with active discussions within the bloc regarding energy security, food security and supply-chain disruptions.

Comments. The world opinion on sanctions against Russia for its 'special operations' against Ukraine remains divided. ASEAN nations, like many others around the world are formulating their response based on their own interests and has implications for the region as a whole.

NORTH KOREA & SOUTH KOREA

USA Accused for Manufacturing Biological Weapons in Ukraine by North Korea

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/north-korea-accuses-us-of-biological-warfare-in-ukraine-101658655491278.html>

An ally of Russia, North Korea, has accused the United States of producing biological weapons in Ukraine, mirroring a Russian allegation that the United Nations Under-Secretary-General of Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu invalidated in March 2022. Pyongyang pointed fingers at Washington for being the primary cause of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in February. Moscow accused the United States of funding research in Ukraine to manufacture biological weapons in March. According to the Korean Central News Agency, the United States has violated international agreements by setting up multiple biological laboratories in numerous countries and regions, including Ukraine. Washington and Kyiv have responded by denying the existence of any such laboratories and claiming that Moscow has conjured up the charges in order to open doors for itself to use similar strategies in other countries.

Comments. Given that Russia invaded Ukraine with the intention of amplifying its position and securing a strong strategic foothold in the evolving geopolitical architecture, Russia is likely to have severed these accusations against the United States to construct a pathway for itself to build biological warfare which could then go unrevoked and unrefuted. The United States claims that their funding in biological laboratories in Ukraine started during the fall of the Soviet Union with the intention of pumping money to help countries transfer scientific skills and focus from biological warfare to public health. No other parties except the Ukraine and United States know about the activities being carried out inside the laboratories but the contention still remains and North Korea cannot outrightly be alleged for falsely accusing the United States. As for India, New Delhi should openly declare the specifics of any funding agreement it strikes with other countries for biological research to avoid finding itself in a quandary such as this.

INDO-PACIFIC AND THE QUAD

The Pentagon and Japan's White Paper on Defence Highlights Security Threats in the Indo-Pacific Due to China and Calls for Quad Cooperation

<https://www.news18.com/news/india/japans-white-paper-on-defence-says-indo-pacific-facing-security-threats-stresses-quad-cooperation-5626555.html>

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/pentagon-official-says-only-a-matter-of-time-before-china-causes-major-incident-in-indo-pacific-region>

Japan endorses its conception of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and in order to create a robust security environment in the region in the wake of security threats and challenges posed by China's expansionist tendencies in the South China Sea, the Senkaku Islands and Taiwan - Japan feels the need for enhanced cooperation between the Quad countries. The Indo-Pacific area, which is home to half of the world's population and is the location of key sea lines of communication, is highlighted in the paper as being crucial to sustaining the vitality of the world. It added that the FOIP is an inclusive vision and any country that endorses it can cooperate.

Comments. The Quad has forged multiple agreements in order to safeguard the Indo-Pacific region and enhance the security and economic status of the Indo-Pacific countries. However, China continues to pose a dangerous threat to the region by expanding its illegal fishing and naval activities. In order to further its own economic and geopolitical advantages, China is unilaterally challenging the Quad and the status quo of the region. It is essential for the Quad countries to develop policies and include them within their own

defence papers to formalise their defence strategies in order to give China a taste of the efforts being made by countries in the Indo-Pacific to counter its expansionist tendencies. This will help prevent China from fostering an atmosphere of authoritarianism, forcing countries into debt diplomacy, and securing key sea lines of communication.

The Indo-Pacific Trade Bloc Meeting was Held on 26 July 2022

(<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/us-to-host-meeting-with-indo-pacific-economic-framework-officials-on-tuesday-3190002>)

The Indo-Pacific Trade bloc held a meeting on 26 July 2022 to discuss trade, supply chains, clean energy, infrastructure, taxes and their fight against corruption and to incorporate these details within the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). Ever since Donald Trump quit the multinational Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement, the United States lacked a pillar for its economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific. The meeting was hosted by US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo to further President Joe Biden's vision of employing the IPEF as a way to raise environmental, labour and other standards across Asia.

Comments. In order to challenge China's rising economic assertiveness and influence in the Southeast Asian, Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific region and to exercise its sway to attract nations towards augmenting economic ties with the United States, Washington plans on establishing the IPEF as an alternative to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, an agreement that not only prevents countries from falling into debt diplomacy with China but also counter the unsustainable labour and environmental standards that exists in Asia. India should use this opportunity in alliance with the United States to expand its area of influence in the region and secure a stronger economic foothold to reach at par with China which employs wolf-warrior diplomacy to aggressively push its economic partnerships forward.

