



CENTRE FOR
JOINT WARFARE
STUDIES
(CENJOWS)

GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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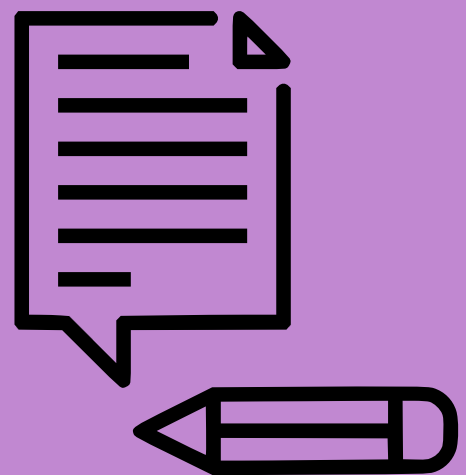
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Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

- 1** TIME: <https://time.com/6256509/ukraine-russia-war-anniversary/?> and https://time.com/6257220/putin-new-start-nuclear-treaty-era-over/?utm_ and https://time.com/6260585/bakhmut-ukraine-russia/?utm_
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- 4.** REUTERS- Daily Briefing. And the NEWSWEEK. <https://www.newsweek.com/putin-ally-reiterates-red-line-possible-nuclear-response-ukraine-war-1790177>
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- 7.** The NEWSWEEK. <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-ukraine-counteroffensive-bakhmut-1791103>
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BAKHMUT OFFENSIVE

Ukrainian soldiers are being attacked on three sides by Russian forces who are trying to capture Bakhmut. Russian forces have had some success in the city of Bakhmut, Ukrainian military officials said, adding that their fighters were still holding on. About 100 Ukrainian settlements were struck by mortars, tanks, artillery, S-300 missiles, multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), drones, and tactical aviation firing 500 kg bombs fitted with aerial guidance kit. Russian officials say their forces are still capturing ground in street-by-street fighting inside Bakhmut, but have so far failed to encircle it and force the Ukrainians to withdraw. Ukrainians have used a combination of sensor data derived from various sources and used AI tools to execute precise strikes against Russian forces.

COMMENTS

For Moscow, the battle is also a chance to inflict heavy casualties on Ukrainian brigades that Kyiv needs for its own expected offensives. Kyiv's determination to hold Bakhmut was also signalled by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to the area on Mar 22, 2023, where he awarded medals to front-line troops Ukraine's. Despite Ukrainian. Russians, who already control around 20 per cent of the Eastern and Southern Ukraine, will likely try to take whatever they consider important for their security, possibly including Odessa, and establish a large demilitarised zone in Central Ukraine. The big question remains to be answered-How long can Russia sustain its offensive, and can Ukraine reverse the momentum with a counteroffensive?

UKRAINE'S COUNTER OFFENSIVE

There has been talk for some weeks of Ukraine launching a spring offensive against Russian forces after receipt of new weapons deliveries from the West. Ukrainian commanders are eagerly waiting for the delivery of western weapons, the status of supply is as under:

Supply for warplanes and Air Defence. Poland has decided to deliver a dozen MiG-29 jets within the next few days followed by 13 MiG-29 jets by Slovakia. President Zelenskyy stated that Ukraine requires at least 20 Patriot batteries to defend against potential missile attacks from Russia.

Armour & Artillery. German Leopard-2 and British Challenger-2 tanks have finally been handed over to Ukraine. Meanwhile, Sweden will send eight Archer artillery systems, 10 Leopard 2 tanks, with 50 combat vehicles, anti-aircraft systems and anti-tank weapons to Ukraine. The U.S. has so far decided not to provide Ukraine with ATACMS, a long-range missile that can hit a target 190 miles away.

Ammunition. The extravagant use of ammunition in the first year of conflict has led to phenomenon of "shell hunger" being experienced by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Ukrainian armed forces are allegedly using Pakistan-made 122mm Yarmuk HE-Frag rockets. European Union countries on Monday agreed a 2 billion euro plan to send 1 million artillery rounds to Ukraine over the next year by digging into their own stockpiles and teaming up to buy more shells.

