



CENTRE FOR  
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STUDIES  
(CENJOWS)

# GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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# Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

1. *The Economist*: <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2023/03/24/how-racing-drones-are-used-as-improvised-missiles-in-ukraine?>
2. *Newsweek*: <https://www.newsweek.com/russian-warships-retreat-crimea-ukraine-1798646>
3. *Eurasian Times*: <https://eurasianimes.com/ukraine-gathers-60000-troops-for-much-awaited-counter/>

## UKRAINIAN OFFENSIVE

Russian security services intercepted the two drones early on 03 May 2023 morning and nobody was injured. Russia's government accused Ukraine of being behind a drone attack on the Kremlin, President Vladimir Putin's residence in Moscow, in what a spokesperson called a "terrorist attack" and an attempt on his life. Ukraine denied the accusation.

- An oil refinery in Krasnodar region of Russia was hit by another drone attack on May 04, 2023 .
- Russia has moved most of its Black Sea Fleet warships from its primary base in Crimea to safer waters in Russian territory out of fear of missile attacks.
- Ukraine has reportedly assembled approximately 60,000 troops in preparation for the upcoming operation.

## RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

In contrast, Russia is believed to have around 300,000 troops stationed on the front lines and an additional 200,000 in reserve . On May 04,2023 Moscow has stepped up attacks as Ukraine prepares for a counteroffensive to try to retake occupied land and launched its worst attacks on Kyiv in a year as missiles and drones struck the capital for the third time in four days. The move has been seen as Moscow's revenge for what it considers was Ukrainian ploy to assassinate Vladimir Putin.

- Russia fired two dozen combat drones at Ukraine early today, striking a university campus in the Black Sea city of Odesa and attacking the capital Kyiv for the third time in four days.
- Russian missile strikes wounded more than 30 people and damaged dozens of homes in Pavlohrad, a city in south-eastern Ukraine. They also knocked out part of the electricity grid, leaving thousands without power. The attacks are the second set of long-range missile strikes Russia has carried out in recent days, suggesting that it is reviving a tactic it used extensively in the winter.
- A fuel depot in Ukraine was also on fire after a suspected Russian drone strike on the central city of Kropyvnytskyi.
- Ahead of its Victory Day celebrations, Russia launched a fresh wave of attacks on Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv and the Odesa oblast. The Russians reportedly fired eight Kh-22 (X-22; AS-4 'Kitchen') missiles on Odesa in an overnight attack.
- The Russian military had started to deploy the latest cutting-edge T-14 Armata tanks against Ukraine and will challenge US and German Tanks

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT



Source: NBC

On **Victory Day Parade (9th May)**, President Vladimir Putin said civilisation was at a “turning point” as a “war had been unleashed” against Russia. Ursula von der Leyen, the President of European Commission arrived in Kyiv to celebrate Europe Day on May 10, 2023.

### UKRAINIAN AIR DEFENCE

Ukraine has confirmed it successfully shot down a Russian Kh-47M2 Kinzhal hypersonic missile, using the Patriot System, over Kyiv on May 04, 2023, clarifying earlier conflicting reports over whether one of the state-of-the-art weapons had been destroyed. Fired by MiG-31, the Kinzhal can reach speeds greater than Mach 10 and travel distances in the range of 1,500 to 2,000 kilometers while carrying a conventional or nuclear payload.

Also, Ukraine has begun operating Israel-made early warning system which recognises all types of rockets and missiles, without the ability to intercept rockets, but predicts where the rockets are going to land and enables the civilian to move to safe areas. Meanwhile, Britain has supplied Ukraine with long-range Storm Shadow missiles to assist in its fight against Russia.

### RUSSIAN DEFENCE

In addition to the Pantsir air defense system, Moscow's defenses have been further reinforced by the deployment of S-400 anti-aircraft systems.

### BATTLE FOR BAKHMUT

Moscow sees Bakhmut as a stepping stone to attacking other Ukrainian cities. Ukrainian counterattacks have ousted Russian forces from some positions in the besieged eastern city of Bakhmut. The Ukrainian general in charge of ground forces said his troops would not give up the eastern city of Bakhmut as they prepare to begin a counteroffensive against occupying Russian forces.

**COMMENTS**

Kyiv is supported by Western weapons and intelligence and is battling for national survival, utilising a Euro-Atlantic supply pipeline, and receiving training from the West's top fighting troops. Ukraine has reportedly been preparing for a spring counteroffensive to take back its territories occupied by Russia since the war began with the February 2022 invasion. The country's military capabilities have been bolstered by Western aid in recent months, including advanced military equipment, tanks and artillery. As the world awaits the start of the long-anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive, concerns are being raised that continued military and economic support for the Zelensky government from the West could well be dependent upon the extent of its battlefield successes this spring and summer. The outcome of Kyiv's upcoming counteroffensive will probably determine how the war develops in the future. If it is successful, Ukraine will not only liberate more land but also probably win more Western assistance. By doing this, Kyiv would be in a good position for any upcoming battles and potential peace talks. Vladimir Putin, though, is banking that if the counteroffensive fails, the U.S. will lose its commitment and pressurise Kyiv into hasty peace negotiations. Whatever may be the outcome of Ukraine's upcoming counteroffensive, it will show whether Ukraine and Russia can generate additional forces in the future and sustain operations.