Indo-Pacific Defence Chiefs Meet Against Backdrop of Rising China

(<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/world/indo-pacific-defence-chiefs-meet-against-backdrop-of-rising-china-416162>)

In the final week of July 2022, military leaders from 26 nations, the majority of whom were Chiefs of Defence, gathered in Sydney for three days to strengthen their defence partnership against the backdrop of a belligerent China that has been bolstering its military presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. According to General Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, the purpose of the meeting was for the Defence Chiefs to consider deepening military cooperation in order to align shared security interests and protect national interests for all participating states. Ironically, China, which was also invited for the conference, said that it would not be able to attend it. The military leaders discussed making their military strategies more interoperable and conducting joint military exercises. General Milley said that Chinese intercepts of allied and partner aircraft in international airspace in the Pacific region have increased multifold in the last five years and has become much more confrontational than before. He added that Chinese activity in the region reflects that they want to bully or impose terms on other countries rather than maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Comments. In order to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific it is crucial to balance a rising China than control it which would instigate it to further its aggressive agenda of controlling Indo-Pacific economies and key sea lines of communication profusely. If the Quad member nations are to dampen China's sphere of influence, they must ensure that

joint military drills with Indo-Pacific nation states become a reality. Additionally, it is imperative for the Quad member states to improve the integration of cutting-edge military systems and technologies so that every hostile move made by China in the Indo-Pacific can be watched and effectively retaliated against.

WEST ASIA

Decoding I2U2 and its Geopolitical Implications for India

https://wap.business-standard.com/podcast/current-affairs/decoding-i2u2-and-its-geopolitical-implications-122072500057_1.html

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2022/jul/30/what-is-for-india-in-i2u2-2482043.amp>

On 14 July 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined US President Joe Biden, Israeli PM Yair Lapid and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in the first ever meeting of I2U2 wherein the leaders collectively identified and agreed to work towards common areas of mutual interest. These included joint investments on water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

Important takeaways include: -

- Possibilities of leveraging private sector capital and expertise for many areas of economic cooperation were discussed.
- Mutual agreement to host regular Sherpa-level interactions.
- Collaboration for “integrated food parks” was announced to help “maximise crop yields which, in turn, will help tackle food insecurity in South Asia and the Middle East”.
- A hybrid renewable energy project in Gujarat consisting of 300 megawatts of wind and solar capacity, with investment from the UAE and support from Israel and the US was announced.

Comments. Initially known as the ‘International Forum for Economic Cooperation’, the I2U2 grouping is intended to aid in modernisation of the infrastructure, promotion of low-carbon development pathways for industries, promotion of public health, and development of green technologies. It was first conceptualized during a meeting of the foreign ministers of the four countries in October last year.

India seeks to gain from the grouping as it paves the way for enhanced Indo-US partnership beyond Asia and offers an opportunity to deepen ties with the Middle East. Furthermore, it boosts the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed between India and the UAE, which is the highest contributor of Foreign Direct Investment to India from the Gulf region. However, the potential drawback could be Israel leveraging the platform to advance its anti-Iran agenda, in light of India’s long-standing and traditional relationship with Iran.

France Signs Energy Deal with the UAE to Wean Off Russian Imports

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/19/france-signs-energy-deal-with-uae-to-wean-off-russian-imports>

With the UAE emerging as a key partner for Western countries to replace imports from sanctions-hit Russia, France has secured promises of new energy supplies from the United Arab Emirates after talks between President Emmanuel Macron and UAE leader Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in Paris.

A deal between French energy giant Total Energies and UAE state oil company ADNOC has been signed “for cooperation in the area of energy supplies”. Sheikh Mohamed has issued a statement to Macron, “The UAE is keen to support energy security in the world in general and in France in particular,” according to Emirati state news agency WAM.

Comments. France procures nearly 17% of its gas supply from Russia. In mid-June, gas transmission network GRTgaz announced that France no longer receives pipelined natural gas from Russia.

According to Economy Minister Bruno le Maire, this agreement holds dual strategic importance for France, as it would allow it to “address the pressing challenges of energy security in the short term while preparing for a low-carbon future.”