COMMENTS

President Volodymyr Zelensky asking Western allies vociferously for fighter jets, so far, none except Poland and Slovakia have agreed. This is at least, due to their desire to avoid upsetting Russia, which they believe may see such support as a serious escalation of their involvement in the conflict .Kyiv's prospects will depend on its ability to co-ordinate different types of troops ,artillery, armoured and infantry in a combined arms 'manoeuvre warfare'. However, the battle for air superiority will watched keenly as Ukraine has limited fighter planes and attack helicopters. The supply of shells for artillery guns is an important lesson for any warring nation.



Source: PBS News Hour

DRONE WARFARE

- **US-Russia.** In conflicting narratives about the incident, the Pentagon says the Russian Su-27s intercepted the surveillance drone in international airspace, dumping fuel on the drone, colliding with it and forcing it down. The Russian Defence Ministry said its jets were scrambled after a U.S. drone violated its “temporary airspace” off the Crimean peninsula (declared for its war in Ukraine) and that the American aerial vehicle “lost altitude” in “sharp manoeuvring”. The Reaper is employed primarily as an intelligence-collection asset.

COMMENTS

The splashing down of the U.S. MQ9 Reaper drone has underscored the dangerous risks of the Ukraine war. Whatever the reason, the fact that the U.S. lost a drone in the Black Sea, is a grave reminder of how close the nuclear powers have come to a conflict. The Russian attack did demonstrate the vulnerability of the platform owing to its poor manoeuvrability, by not firing any missile. This means downing the drone had a more political and strategic objective than a military one. Lastly, the unmanned platforms which were regarded low on escalation calculus, may see a change as states may be willing to engage in riskier behaviour.

- **Russia-Ukraine.** Iranian-designed Shahed-136 drones which have hit Ukrainian cities since the start of winter is an innovative product with uncanny precision. It has long range and its cheap cost stands out from tactical standoff weapons. Russia claims to also have developed and tested a drone quadcopter UAV400T with thermal camera and integrated it with an even more powerful ground based multi-camera thermal sighting system called Blockpost 4-T. Russia’s Ministry of Defense has particularly publicized the employment of the Pole-21 EW system, which presumably knocked out the Tu-141 electronics, controls, and navigation, eventually bringing it down. Ukraine too has been using drones to carry out deep intrusion missions into Russia in the past few weeks. Lancet kamikaze drones have been used to hit Russian Artillery gun posts.

COMMENTS

The war is also testing drone technologies as never before: over a large, contested airspace and against sophisticated electronic-warfare systems. It is said that the longer the war lasts, the more likely it becomes that drones will be used to identify, select and attack targets without human help. That would mark a revolution in military technology as profound as the introduction of the machine gun. Drones are only one element of a war that is currently dominated by artillery, infantry and missiles and represents inexpensive way to fight back against Russia’s vast military.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

There are about 80 Ukraine based drone manufacturers which are trying to fill the gap for both reconnaissance as well as hitting targets in depth. Ukraine is deploying drones in at least five different ways:

- as small, commercially available reconnaissance vehicles that can feed video footage back over a short range;
- as small-scale improvised loitering munitions, often designed to disturb more than destroy;
- as more sophisticated reconnaissance or electronic-warfare drones;
- as larger loitering munitions designed to destroy heavy armour; and
- finally as strike drones, whether airborne or naval, able to deliver bombs and missiles over distances of hundreds or even thousands of kilometres.

One major bottleneck is engine production, especially the petrol engines (as opposed to electric motors) needed to power strike drones over large distances. Only a limited number of manufacturers in the world can produce them.

CYBER WARFARE

Russian hackers are preparing for a new campaign in Ukraine where a spring cyber-offensive is about to be unleashed. Microsoft recently revealed that Russia had been using a “zero-day” vulnerability—one that is previously unknown and thus impossible to patch—for over a year until it was disclosed in mid-March. The vulnerability was used not just against Ukraine, but also government, military, energy and logistics sectors in Poland, Romania and Turkey.

COMMENTS

The war in Ukraine, is the first cyber war where both sides have comparable capabilities.