Though Ukraine has denied the drone attack on the Kremlin, it is assessed that Russia may use its Air Force which is the second largest and includes approximately 900 fighter jets and 120 bombers ahead of Ukrainian counteroffensive. Ukrainians have a depleted strength of S-300 and Buk air defence mid to long-range systems which have been used to defend against cruise missiles and drones fired by the Russians.



*Source: Radio Free Europe*

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Drones of all sizes and capabilities have become vital to the current combat, being used by front-line forces for observation, artillery spotting, and even bombing missions against enemy units and positions—whether as kamikaze weapons or dropping grenades. Many of these UAVs are of commercial grade. Both Ukraine and Russia have utilised increasingly advanced long-range drones to hit infrastructure targets far behind the front lines on a regular basis. Ukraine has been converting faster and more agile drone devices designed for the sport of drone-racing into small loitering munitions. They are small, carry payload, such as grenade, of a kilogram or so and detonate the cargo.

The latest \$1.2 Bn US military aid to Ukraine reportedly enables integration of US AWACS into the Ukrainian AD systems like S-300. This could potentially keep the Russian Airforces at bay.

Differences between the leader of the Wagner Group, Prigozhin, and the Russian Defence Ministry/Forces over supply of munitions and logistic support could mean a weaker front in Bakhmut and elsewhere.



*Source: The Guardian*

# India Financed Sittwe Port Opens in Myanmar, Countering China's Connectivity Projects

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-financed-sittwe-port-myanmar-chinas-connectivity-projects-2377650-2023-05-11>

- The strategic Sittwe Port in Myanmar was jointly inaugurated by Indian Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal and Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Transport & Communications of Myanmar, Admiral Tin Aung San on Wednesday. At the event, they received the first Indian cargo ship, which was flagged off from Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata.
- The port, built with Indian assistance, will play a key role in connectivity and would lead to 50 per cent reduction in cost and time of transportation of goods between Kolkata, Agartala and Aizwal. "This will promote trade connectivity and people to people ties between India and Myanmar and the wider region and will help boost economic development of North Eastern States under 'Act East Policy' of the Government," said Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal at the inauguration.
- "The operationalisation of Sittwe Port would enhance bilateral and regional trade as well as contribute to the local economy of Rakhine State of Myanmar. The greater connectivity provided by the Port will lead to employment opportunities and enhanced growth prospects in the region," said a press release issued by the Ports Ministry. Union minister Sonowal reiterated India's longstanding commitment towards the development and prosperity of people of Myanmar through developmental initiatives such as the Sittwe Port.



Source: PIB

## REGIONAL SCAN: MYANMAR

- In 2008, India and Myanmar had signed a \$ 484 million deal for the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project to connect North Eastern India to the Indian Ocean, to provide an alternative connectivity of Mizoram with Haldia/Kolkata/any Indian ports through Kaladan River in Myanmar. The project envisages highway road transport from Mizoram to Paletwa, Myanmar, thereafter from Paletwa to Sittwe, Myanmar by Inland Water Transport and from Sittwe to any port in India by maritime shipping, thus making Sittwe Port the epicenter of the Kaladan Project.
- While the port has been operationalised, other parts of the Kaladan Project, such as the highways, have hit a roadblock due to the Rohingya crisis and civil unrest with fighting between Myanmar's military and pro-democracy factions.

### COMMENTS

Myanmar is of geo-strategic importance to India and it has accordingly retained ties with the military regime since the 2021 takeover and toppling of the civilian government and not followed the Western sanctions. In addition to enhancement of bilateral and regional trade, the operationalisation of Sittwe Port would provide the desired geo-strategic advantage to India in the Indian Ocean region.



*Source: Switteport.com*

## Pakistan FM Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Describes His India Visit As A 'Success'

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/pakistan-fm-bilawal-bhutto-zardari-describes-his-india-visit-as-a-success/articleshow/100027301.cms>

Pakistan foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said his visit to Goa was a "success" as he advocated his country's case on the soil of India. His remarks came hours after his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar accused him being a "promoter, justifier and a spokesperson of a terror industry." "When the world was fighting Covid, the menace of terrorism continued unabated. We firmly believe that there can be no justification for terrorism and it must be stopped in all its forms and manifestations including cross-border terrorism. Combating terrorism is one of the original mandates of SCO," Jaishankar said.

### COMMENTS

The summit witnessed both India and Pakistan trading barbs on sensitive issues like the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and cross-border terrorism. Such exchanges over terrorism or Kashmir are staples of the India-Pakistan conversation and have recurred several times in the past.



Source: Al Jazeera

The relationship has been minimally stable since early 2021 and the reaffirmation of the ceasefire by both sides. The stability is, however, at a very low plateau with no bilateral contacts, a downgraded diplomatic representation, and a closure of trade. It has been, therefore, a fragile, even brittle, stability. It is nevertheless significant because the ceasefire has endured, despite a year-long period of serious internal turmoil and severe economic stress in Pakistan. The Pakistan army has also gone through a messy and bruised transition at its highest echelons alongside intense civil-military contestations.

The image today of the Pakistan Army is more dented than at any time in the past decade and a half. As of now, the heightened rhetoric and the recent terrorist attacks do not bode well for the months ahead. Terrorism and Kashmir issue will continue to remain issues of contention. At any cost, the peace process must be continued. We will keep monitoring the future implications.