Additionally, the governments have signed a strategic agreement to cooperate in the energy sector. Their partnership is aimed at identifying joint investment projects in France, the UAE or elsewhere in the sectors of hydrogen, renewable and nuclear energy.

Syria, a Close Russia Ally, Breaks Diplomatic Ties with Ukraine

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/20/syria-formally-breaks-diplomatic-ties-with-ukraine>

On 20 July 2022, Syria formally broke diplomatic ties with Ukraine in response to a similar move by Kyiv. The Foreign Ministry noted, “The Syrian Arab Republic has decided to break diplomatic relations with Ukraine in conformity with the principle of reciprocity”. Late last month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had stated that Kyiv would cut ties after Syria recognised the Russian-backed breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine.

Comments. While the official statement was given recently, the Syrian foreign ministry mentioned that Ukraine had first ruptured relations in 2018 by refusing to revalidate the residencies of its diplomatic staff in Kyiv, making it impossible for them to carry out their duties. Further, it added that the Syrian embassy at that time suspended its duties “as a result of the hostile attitudes of the Ukrainian government.”

AFRICA

Ghana confirms first cases of deadly Marburg virus

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-62202240>

Ghana has confirmed its first two cases of the deadly Marburg virus, a highly infectious disease in the same family as the virus that causes Ebola. It says both patients died recently in hospital in the southern Ashanti region.

Comments. The Marburg virus was first detected in the city of Marburg in Germany, in 1967. This instance is the second time that the virus has been identified in West Africa. Last Year, Guinea had one confirmed case but the outbreak was officially declared over

five weeks after. This time two patients have died in Ghana and 98 people are under quarantine as suspected contact cases. The World Health Organization has appreciated Ghana's swift response and contact tracing and strict infection control measures have been put in place to minimize the number of casualties.

Sudan Reopens Border Crossing with Ethiopia to Resolve Disputes

<https://theprint.in/world/sudan-reopens-border-crossing-with-ethiopia-to-resolve-disputes/1043483/>

Sudan decided on Sunday to open the Galabat crossing on the border with Ethiopia in an effort to build confidence and resolve disputes between the two countries. The council also decided to step up border monitoring and improve coordination between the two countries to stop the movement of armed elements across the border, according to the statement.

Comments. On June 26 this year, Sudanese leadership decided to close the Galabat crossing on the grounds that the Ethiopian army had killed seven Sudanese soldiers and a citizen on the joint eastern border, a charge that Ethiopia has denied. Since the past 2 years the border has been witnessing deadly skirmishes between the two sides. Post the collapse of the al-Bashir regime in April 2019, the relations have been tensed between the two nations and the Sudanese authorities have closed and reopened the strategic crossing many times.

Top Israeli General, in First Morocco Visit, to Explore Defence Deals

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/top-israeli-general-first-morocco-visit-explore-defence-deals-2022-07-18/>

The chief of Israel's armed forces will visit Morocco on Monday in the highest-profile military engagement between the countries, which upgraded ties in 2020 under a U.S. diplomatic drive.

Comments. Israel and Morocco had established low-level relations in the 90's but were suspended due to the Palestinian uprising against the Israelis in 2000. The ties received an upgrade post the signing of the "Abraham Accords" when Israel normalised its relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. While Lieutenant-General Aviv Kochavi's trip has been showcased by Israel as part of emerging defence cooperation with the North African country, Rabat has also been trying to broker improved conditions for the Palestinians.

Russia's Lavrov to Visit Africa as Moscow Seeks Non-Western Ties

<https://www.reuters.com/world/russias-lavrov-visit-africa-moscow-seeks-non-western-ties-2022-07-22/>

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov will begin an African tour in Egypt on Sunday, seeking to draw on demand for non-Western alliances as Moscow pushes back against international censure over the war in Ukraine.

Comments. The Foreign Minister of Russia will begin the Africa tour in Egypt and will also visit Ethiopia and Uganda. Cairo is balancing its relationship with both the USA and Russia and this is the Russian Foreign Ministers' first visit to Africa post the war in Ukraine. Russia is trying to rebuild its post-cold war ties in Africa. Egypt has strategic relations with Moscow and has been the source of wheat and weaponry. There have been reports that the Russian state-owned energy cooperation Rosatom has started the long-

delayed construction of Egypt's first nuclear plant which is considered the largest Russian-Egyptian project since the creation of Aswan High Dam on the Nile River in 1970. A group of Western Nations has petitioned the Egyptian Government and the Arab League to not accept the Russian version of events in Ukraine. Russian FM replied in an interview by saying that Russia has never schooled the African states and also highlighted the USSR's support for decolonization. Russia has tried to build its ties with Ethiopia as the African nation's relations took a downturn with the West post the Tigray conflict. Russia has also tried to take advantage of the differences that have been generated between the West and Uganda as the West has accused Uganda of rampant corruption, election violence, and human rights abuses. African states are looking for Non-Western alternatives and Russia can be one such alternative.