LEGAL WARFARE

The International Criminal Court accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of illegally deporting children from Ukraine, a war crime on March 17,2023. The move, which obligates the court's 123 member states to arrest Putin and transfer him to the Hague if he sets foot in their territories, caused outrage at the Kremlin. Russia is not a member of the ICC, however, it was able to file charges against Putin because Ukraine has accepted its jurisdiction over the current situation, although Kyiv too is not a member. On Mar 20,2023 Russia's top investigative body said that it had opened a criminal case against the International Criminal Court prosecutor and judges who issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin on war crimes charges.

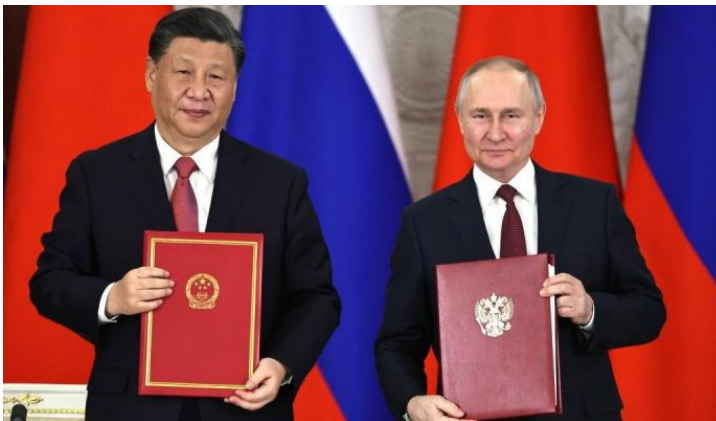
COMMENTS

Russia ,in fact had signed the court's founding ‘Rome Statute’ but did not ratify it to become a member. Russia then withdrew its signature on Putin's orders in 2016, after the ICC launched a probe into the 2008 war in Georgia.

STATE VISITS

Three major State Visits were reported in the media:

- Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Crimea on March 18, 2023 on a visit to mark the ninth anniversary of Russia's annexation of the peninsula from Ukraine and Mariupol, located in the Donetsk region which has been occupied by Moscow forces since May 2022.
- President Xi Jinping arrived in Moscow for talks with Vladimir Putin, his Russian counterpart on March 20, 2023. Despite the publishing of the 12 point "peace plan" last month, made no direct support for Putin's war in Ukraine during his two-day visit. The joint statement places emphasis on strengthening trade and economic cooperation, stressing energy as a particular area of converging interest.
- Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Kyiv for talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, on March 21, 2023.



Source: The Wire



Source: DW

COMMENTS

President Xi's visit was to cement the Sino-Russia ties between two "strategic partners" and "great neighbouring powers" where both sides also announced a "Plan to Promote the Key Elements of Russian-Chinese Economic Cooperation until 2030." Though a lot of effort was put in emphasising the economic underpinnings of their relationship in finance, transport, logistics and energy. However, there are growing concerns in the West on the Sino-Russia military ties which will reshape the post-cold war geopolitics challenging the Western World.

NUCLEAR

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced plans on Saturday to station tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus. Putin said the plan was in response to Britain's decision this past week to provide Ukraine with armour-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium. He said that the decision did not violate nuclear non-proliferation agreements and was not unusual, as America did the same with its own allies. China stresses opposition to nuclear war after Russia announces plan to send weapons to Belarus during a discussion in the UN held on Mar 31,2023. The country's UN ambassador Geng Shuang told a Security Council discussion that Beijing has always maintained 'a nuclear war cannot be fought'.

COMMENTS

Tactical nuclear weapons have a comparatively low yield and are designed to take out specific military targets, whereas strategic weapons have much greater destructive power. Russia has a huge numerical superiority over the United States and the transatlantic NATO military alliance when it comes to TNW. The United States believes Russia has around 2,000 such working tactical warheads, 10 times more than Washington. These warheads can be delivered by missiles, torpedoes and gravity bombs into the intended area with different yields of 0.3 to 170 KT. The Kremlin's most recent action, which practically places tactical nuclear weapons close to NATO countries, obviously escalates the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It is probably also designed to deter the West from supplying Ukraine with more advanced weapons. It also highlights that there have been no arms control agreements between the U.S. and Russia on tactical nuclear weapons.