## Former Pakistan PM Imran Khan Arrested From Outside Islamabad High Court

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/former-pakistan-pm-imran-khan-arrested/articleshow/100098249.cms>

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has been arrested as he appeared in a court in the capital, Islamabad, to face corruption allegations, igniting protests across the country.

## Supreme Court Keeps Favours Its 'Ladla' Imran Khan: PM Shehbaz

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/supreme-court-keeps-favouring-its-ladla-imran-khan-pm-shehbaz/articleshow/100189967.cms>

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif questioned the Supreme Court's granting of relief to its 'ladla' Imran Khan, saying its 'double standards' have led to the death of justice in Pakistan. SC said that the arrest was "unlawful" and "invalid" and ordered his immediate release.

## Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan granted bail after 'invalid' arrest

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/12/pakistan-ex-pm-imran-khan-granted-bail-after-unlawful-arrest>

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has been granted bail by the Islamabad High Court after his arrest on corruption charges this week sparked deadly clashes before being declared illegal.

### COMMENTS

Khan has been charged in more than 100 cases – including corruption, terrorism and blasphemy – since his removal from power through a parliamentary no-confidence vote. His arrest was made in connection to the Al-Qadir Trust case initiated last year by the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Imran Khan's arrest followed a recent escalation in a war of words with the country's powerful military, which had recently publicly fallen out with the former prime minister over senior military appointments and policy decisions.



Source: *The Indian Express*

This time the armed forces became targets of widespread anger and violence. The heavily guarded General Headquarters in Rawalpindi has been attacked by violent mobs, setting fire to some buildings. It is no longer possible for Pakistan Army maintain the facade of a neutral entity that rises above the squabbling and corrupt parties and be regarded as the sentinel of Pakistan's security. Imran Khan has been attacking the army, even accusing a senior officer of ISI ie Maj Gen Faisal Naseer, of being responsible for several assassination attempt against him. Pakistan enjoys a strategic location and, more importantly, it is a nuclear weapon state. There may even be a quiet welcome to a military takeover. A possibility is that if things get out of hand, the army may assume direct control of the government. The military has directly ruled the country for more than three decades in its 75 years of existence and is still believed to play an active role in political affairs.

Pakistan faces multiple crises. There is a political crisis, often with constitutional implications, a deepening economic crisis, the worst climate-induced floods in the country's history, a resurgence of terrorist violence with transborder implications, and a judiciary crisis with a growing confrontation between the judiciary and the legislature/ executive. Pakistan has never been as polarized as it is today, and the confrontation between parties does not appear amenable to resolution in Parliament. Imran Khan's ambition is to win back power, but it is unlikely that the army leadership will let Khan return to power. Hence, the situation is fast becoming alarming.

Relations with India continue to be tense. There may be a temptation to deflect attention with more shrill propaganda on Kashmir and renewed activity along and across the LoC. But the nature and intensity of Pakistan's crisis are such that this deflection may not suffice. The present situation remains unpredictable. The possibility of a more disturbed LoC must be considered seriously. We will keep monitoring the situation.

## Pakistan Breaches FATF Redline By Allowing JeM To Solicit Funds During Eid For Jihad; Report

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/world/pakistan-breaches-fatf-redline-by-allowing-jem-to-solicit-funds-during-eid-for-jihad-report/ar-AA1aGrdH>

During the Eid celebrations, the internationally outlawed terrorist organisation Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) actively sought funds for jihad in Peshawar and other locations. Pakistan has thus violated the key redline set by the global anti-terrorist financing watchdog, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) when it removed the nation from the greylist last year.



Source: India TV

## COMMENTS

The operations by the JeM are considered a major violation by Pakistan of a key redline set by the FATF in removing the country from the "grey list" last year. The country has also been repeatedly chastised for harboring terrorists and assisting terrorists, especially India. Pakistan's government has not completely stopped such fundraising activities. Terrorist organizations use this devious method to raise funds.

Last year, the FATF inspection team verified that there was a high-level political commitment from the Pakistan authorities to implement the current set of action steps and show commitment to ongoing reform. Pakistan was on the FATF's "black list" from 2009 to 2012 before moving to the "grey list" from 2012 to 2015. It was placed on the "Regular follow-up" (RFU) from 2015-2018 after being removed from the "grey list" in 2015. Similarly, it was on the "grey list" from 2018 to 2022 and will now be placed in RFU. It has to be seen, how FATF authorities will change their stance, seeing Pakistan's government not stopping objectionable practices. We will keep monitoring the situation.

## IMF To Discuss Pakistan's Upcoming Budget Plans Before Unlocking 'Financing Injection'

<https://www.livemint.com/news/world/imf-to-discuss-pakistans-upcoming-budget-plans-before-unlocking-financing-injection-11683467898119.html>

IMF has said it is preparing to discuss the upcoming budget plans of Pakistan for the financial year 2024 as part of the lender's support program to the cash-strapped nation before unlocking the crucial financing injection. The IMF deal is crucial for tackling Pakistan's severe balance-of-payments (BoP) crisis, and avoiding default and potentially difficult debt restructuring.