2 Indian Peacekeepers Killed In Violent Anti-UN Protests In Congo

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/2-indian-peacekeepers-killed-in-violent-anti-un-protests-in-congo-3196665>

Two Border Security Force personnel, who were part of the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo, were killed on Tuesday during violent protests, a spokesperson for the force said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said he was deeply grieved at the loss of the two valiant Indian peacekeepers and demanded that the perpetrators of the "outrageous attacks" must be held accountable and brought to justice.

Comments. The two soldiers were part of MONUSCO that is the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in DR Congo. It has been reported that the locals had warned and given a call for demonstrations against MONUSCO throughout Congo and the protests turned violent in Goma where the protestors set fire to UN property. The protests were driven by accusations that MONUSCO was failing to act against the armed groups. India has an extensive history of service in UN Peacekeeping and has contributed more personnel than any other nation.

Tullow Oil in Talks with Indian Groups over Kenyan Project

<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/tullow-oil-talks-with-indian-groups-over-kenyan-project-2022-07-30/>

Executives from Tullow Oil held talks with India's ONGC Videsh Ltd. in Nairobi this week as the London-based firm seeks a strategic investor for its onshore oil project in Kenya, the company said on Saturday.

Comments. ONGC Videsh Limited that is the overseas arm of the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) have held talks with Tullow Oil to acquire a stake in Tullow Oil's Lokichar oil field in Kenya. Tullow owns 50 percent stake in south Lokichar field and is trying to give the operatorship to a strategic partner. The news was also confirmed by Kenya's Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Energy.

NATO AND EUROPE REGION

Russia Cuts the Gas Flow as Europe Urges Gas Reduction Plan

<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/physical-flows-through-nord-stream-1-pipeline-dip-2022-07-27/>

In a fresh escalation of the energy standoff between Moscow and the European Union, Russia provided less gas to Europe, making it more difficult and expensive for the union to fill up its storage facilities in time for the winter heating season. The key Russian gas delivery route to Europe, Nord Stream 1, has had its capacity lowered to just a fifth of its maximum level as a result of the supply curtailment, signalled by Gazprom. State-owned gas corporation Gazprom of Russia said that it will reduce gas flows via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany to barely 20% of its capacity. About one-third of all Russian gas sent to Europe goes through Nord Stream 1.

Comments. This came after the European Commission's 15% gas reduction plan. After reaching compromise agreements to restrict cutbacks for some countries, EU nations have agreed a scaled-back emergency plan to reduce gas use in the hopes that reduced consumption will lessen the effect in the event that Moscow completely stops supplying gas. The reduction in gas usage is meant to save money before winter in order to be ready for any potential delays in gas supply from Russia, which is always using energy as a weapon. This action would also hurt Russia as a large sum of its export revenues depend on the gas supply to Europe.

The global oil and gas value chain is disrupted as a result of sanctions and other limitations. India, a country with a shortage of both oil and natural gas, finds it more challenging to deal with the growing prices. The Indian oil marketing corporations have been forced to progressively raise fuel prices in order to reduce their potential losses as a result of the current geopolitical crisis that is driving up the price of petroleum. The strain of inflation affects consumers. There is also a rift between India and the western bloc as it buys gas from Russia with the US, attempting to make a global agreement to restrict the prices Russia may charge on international oil markets. The economic rebound following COVID-19 and the high prices of oil and natural gas will cause a large increase in the cost of oil and gas imports. With a combination of international energy diplomacy, increasing domestic production, and expanded import substitution techniques, India must work to improve its current state of energy security.

Seven allies conduct integrated training over Romania

https://ac.nato.int/archive/2022/eVA_ROU_220728

In order to execute coordinated integrated air-to-ground manoeuvres demonstrating interoperability and readiness, seven Air Forces from around the European Alliance united their aircraft and ground systems for a training event in Romanian airspace. A fly-by of participating aircraft at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base near Constanța, Romania, marked the event's conclusion and showcased NATO's cutting-edge multilateral Air Power capacity. The exercise, which complies with international rules and regulations, is part of the Alliance's vigilant efforts to protect the eastern flank and provide security for NATO Allies in the area rather than a reaction to recent geopolitical developments.