Source: Metro UK

Pakistan Gets \$2bn Rollover Deposits From China for IMF bailout: Report

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/pakistan-gets-2bn-rollover-deposits-from-china-for-imf-bailout-report/articleshow/98982483.cms>

Cash-strapped Pakistan has received a rollover of \$2 billion in deposits for a period of one year from its all-weather ally China to help Islamabad get a much-required bailout from the IMF to stabilise its economy. The rollover, which basically is not a loan but a financial deposit to be kept at Pakistan's central bank for a period of one year, is one of the requirements of the IMF in meeting its external financing needs in order to move towards inking the staff-level agreement. Pakistan is scrambling to increase its forex reserves which are estimated to be at \$4.8 billion after China refinanced \$500 million last week. Earlier, a Chinese bank provided \$700 million to Pakistan.

COMMENTS

Pakistan and the IMF have been negotiating the release of a \$1.1 billion loan since February but so far without any success due to the tough conditions by the donor which Pakistan is slow to fulfill. The funds are part of a \$6.5 bn bailout package the IMF approved in 2019. In order to secure funding from IMF, the country has been implementing policy changes in line with the conditions set out by Washington based headquarter financial body. These changes include measures to increase tax revenues and promote a more equitable distribution of resources. The IMF has recommended reducing subsidies for those who do not require them, as part of this effort to improve resource allocation. Pakistan, is currently scrambling to boost its dwindling forex reserves.



Source: Crescent International

China's support has been critical as it has already provided financial support in this critical hour to help Pakistan avoid the default. It is worth noting that China is currently the largest creditor to Pakistan, with its commercial banks holding approximately 30 percent of Pakistan external debt. This is a part of China's Debt trap diplomacy. Debt-trap diplomacy is when a richer country lends to poorer countries, that are resource-rich or strategically placed, overwhelming them with debts that are not sustainable. This leads the poorer countries to give up their strategic assets or give in to political leverage.

Pakistan has survived the COVID-19 pandemic, the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, inflation, and supply chain disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The current crisis is so severe that foreign banks have refused to confirm letters of credit (LC) for even crude oil imports. The only foreign banks currently confirming LCs for Pakistan crude oil imports is Saudi Arabia's Al-Rajhi Bank. The current crisis in US banks, as well as Credit Suisse, will make the global business environment volatile. We will keep monitoring the situation in Pakistan.

Wary of China, Pakistan Opts Out of Democracy Summit in Washington

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/wary-of-china-pakistan-opts-out-of-democracy-summit-in-washington/articleshow/99071401.cms>

Pakistan, the closest ally of China, has decided to skip the Democracy Summit that begins in Washington, opting instead to engage with the US bilaterally to strengthen democratic values. The virtual summit is co-sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on the theme of "Global Declaration of Mayors for Democracy". China and Turkiye have not been invited to the virtual summit. Pakistan's participation in the summit has been a subject of intense debate for some time now. Islamabad chose to skip the event so that it does not potentially upset its "all-weather ally" China.

COMMENTS

The three-day event will showcase the role of cities and sub-national governments in the affirmation of democratic values and the renewal of democracy worldwide. During the summit there will be four sessions on each of the themes — International Cooperation for Anti-Corruption; Financial Transparency and Integrity; Non-governmental Stakeholder; and Technology and Anti-corruption. It provided a chance for Pakistan to present its perspective to a global audience that is not always inclined to view it kindly, including regarding its democratic progress and aspirations. But Islamabad gave up the platform the summit offered, and spurned the chance to be at the table when discussing key issues on which many question its commitments, those of human rights and democracy.