## COMMENTS

The new conditions by the Washington-based global financial body and the refusal to combine the reviews reflect the widening trust gap, which is seen as a fresh obstacle to the release of the pending bailout funds amounting to \$2.6 billion. The country is reeling from an economic crisis with inflation surging to 47%, the highest in its history and the highest in South Asia. The government has removed caps on the exchange rate, imposed taxes, raised energy tariffs, and scaled back subsidies in an attempt to unlock the IMF funding.

IMF wants to ensure that the government remains committed to the agreed path of fiscal consolidation as the country prepares for elections later this year. Historically, the biggest fiscal slippages in Pakistan occur in an election year. IMF seems averse to combining the remaining two reviews (9th and 10th) with the ninth review and releasing the entire amount at one go to keep the fiscal authorities in check. The country faces a total of \$3.7bn in debt payments in the next two months till the end of June. About \$700m in maturities are due in May and \$3bn in June.

## China May Be Looking At Setting Up A Military Base In Pakistan's Gwadar

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/china-may-be-looking-at-setting-up-a-military-base-in-pakistans-gwadar/articleshow/100096885.cms>

Beijing recently announced that it is looking to “expand into new fields of military cooperation” with Islamabad, raising global concerns that the PLA may be looking at setting up a military base on the shores of the Arabian Sea near Gwadar Port in Pakistan.



Source: Getty Images



Source: Times of India

### COMMENTS

In order to safeguard its interests in the region, China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti on the northwestern fringe of the Indian Ocean in 2017. China was seeking to establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure to allow the PLA to project and sustain military power at greater distances. Beijing is also investing heavily in Gwadar. China's Space System Department operates at least eight bases, including those whose core missions are launch, tracking, R&D, and operation of the satellites vital to China's defence architecture. Chinese Army footprints will be all over Pakistan from Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK, Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan.

The setting up the military base would give China permanent access to the Indian Ocean, through which vital shipping routes for China's oil imports from the Persian Gulf run. India needs to keep tracking these developments, because these are happening in her own backyard. Gwadar's strategic location near the mouth of the Straits of Hormuz is of concern to India as 63 percent of India's oil imports are transported via this waterway. In the event of a military confrontation with India or if China decides to come to Islamabad's aid in an India-Pakistan war, military facilities at Gwadar will prove critical. For India, the crucial requirement is to strengthen cooperation with United States, Japan, Australia and other South East Asian countries. India should be focusing on deft diplomacy.

# China-Made Advanced Naval Warships Inducted Into Pakistan Navy

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/486633-china-made-advanced-naval-warships-inducted-into-pakistan-navy>

In a major leap towards strengthening capabilities to respond to maritime threats and contribution to peace and stability in the region, the Pakistan Navy inducted two new frigates — PNS Tipu Sultan and Shahjahan — into its fleet. The active support of China, the Pakistan navy has undertaken substantial measures to strengthen its force structure and progressive capability enhancement.

## COMMENTS

The contract for four multi-role frigates (Type 054-A/P) for the navy was signed between Pakistan and China in 2018. The first and second ships PNS TUGHRIL and PNS TAIMUR joined the PN fleet in 2022. The development of these state-of-the-art naval units for the Pakistan Navy is hinged upon modern stealth design with the capability to simultaneously engage in multiple naval operations to counter maritime threats.

The 4,000 tonnes frigates are technologically advanced and highly capable platforms having enormous surface-to-surface, land attack, surface-to-air and underwater firepower coupled with extensive surveillance potential. These ships will provide deterrence and a means for averting threats in our region while contributing towards the protection of Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCS).



*Source: Global Times*

# NATO To Open Japan Office, Deepening Indo-Pacific Engagement

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/486633-china-made-advanced-naval-warships-inducted-into-pakistan-navy>

NATO is planning to open a liaison office in Tokyo, the first of its kind in Asia, Nikkei Asia has learned. The station will allow the military alliance to conduct periodic consultations with Japan and key partners in the region such as South Korea, Australia and New Zealand as China emerges as a new challenge, alongside its traditional focus on Russia. NATO and Japan will also upgrade their cooperation, aiming to sign an Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) before the NATO Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 11-12. The two sides will deepen collaboration in tackling cyber threats, coordinate stances on emerging and disruptive technologies, and exchange notes on fighting disinformation.

## COMMENTS

The Ukraine conflict has altered NATO's perception of China. In addition to the already existing issues with China, a new aspect has merged. China's role as a supporter of Russia. This is now directly tied to the security of Europe.

Since NATO released its previous "Strategic Concept in 2010", the geopolitical scene has undergone significant shifts. There was no mention of China at that point of time meanwhile Russia remained prospective ally. At the Madrid Summit in 2022, the leaders of the allies agreed that Russia was no longer a friend but a threat, and they also recognised that China's ascent would have an effect on trans-European security.



Source: WWS.org

## NATO/ INDO-PACIFIC

Due of this, it is crucial that NATO maintains its relationships with its regional allies. Nikkei Asia affirms that NATO intends to establish the region's first liaison office in Tokyo. During the latter's visit to Tokyo at the end of January 2023, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg first broached the subject of establishing a liaison office.

If Tokyo contributes the funds necessary for a Western military alliance to establish a presence in Japan, it would mark the beginning of a new era in defence collaboration.