Comments. The Ukraine conflict, which supposedly compelled NATO to bolster its eastern flank, is what led to the training. In order to enable follow-on actions and the freedom of movement required for defensive operations in NATO and international airspace, the participating air assets are simulating how to undermine an adversary's integrated air defence system. By bringing together this many allies for such a thorough training exercise, NATO demonstrates its ability to "concentrate multinational fires and effects from the air, maritime, and land components in the same place at the same time and to ensure it has the capability and interoperability to respond in the event that the Alliance is threatened". Though, India is not getting impacted by these exercises, it is closely observing the developments. At its summit in June 2022, NATO invited the NATO

Plus countries to join for the first time. The attempt to join NATO Plus as the sixth nation would easily bring New Delhi into alignment with the US on matters of defence and security. The Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) amendment, if passed by the US congress would exclude India from CAATSA, which is in the best interest of the US government and the US-India defence alliance. India wishes this to happen and it will bolster its defense ties with the US, but at the same time India has made it crystal clear that it won't support NATO in moving against Russia. India has held its stance that it would go for whatever conforms with its national interest.

Belgian Air Force Returns After Eight Month Mission

https://ac.nato.int/archive/2022/BEL_wrap-up_EST2022

Belgian F-16s have returned after an eight-month mission supporting NATO Air Policing and subsequently NATO's increased Vigilance Activities in Estonia. When the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, a detachment of Belgian F-16s was conducting enhanced air policing in Estonia. At NATO's request, Belgian F-16s have been performing routine patrols in important Baltic airspace; this operation ends on August 1. In less than four months since the EVA mission began, Belgian F-16s have conducted more than 340 drills, totaling over 850 flying hours. Belgium has participated in NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission since 2004 and has helped to defend NATO airspace as a result. The Combined Air Operations Centre is in charge of this ongoing peacetime task, which aims to protect the Baltic States' airspace integrity and discourage airspace infractions.

Comments. These drills were designed to improve Alliance nation collaboration and integration in order to maintain NATO airspace integrity and an unified response. More than 13 countries participated in these international drills, including Sweden and Finland. During international patrols, Belgian fighter pilots demonstrated their interoperability in challenging scenarios that necessitated the Allies' pilots to fly in foreign airspace. NATO military strategists started getting ready to send a large number of fighter and surveillance planes into the airspace surrounding Russia and Ukraine. It served as a warning to Moscow not to target any other member nation. Despite the stark disparity in overall air power between Russia and Ukraine, Russia uses air force rather sparingly. The Ukrainians have, however, received assistance from NATO countries in a variety of different ways, such as the provision of satellite images to strengthen Ukrainian air defence operations.

India is pursuing a foreign policy of being neutral that is in order to defend its interests in a setting that is becoming more difficult, especially with China's growing alignment with Russia in the picture.

BANGLADESH

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has Invited West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to her Country to See the Newly Constructed Padma Bridge.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/national/bangladesh-prime-minister-invites-mamata-banerjee-to-see-the-padma-bridge-in-bangladesh-news-210507>

Comments. The Bangladesh Prime Minister with her invitation extended hope for new economic ties between both nations. Leaders from both nations have mostly shared cordial relations since India's strong backing towards Bangladesh in its 1971 Liberation War. Both nations have shared a number of connectivity and infrastructure projects. Apart from this, close proximity, as well as overlapping language and culture, also plays a major role in bringing both the Bengals closer. Bangladesh has stayed on the top of the priority

list for India pertaining to its Neighbourhood First policy and efforts for revival are made from both ends after disagreements over the controversial Teesta Water Sharing Treaty of 2011.

Bangladesh to Hold Talks with IMF after Applying for Bailout

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/28/bangladesh-to-hold-talks-with-imf-after-applying-for-bailout>

Bangladesh is to hold talks with the International Monetary Fund after applying for a bailout to prevent the country running out of cash. The government in Dhaka – the third in south Asia to seek a financial rescue package from the IMF after Pakistan and Sri Lanka – is understood to want \$4.5bn (£3.7bn) after it was hit hard by high import prices, especially for gas, and a fall in exports as the global economy slowed down.