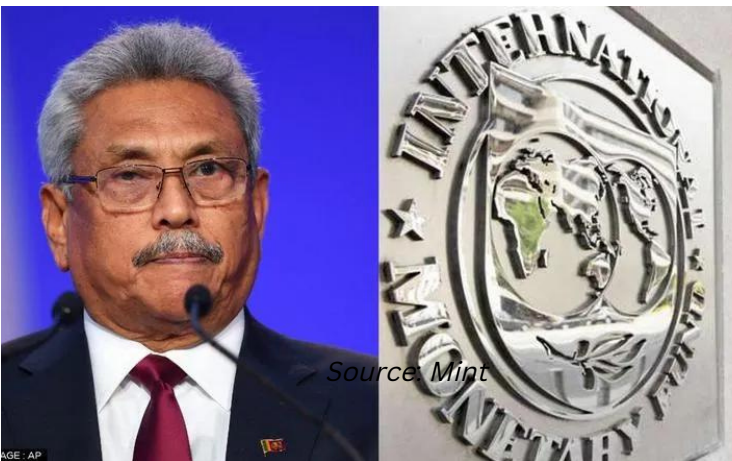
Pakistan chose not to attend a global summit held by the U.S. to show its support for China. Pakistan not attending will send negative signals to the US. The US is required for Pakistan to secure a deal with IMF. China would be closely monitoring these overtures as the US has already annoyed Beijing by inviting Taiwan, China's long-standing nemesis. The underlying message was that Pakistan declined the invitation in support of China, which had shown displeasure over Taiwan's inclusion. The decision to keep Turkiye, a close friend of Pakistan, out of the summit was another cause of concern for Islamabad. The decision to not attend the Summit had kept Islamabad on a tightrope of decision-making as the country's current security and economic situation complicated its position. Pakistan has been engaging with the US and other western countries to what it terms as fixing the damaged ties and open new chapters of diplomacy.

Sri Lanka to Get First Tranche of \$2.9bn Bailout in Two Days: IMF

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/21/sri-lanka-to-get-first-tranche-of-2-9bn-bailout-in-two-days-imf>

Economic mismanagement, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, left Sri Lanka severely short of dollars for essential imports at the beginning of last year, tipping the island nation into its worst financial crisis in seven decades. The IMF's executive board approved nearly \$2.9 bn, with the endorsement expected to catalyse additional external support to the tune of \$3.75bn from the likes of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other lenders. Earlier this month, the IMF said Sri Lanka had secured financing assurances from all its major creditors, including China and India, which paved the way for the bailout.

COMMENTS



Source: Mint

Source: Republic World

Colombo must continue pursuing tax reform and greater social safety nets for the poor, and rein in the corruption that has been partly blamed for the crisis. IMF had provisionally approved the bailout in September, but the final green light was held up until China, Sri Lanka's biggest bilateral lender, agreed to restructure its loans to Colombo. China agreed to restructure its loans. Areas, where Sri Lanka can look at, are tea, textiles/ garments, and the construction of ports and logistics.

With the growing influence of China, India is looking to strengthen its walls with its 'human-centric development' approach. India has offered a credit line, currency swap etc. India has investments in areas of tourism, real estate, manufacturing, communications, petroleum retail etc in Sri Lanka. It is also one of the neighbouring country's biggest sources of FDI.

India is likely to try and continue its influence on Sri Lanka. India is looking to maintain its influence in the region and counter the growing debt-trap initiatives of its eastern neighbour China via cooperative strategies and humanitarian aid, a move aimed to ringfence its strategic interests in the region and also keep the shadow of China away from its other borders.

In Doklam Standoff, Bhutan PM's China Comment Raises Concern In India

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/in-doklam-standoff-bhutan-pms-china-comment-raises-concern-in-india-3900017> - 28 March 2023.