Both parties want to intensify their cooperation. Japan even plans to create a separate NATO mission in Belgium apart from its embassy there. Along with this, Tokyo proposes a new ambassador to relieve Masahiro Mikami from his NATO responsibilities



Prior to the NATO Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 2023, both the sides intend to ink the “Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP)”. This would mostly involve exchange on information on countering misinformation and strengthen their cooperation in addressing cyber threats.

They will also coordinate their positions on new and disruptive technologies. The event is supposed to be attended by leaders of South Korea, Australia and New Zealand apart from Japan. This itself signals increased involvement of NATO in the Indo-Pacific.

The liaison office also intends to communicate with other significant regional players including India and the ASEAN nations.

Source: Council Pacific Affairs

# Impact Of Korean Goods Is Etched In Indian Minds: FM

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/finance-minister-nirmala-sitharaman-meets-samsung-cfo-in-south-korea-to-discuss-future-investments-in-cutting-edge-technology-in-india-11683049216557.html>

**Incheon, South Korea:** Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman kicked off a four-day visit to South Korea with a meeting with Samsung Electronics Chief Financial Officer Hark Kyu Park on Tuesday on the sidelines of the annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank. Discussions between the two were around future investment in cutting edge technology in India," the finance minister's office said in a Twitter post on Tuesday.

## COMMENTS

The visit of Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to South Korea coincided with the 56th annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank. The visit is also key to India-South Korea relations as this is the 50th commemorative year of diplomatic ties between the two countries. India and South Korea's bilateral relations have always been characterized by trade and technology. FM Sitharaman's visit to Seoul is just another extension of solidifying existing ties, especially at a time when demands for South Korean goods, both tangible and intangible, in India, have increased over time.

FM Sitharaman also met with her Korean counterpart Choo Kyung Ho, the Deputy Prime Minister of Economy and Finance to discuss South Korea's investments in India, especially with regards to the Nagpur-Maharashtra Expressway. Foreign investments from South Korea have gradually increased and are now even being extended to green hydrogen sectors. As India makes a switch to cleaner and sustainable energy, further investments from Korea and like-minded countries are invited.



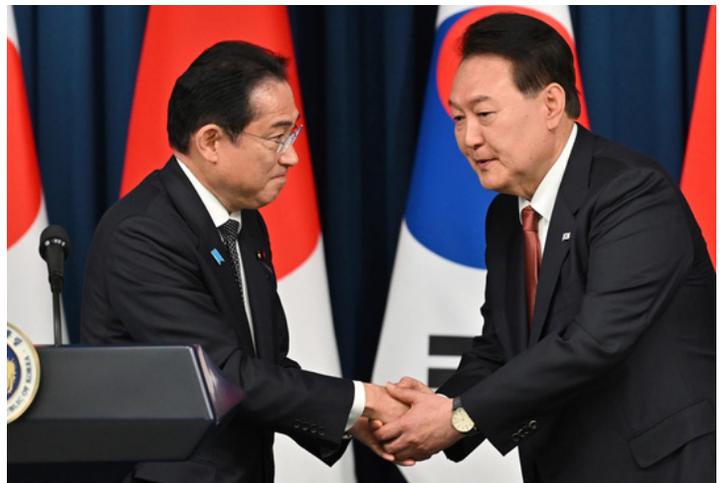
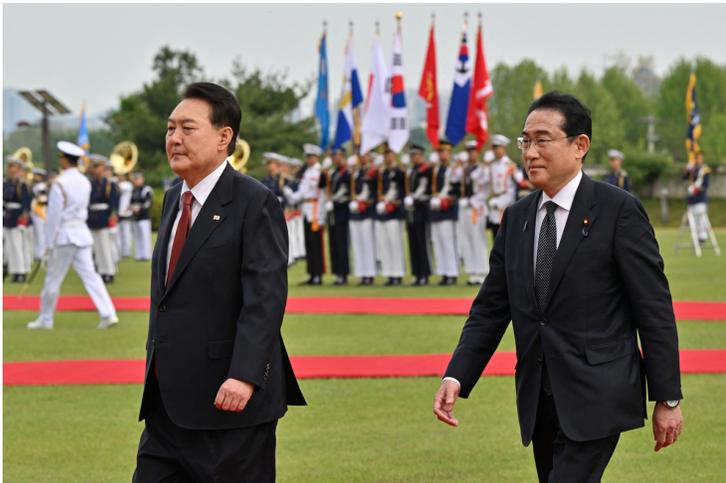
*Source: Twitter*

A key driver that is presently shaping India-Korea relations is cultural exports from the latter. The market in India has shown a positive response towards Korean cultural assets resulting in more people-to-people interactions. This presents an opportunity for both countries to tap into and work to strengthen relations beyond trade and technology. India's Presidency at the G20 has been appreciated and recognized by South Korea and it further calls for leveraging this opportunity to strengthen relations with the country, both at the regional and global level.

## Kishida's South Korea Visit A Geopolitical Triumph

<https://asiatimes.com/2023/05/kishidas-south-korea-visit-a-geopolitical-triumph/>

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Seoul on May 7-8, 2023, represents a triumph of geopolitics over the search for historical justice. Both South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Kishida are now driven by the ominous international environment, led by threats to the international order from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China. Kishida remained cautious when responding to South Korean calls for an apology and compensation for the victims of Japan's colonial and wartime forced labour system. These issues were compounded by later trade and security tensions.