Comments. Bangladesh has approached the International Monetary Fund for a multi-billion-dollar loan and has become the third South Asian nation after Sri Lanka and Pakistan to seek international financial assistance. Dhaka was better placed than other South Asian nation due to its export sector with the garment trade a valuable source of foreign currency. It is now struggling with a rising import bill as the rising food and fuel prices globally have strained the economies. The IMF has said that Bangladesh has contacted to also start negotiations for a programme, adding that it was seeking a “Resilience and Sustainability” facility designed to help countries adapt to climate change. Economists are concerned that the pressure on South Asian nations in the coming times might only intensify as the region mostly is dependent upon the import of energy.

MYANMAR

How the Myanmar Political Crisis has Triggered Fresh Demands for an NRC in Manipur. Old Ethnic Faultlines have Fed into New Demands.

<https://scroll.in/article/1029029/how-the-myanmar-political-crisis-has-triggered-fresh-demands-for-an-nrc-in-manipur>

There is a fresh push for a National Register of Citizens in Manipur. Early this month, seven student bodies and 19 tribal groups from the state submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming a citizenship register was necessary to check migration from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Comments. The ongoing political crisis in Myanmar where the people are being killed, tortured and imprisoned by the Myanmar Junta has started a flood of refugees flowing into the Manipur state of India. Student bodies, tribal groups, the local population and even members of the ruling BJP party are demanding a National Register of Citizens or NRC to dismay the refugees from settling in Manipur. These refugees consist of Muslim, Nepali and most of all, Kuki communities who are becoming a problem for the locals as they are destroying the natural environment like forest land which is a prime source of occupation for local people. On top of this, all the resources and facilities available are also shared by them, which becomes a problem for the locals. These refugee inflows might turn into a serious security concern for India as the country is already struggling with its internal security with respect to the northeastern states which have seen several insurgencies over the past years. In Manipur itself, various ethnic groups have demanded their separate homelands and this refugee inflow might fuel that demand further. India, which has maintained a safe distance from the Myanmar crisis so far, though it has to look out for its own security.

NEPAL

Upper House Passes Citizenship Bill

<https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/upper-house-passes-citizenship-bill>

The National Assembly passed the Citizenship Bill, which will become a law when President Bidhya Devi Bhandari certifies it. The bill was sent to the Upper House after the House of Representatives passed it on July 23 through a fast-track process.

The bill will enable children of citizens by birth to obtain Nepali citizenship. It will also enable children of Nepali mothers whose fathers cannot be traced to obtain citizenship by descent. Non-resident Nepalese can also obtain citizenship and enjoy social, economic, and cultural rights, but not political rights.

Comments. Nepal's Parliament passes the Citizenship Amendment Bill, the bill was under discussion for the past 2 years as the parties failed to form a consensus on it. The main point of contention between the parties was the 7-year waiting period for obtaining naturalised citizenship for foreign women married to Nepali men. Home Minister Balkrishna Khand have argued in the House of Parliament that if the citizenship bill was stalled it would mean more suffering for the thousands of eligible citizens particularly the children on citizens by birth. Stating that differences between parties over seven-year waiting period for matrimonial naturalisation stalled the bill, the minister said the government brought the bill incorporating provisions of consensus. He said the government would continue to forge consensus on provisions related to matrimonial naturalisation even after the passage of the current citizenship bill.

Nepal Received Observer Status in Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

<https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/07/31/nepal-receives-observer-status-in-shanghai-cooperation-organisation>

Nepal is all set to be elevated from a dialogue partner to observer in Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, one of the biggest regional organisations in terms of geography, population and economy after the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Comments. Nepal's association with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation started as a dialogue partner after it signed a memorandum of understanding with the SCO secretariat on 22 March 2016. India is the member of SCO whose secretariat is in Beijing. Many analysts have suggested that Nepal's foreign relations have tilted towards the West lately and Beijing has expressed its unhappiness with the Sher Bahadur Deuba government. One official of the Nepal government has suggested that "Simply as an observer too, we can benefit from the position," "Since India and China are full members and they helped in elevating us, there is no need for Nepal to hesitate to become an SCO member now. But we need to be careful about the military and security components." The reactions have been mixed as everyone is not optimistic about the development. Some analysts have said that the role of observer is limited and defined and have no say in the decisions. One Nepali diplomat suggested that Nepal should be careful about joining a bloc that also has military and security components especially in the time of rising geopolitical tensions.