- Six years after Indian and Chinese soldiers faced off in Doklam, Bhutan's Prime Minister has said Beijing has an equal say in finding a resolution to the dispute over the high-altitude plateau, which New Delhi believes has been illegally occupied by China. "It is not up to Bhutan alone to solve the problem," said Prime Minister Lotay Tshering in an interview with the Belgian Daily La Libre. "There are three of us. There is no big or small country, there are three equal countries, each counting for a third."
- The Bhutanese Prime Minister's statement on China having a stake in finding a resolution to the territorial dispute is likely to be deeply problematic for New Delhi, which is entirely opposed to China extending its footprint in Doklam, since the plateau lies close to the sensitive Siliguri Corridor, the narrow tract of land that separates India's North Eastern States from the rest of the country. Now, Bhutan's Prime Minister says, "We are ready. As soon as the other two parties are ready too, we can discuss." It is an indicator that Thimphu is willing to negotiate the status of the Tri-junction in Doklam, between India, China and Bhutan, which lies at the heart of the dispute.
- Mr Tshering's statement is in stark contrast with what he had told The Hindu in 2019, that "no side" should do anything near the existing Tri-junction point between the three countries "unilaterally". Since 2017, when the Chinese agreed to back off from the face-off site at Doklam, they have carved into Bhutanese territory along the Amo Chu River Valley, which lies adjacent and directly to the East of Doklam. Here, they have constructed several villages and a road directly through territory that has always been a part of Bhutan, as evident in official maps of the country. Now, however, in the clearest indication that Bhutan may have been forced to cede territory to China, Prime Minister Lotay Tshering says, "A lot of information is circulating in the media about Chinese facilities in Bhutan. We are not making a big deal about them because they are not in Bhutan. We have said it categorically, there is no intrusion as mentioned in the media. This is an international border and we know exactly what belongs to us."
- Mr Tshering's remark is a likely reflection of the fact that Thimphu can do little to halt China's 'salami-slicing' of Bhutanese territory, not just along its Western frontiers near Doklam, but also to the North of the country in the Jakarlung and Pasamlung Valleys. The Western areas measure approximately 270 square km, while disputed areas to the North measure nearly 500 square km.



Source: *The Wire*

- In January this year, Chinese and Bhutanese experts met in Kunming and agreed to work towards reaching an agreement on their boundary talks. Both sides have held more than 20 rounds of talks so far and are reportedly working to arrive at a 'positive consensus'. "We are not experiencing major border problems with China, but some territories have not yet been demarcated," said Prime Minister Tshering, downplaying the extent of China's intrusions. "After one or two more meetings, we will probably be able to draw a dividing line." New Delhi will be closely watching where that line is placed on a map.

COMMENTS

The Tri-junction Point is located at Batang La. Tibetan Chumbi Valley lies to the North of Batang La, Bhutan lies to the South and East and India to the West. China wants that Tri-junction shifted approximately seven km South of Batang La to a peak called Mount Gipmochi, so as to make the entire Doklam plateau a part of Tibet. In 2017, Indian soldiers prevented China from extending a road in Doklam plateau that it was illegally constructing in the direction of Mount Gipmochi and Jhampheri Ridge, which led to a standoff for more than two months.

Kishida's Visit to New Delhi and the Future of the Indo-Pacific

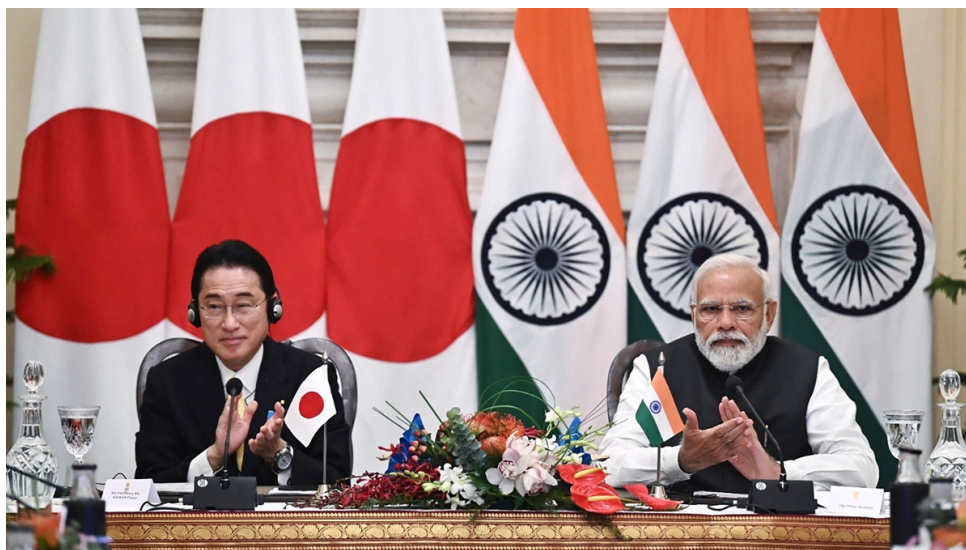
<https://www.ankasam.org/kishidas-visit-to-new-delhi-and-the-future-of-the-indo-pacific/?lang=en#:~:text=Japanese%20Prime%20Minister%20Fumio%20Kishida%20paid%20a%20two-day,%E2%80%98%E2%80%99Indo-Pacific%20Initiative%20Action%20Plan%E2%80%99%E2%80%99%20during%20this%20visit.%20>