*Source: Reuters*

### COMMENTS

The return to normalcy between South Korea and Japan is primarily due to the shared security concern. Threats from China and North Korea have resulted in this rapprochement between the colonial loggerheads. Missile tests from the latter have unprecedentedly increased over the months and therefore both South Korea and Japan are now working on bilateral relations under the shadow of the United States.

The decision of putting colonial antagonism in the past has resulted in anguish amongst Koreans, especially the activists representing the comfort women. A huge part of the populace pressed their reservations against the Yoon administration and his inefficiency to seek justice from the Japanese colonial sympathizers. Kishida's visit to Korea may be a sign of normalcy, but the natives appear unsatisfied with the decision taken by President Yoon.

However, the resumption of 'shuttle diplomacy' clearly indicates the priority of the two countries in addressing their security concerns, especially when both Japan and South Korea are the key US allies in the region and therefore this also presents the right opportunity for Washington to show its influence in the Indo-Pacific. Further, this extends to the US a niche way to enter the East Asia region by utilizing this rapprochement between Japan and Korea, who have been historically known to be powerful in the region.

The visit by PM Kishida to Seoul also coincides with Yoon's recent visit to the White House. The result of the visit amalgamated into the highly scrutinized 'Washington Declaration'. The Indo-Pacific region is slowly entering into a tripartite versus tripartite competition over security and dominance, i.e. North Korea-China-Russia and South Korea-US-Japan. Whether the deterrence capabilities that each country aims to fulfil in the region continue to remain an ambiguous and highly scrutinized issue.

## Yoon To Meet With Biden, Kishida On Margins Of G-7 Summit

<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20230514002200315?section=news>

SEOUL, May 14 (Yonhap) -- President Yoon Suk Yeol will attend a Group of Seven (G-7) summit in Hiroshima of Japan later this week and hold a trilateral meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on its sidelines, his office said Sunday. Yoon will attend the three-day G-7 summit from Friday as the leader of an invited country, South Korea is not a member of the G-7.

### COMMENTS

The invitation to South Korean President Yoon Seok Yeol to the G7 Summit is an indication of trilateral talks between the US, Japan and Korea on threats from North Korea and China. Russia's indulgence in the region is also another aspect between the three countries. The trilateral meeting could also act as an extension to the Washington Declaration between South Korea and the US, whereby speculations on Japan being added to the Nuclear Consultive Group may end up either being confirmed or dismissed.

North Korean reaction has largely been critical, especially towards Yoon's foreign policies.

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Apart from security talks, it may also be anticipated that the US with Japan can raise the addition of South Korea to the G7 nations, at a time when the member states have recognized the need for more inclusive and regenerated participation from other countries. The three major forces behind trans-Pacific stability and peace, Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo, need to cooperate more closely and rationally.



*Source: KoreaJoongAng Daily*

India too has received an invitation from Japan to participate in the upcoming summit and a meeting alongside with the QUAD members is assumed to take place.



*Source: CTV News*

## Doval In Saudi To Discuss US Rail Link Plan For West Asia

<https://asiatimes.com/2023/05/kishidas-south-korea-visit-a-geopolitical-triumph/>

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval Sunday met his counterparts from the US, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to discuss an ambitious proposal being pushed by the White House to link West Asian countries through rail — using Indian expertise — and connect the region to South Asia via sea lanes.



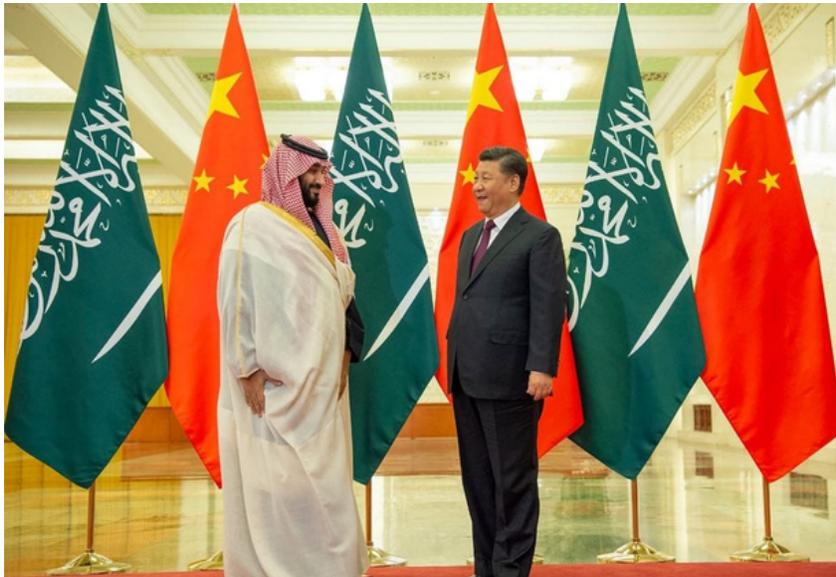
*Source: The Statesman*

### COMMENTS

The proposal for this project first surfaced through deliberations exercised by I2U2. The summit is crucial because it came soon after Beijing created a difference in the region's geopolitical arena by acting as a mediator. The reunification of Syria with the Arab League and the establishment of peace negotiations in Yemen are both effects of the Iran-Saudi deal. India is still considered one of the top global energy consumers by UAE and Saudi Arabia. Before shifting its focus to cheap Russian energy supplies, Delhi's reliance was on the Middle East. OPEC accounted for nearly 90% of India's energy imports which has shrunk considerably. Despite this, India is still a key supplier of consumer products and manpower to West Asian nations.

The overarching goal is to link South Asia, the Middle East, and the United States in capacities that strengthen economic prowess, technological expertise, and diplomacy. Economic links between the UAE, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and India have proven extensive. One of the main targets of BRI is the Middle East, and a combined initiative can be the most effective strategy to tackle Beijing. For India, it serves three key priorities.

- a) Beijing's political maneuvering in West Asia could counter India's strategic and energy security. This joint project can facilitate faster crude transfer while lowering long-term costs for India. The enhanced transportation links will benefit overseas Indian residents who are employed and living in the Gulf.
- b) Pakistan's blocking of overland passageways has severely hindered India's accessibility to the Middle East & Central Asia. Delhi intends to leverage the maritime links to connect West Asian ports like Duqm (Oman), Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Bandar-e-Abbas and Chabahar (Iran), Dubai (UAE), and Kuwait City. Further, India is aiming to emerge as the region's breadbasket.
- c) This collaboration will facilitate Indian Railways to establish its credibility as an international rail network developer. Further, it will promote PSU and public sector organizations to seek out possible socioeconomic and infrastructure prospects. On a macro level, the impact might help to counter the Chinese influence through BRI, which has strapped the region with obsolete infrastructure.



Source: *The Express Tribune*

# Public Reluctant To Defend Taiwan Should China Invade

<https://indianexpress.com/article/world/japan-public-defend-taiwan-china-invade-8604360/>

In a recent opinion poll by the Asahi Shimbun, over half of the Japanese population is of the opinion that the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) should not become involved in fighting if China invades Taiwan.



Source: ABS-CBN News

## COMMENTS

The growing tensions in the East Asian region has brought to light the mounting concerns amongst the general populace regarding war. The recent opinion poll by Asahi Shimbun has highlighted the concern of most Japanese have if Japan gets caught up in a conflict if Beijing were to attack Taiwan in an effort to unify it with the mainland. These concerns as pointed out by most political spectators in Japan are not surprising, if we are to consider the various challenges that the JSDF faces.

In order to understand the various challenges that the JSDF faces, it is imperative to understand the various social, political and economic challenges that Japan currently faces. In the recent times, Japan's population has seen a significant decline which can be highlighted by the most recent government data[1]. Also, the JSDF faces major recruitment shortages in recent times especially in its Naval branch/ Maritime Self Defense Force which is short of almost 2,000 less than the mandated strength of 45,307[2]. Along with these challenges, there is also general disdain for military action and war, with many wanting that tense situations amongst the various contending states should be solved via diplomatic and political means. This can be highlighted by a quote from one of the participants- Ren Yabuki, who states "I do not support a military solution and hope for a political solution, so I do not want the Japanese government to provide military support to the US. I am strongly opposed to all wars and believe all problems between nations should be resolved through diplomatic efforts."

While majority of the population in Japan is against war and military action, a small minority believes that in a future situation where in USA goes to war to aid Taiwan in case of a Chinese Invasion, Japan should whole-heartedly help the USA.

[1] According to the new statistics, Japan's population shrank by 556,000 in 2022 from a year earlier to 124.9 million thereby marking the 12th straight year of decrease. (As taken from-Japan's population falls below 125 million, shrinking for 12th straight year by The Japan Times-<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/04/12/national/japan-population-shrinking-2022/>)

[2] Taken from A Solution for Japan's Military Mismatch by Samuel P. Porter for the ForeignPolicy.com-<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/15/japan-military-defense-navy-army-kishida-personnel-gsdf-msdf-jsdf/>)

## JAPAN

This help can be in the form of rear-echelon support which includes assistance with fuel, food, medical aid and logistics; or full-fledged cooperation with the USA to repel the invasion. But another small group believes that the JSDF should only be concerned with protecting Japan and should not concern itself with Chinese Invasion of Taiwan.

Despite, the various deferring opinions of the common masses there is one thing that most people can agree upon- the threat of a People's Republic of China (Mainland China) invading Republic of China (Taiwan) is imminent[3].

The role of Japan in this regard is complex. While it is an ally of the USA, it faces several major problems with regards to its recruitment, growing concerns within the citizenry with regards to its role in the growing tensions as well as the concerns with regards to a Chinese attack on the Japanese soil.

These concerns that have been highlighted by the opinion poll have to be addressed in a timely manner in order to achieve the goals that the Japanese Ministry of Defense and the JSDF have in mind with regards to the future security concerns of the region.



*Source: Asia Society*

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[3] This threat has grown especially since the House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022.

# China Employs Overseas Policing Mechanisms To Target Its Nationals

<https://aninews.in/news/world/asia/china-employs-overseas-policing-mechanism-to-target-its-nationals20230503230846/>

Indo-Pacific Center for Strategic Communications came out with a report on the Chinese Overseas Police Stations (COPS) network that spans over 53 countries with more than 100 police stations. This apparatus targets Chinese dissidents in an extra-judicial and illegal manner in overseas territories.