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida paid a two-day visit to New Delhi on 20 March 2023 at the official invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Kishida invited Modi to the G-7 Summit in Hiroshima in May 2023 and also announced a new "Indo-Pacific Initiative Action Plan" during this visit. These contacts, which took place simultaneously with the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Moscow, can be considered as an important indicator of regional and global polarization.

COMMENTS

This year, Japan is holding the presidency of G7 and India is holding the presidency of G20. In his visit to India, the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, focuses on collaborating with ASEAN and other numerous countries. He believed that both the countries have the leverage to engage together on certain fields which would bring peace and prosperity to the international community, which is facing a time of challenges.

Prior to his visit to India, Kishida has met with a number of world leaders, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol. security, and climate change.



Source: Global Times



Source: Outlook India

Being the last G-7 leader to visit the war-torn country Ukraine, he assured “solidarity and unwavering support” to Ukraine. These meetings and visits mostly pertain to the fact that Japan’s security environment in its neighborhood is changing which is followed by an increase in its defense spending. Not just focusing on the robust military activities of the countries like Russia and China, Kishida’s talks with Prime Minister Modi was on various issues such as debt financing, food and energy security, and climate change.

At the Indian Council of International Affairs, Kishida also delivered a talk in which he described his idea for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" framework. The idea of FOIP has been particularly adaptable in developing in a way that includes varied viewpoints, along with the rising support and acceptance from the international community. The goal of guiding the international community towards cooperation rather than division and conflict is becoming more and more dependent on this vision, which has been cultivated by the voices of various nations and can be referred to as "our FOIP."

Kishida also invited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the G-7 Summit in Hiroshima and announced a new “Indo-Pacific Initiative Action Plan”. Obviously, China remains a major concern for Japan apart from the Russia-Ukraine war. Both the countries have already initiated joint air exercises in January 2023 which was interpreted as a move to contain China. Japan has been trying to include neighboring states in an anti-China and anti-Russian axis, with India being an important partner in this effort. Kishida also asked India for help in building a broader coalition against Russia.

In sum, it could be observed that, Kishida’s visit to India was an effort to defend the free and open world order. It also has intentions to promote its strategic partnership with India to strengthen the American-led alliance for democracy. Despite there exist a gap between the two countries such as people-to-people contacts, Japan believes that it could be filled. The endeavour to promote languages is admirable, more interactions between young people, the workforce as well as a focus on tourism promotion would be expected since relationships cannot be evaluated solely in strategic and economic terms in order to endure in the long run.

Japan, South Korea Break Long Chill and Pledge Cooperation at Summit

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-koreas-president-yoon-arrives-in-japan-for-rare-summit-talks-ab69044c>

Japan and South Korea pledged to deepen military and economic ties at their leaders' first formal summit since 2011, a long-delayed move to repair relations strained by historical disputes. The U.S. hailed the tentative rapprochement, saying it would help the two American allies work more closely to tackle regional threats from China and North Korea.

COMMENTS

Japan and South Korea's resumption of bilateral engagements are bound to have a regional as well as a global impact. After finally deciding to do away with colonial antagonism, the two countries are likely to steer regional matters to their advantage. The Summit between Japan's Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and South Korean President Yoon Seok Yeol is significant both in terms of military and economic security.

With North Korea's unprecedented missile tests, the disconnect between US-ROK and US-Japan relations can accelerate into a more strengthened trilateral cooperation. Further, this can also normalize the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSMIA) between Tokyo and Seoul in line with the existing agreement on trilateral Information Sharing Arrangement Concerning the Nuclear and Missile Threats Posed by North Korea. The real-time data sharing between Japan and Korea may address the North Korea security threat issue more cautiously and resume security dialogue on the same.