## COMMENTS

The first instances of such overseas police stations came in 2022 when Safeguard Defenders, a human rights group exposed these COPS presence on almost all of the continents of the world. Chinese established such outposts as they feared their diaspora getting out of control and participating in West-driven de-stabilization campaigns in China. China has tasted this in the past with its diaspora playing an important role in bringing an end to Imperial China. CCP fears this repeating of history.



*Source: Japan Times*

These so-called 'police stations' are set up on a smokescreen of providing administrative help to the Chinese diaspora, thus operating like 'mini-consulates' but actually, their primary tasks are intelligence gathering, kidnappings, facilitating involuntary 'persuaded' returns of Chinese who have criminal records or are dissidents.

Article 15 of the National Supervision Law established the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) which acquired jurisdiction over all Chinese irrespective of their CCP's membership. This law, it seems, has been used to justify the establishment of such posts on foreign soil. Some of these 'police stations' have been surprisingly set up with the consent of host nations, like Myanmar, and Pakistan. They are established to safeguard the Chinese workers and their interests. The targets are usually the people opposing the authoritarian rule of the CCP like FalunGong followers, Tibetans, Mongolians, and Uyghurs as well as people from academia and media who are critical of the authoritarian Chinese regime.

Chinese officials associated with these programs/initiatives have asserted that crimes against China have decreased significantly. This initiative led to arrests of 230 in 2015, 283 in 2016, about 10,000 involuntary returns through Operation Fox Hunt, 395 Uyghurs have been repatriated, and 2,30,000 involuntary returns made in telecom fraud cases.

The case of Chinese Overseas Police Stations (COPS) is a curious one that stands at the intersection of not only violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity but also a challenge to international human rights, the rule of law, and due process of law. It undermines domestic law and amounts to interference in local matters of a sovereign state. This authoritarianism transcending the territorial limits must be encountered resolutely by like-minded countries.

Though no such illegal police stations have not been found in India till now, they still remain a possibility. Given a large number of Tibetans living in India and questions of Dalai Lama's successor looming large alongwith an ongoing border clash, China will try to use such mechanisms or others to launch such targets and influence operations, India in such a situation, must not lower the guard.

## Relations With China Cannot Be Normal Until Border Row Is Resolved, Jaishankar Says

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-sco-foreign-ministers-meet-jaishankar-bilawal-bhutto-china-russia/liveblog/99973566.cms>

EAM of India Dr. Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang on the sidelines of the SCO Foreign Ministers meeting in Panjim, Goa to discuss bilateral issues.

### COMMENTS

It seems like other bilateral meetings of Defence Ministers and Foreign Ministers in the past, this meeting also showed that the two sides are still on different pages with regards to the direction of bilateral relations and the outstanding border dispute.

While India considers, and this is been often repeated by Mr. Jaishankar that the overall relations with China cannot be normal until, things are normal at the border, whereas China considers the border to be 'stable.'

There has been a clear effort from the Chinese to de-hyphenate the border issue with the overall relationship that shows that they in their matrix do not see this issue as very important one, which India has resisted vehemently. India has categorically made it clear that any progress in the relationship can be only once the border dispute is resolved.

This makes any hopes for better India-China relations over the next few years dim, as China has adopted a hardline approach towards borders and is trying its best to show to India as well as to the world that everything is normal, and that India should forget the slicing of her territory and move forward in the greater good of these two old civilizations and betterment of the world.

The negotiations are going to be hard and Indian negotiators must be well prepared for long and arduous negotiations to achieve the desired results.

# Police Raid Consulting Firm as China Starts Anti-Spy Campaign

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-05-08/china-starts-anti-spy-campaign-says-capvision-leaked-secrets?leadSource=uverify%20wall>

In the past couple of weeks, Chinese authorities cracked down on foreign companies (primarily of the USA) arresting its local staff. This has raised questions of safety and freedom of business at a time when China is trying hard to spur economic growth by inviting businesses. In past week, China conducted coordinated raids in number of cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen.

## COMMENTS

China through its rubber-stamp legislature, the National People's Congress updated its Counter Espionage Law. The law from its outset puts obligations on 'all enterprises and organisations' apart from state organs, armed forces and political parties to prevent espionage activities. The law states that "all documents, data, materials and items related to national security and interests" are state secrets that must be protected. The law in general invokes 'national security' and in the name of it expands its jurisdiction to great extent.

Article 4 states that "All state organs, armed forces...and all enterprises and organisation, have obligation to prevent and stop espionage activities and maintain national security." Article 7 states that state will 'provide protection' and give rewards to those who will assist in counter espionage efforts. This leads on to ponder on question of what state will do to those who refuse to cooperate on argument of privacy.



Source: *The Mint*

Experts suggests that this must be seen in the backdrop of heightened tensions between USA and China and Xi's priority of national security in his unprecedented 3rd term. This may be a retaliatory move by China in wake of recent developments like increased engagements between USA and Taiwan, USA's sanctions on China in the semiconductor industry and increased fear of psychosis in higher ranks of the CCP on Western interference in China to destabilise the 'red regime.'

Western media has described this as causing "chilling effect' while Global Times termed the Western attacks as "blatant political malice" and talked of the West's double standards and called that the "chill in their hearts cannot invade the reality of warmth."

But it is very clear that with the passing of this law, coming into effect from 1st July 2023, the bad will only get worse. The long arm of Chinese state will get longer and the shadow of national security will follow the citizens, especially foreigners everywhere.