Japan and South Korea normalizing bilateral relations will also follow economic security in the region, especially in the technology domain. The two countries are known for their chip-making capacity and can act counter-effective to China's dominance in the semiconductor market. The resumption of bilateral ties may also assist in strengthening the global supply chain resilience on semiconductors and reduce the dependence on China. Moreover, Japan and South Korea have decided to lift the trade bans which will add to increased trade movement between the two countries and the Indo-Pacific at large.

Earlier last year, the two countries released their updated defence policies that highlighted key interactions in the Indo-Pacific region. The rapprochement between Tokyo and Seoul can lead to a change in power play in the region and beyond, especially with the ASEAN countries. China's belligerence remains a fundamental security threat for Japan and the US, while South Korea choose to remain status quo. But the centrality of the ASEAN countries for both Japan and South Korea is immense and therefore some engagement perhaps can also gather momentum. South Korea's engagement with the QUAD nations is also likely to incentives. On the whole, the normalizing of bilateral ties will carry a positive outcome on security, trade and technology.

Russia Supplies Iran With Cyber Weapons as Military Cooperation Grows

https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-supplies-iran-with-cyber-weapons-as-military-cooperation-grows-b14b94cd?mod=world_major_2_pos1

Russia is helping Iran gain advanced digital-surveillance capabilities as Tehran seeks deeper cooperation on cyberwarfare, people familiar with the matter said, adding another layer to a burgeoning military alliance that the U.S. sees as a threat.

COMMENTS

This collaboration between Russia and Iran takes place after Russia has maintained its regular supplies of Iranian drones which provided an additional advantage by allowing Putin to conserve the long range strike assets.

According to the Citizen Lab report (Toronto University's research facility), PROTEI LLC (a Russian corporation) is transferring data interception and censorship technologies to Ariantel (an Iranian mobile operator). It will benefit the state agencies in monitoring, intercepting, redirecting, degrading, or refusing any Iranians' connectivity, especially those who are actively protesting against the regime.

Russia had earlier turned down sharing digital-offensive capabilities with Iran, fearing that the tech expertise would disseminate on the black market, but has now judged that the advantages of developing a deeper strategic partnership with Iran exceed any disadvantages.

Russia's decision to provide Iran with cyber monitoring systems greatly deepens their strategic alliance. The transfer of technology to Iran improves Tehran's capacity to repress its own internal political resistance and threaten America and its allied forces in cyberspace. This also holds the possibilities of changing the cyber security dynamics in West Asia as Iran will try to use these advanced cyber capabilities to protect its nuclear programme as well as its nuclear sites that are frequently subjected to attacks by Israel, and US.

Vladimir Putin May Visit Turkey In April For Power Plant Inauguration

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/vladimir-putin-may-visit-turkey-in-april-for-power-plant-inauguration-3904972>

Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin may visit Turkey on April 27 for the inauguration of the country's first nuclear power reactor built by Russia's state nuclear energy company Rosatom.

This dramatic move by Turkey and Russia to jointly collaborate on strategic projects in the energy sector came soon after Biden dropped Turkey along with Hungary for its NATO Democracy Summit. In the realm of energy independence, there is likely to be a shift in Turkey-Russia relations. The visit also demonstrates Mr. Putin's commitment to preserving the advantage Russia has won through decades of military and diplomatic engagement in West Asia.

China Says Joint Exercises With Russia, Iran in Gulf of Oman Enhanced Navies' Ability

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2023/03/30/Joint-China-Iran-Russia-exercises-in-Gulf-of-Oman-enhanced-navies-ability>

A recent joint China-Iran-Russia navy exercise in the Gulf of Oman enhanced the ability of the navies to conduct diversified maritime missions, said China's defense ministry. The three nations sent forces including 12 ships, special operations and diving units to participate in the drills from March 15 to 19th.

COMMENTS

These drills reflect that Iran, despite being subjected to sanctions, is working closely with Russia and China, to enhance its defense capabilities. These drills could also be interpreted as an effort by Iran to project power and influence in the Middle East. It also reveals a growing synergy between the three nations to defend their common geopolitical interests in the Indian Ocean and pose a threat to the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) force, led by the United States.



Source: Serbia Posts English