



CENTRE FOR  
JOINT WARFARE  
STUDIES  
(CENJOWS)

# GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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**Russia And  
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Deal For  
Corridor  
Intended To  
Rival Suez  
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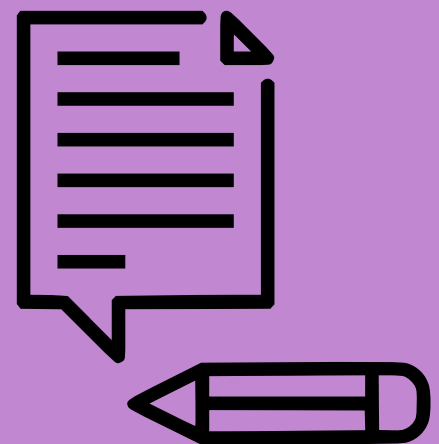
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## Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

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### BATTLE OF BAKHMUT

Ukraine has reportedly retaken additional territory around the eastern city of Bakhmut recently, building on localized counterattacks conducted. Although Russia continues gaining ground inside Bakhmut, Ukraine had seized advantageous tactical positions on the city's flanks, apparently forcing Moscow to divert forces from other areas. After initially denying that Ukraine had achieved breakthroughs around Bakhmut, the Russian Defense Ministry on May 12 admitted its forces had fallen back to the Berkhivs'ke Reservoir northwest of the city. Later, Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces were continuing to fight to capture western parts of Bakhmut. On May 20, 2023 Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner Group of mercenaries fighting for Bakhmut, has said that his troops have fully taken the Donetsk city. On May 25, 2023, Russia has declared victory in its devastating, nearly yearlong assault on Bakhmut, and its Wagner mercenaries have begun to withdraw and are being replaced with regular troops.

### COMMENTS

While military analysts say that Bakhmut holds little strategic significance, Russia and Ukraine have remained firm in their justifications for fighting there, each viewing the battle as vital for weakening the other. For Vladimir Putin's Russia, which invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, it was a much needed victory after a series of set backs late last year when Russian troops were beaten back by the Ukrainians from the Kharkiv Oblast in the northeast and Kherson city in the south. For Ukraine, which was preparing for a major counter offensive, the loss of Bakhmut is a setback, but not the end of the road. This may delay the launch of the much-awaited Spring counteroffensive even though the western countries have supplied new weapons and there has been reports of a spike in the firing of long-range missiles by Ukraine.



## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT



Source: The Japan Times

Kyiv accuses Moscow of launching phosphorus munitions. The [Fifth Review Conference of CWC](#), which was scheduled in The Hague (Netherlands) from May 15 to 19, 2023, discussed this agenda. Russia's non-compliance with the CWC has led to a resolution, wherein the Executive Council has urged member states to pass a resolution seeking a 90-day deadline for Russia to demonstrate the compliance with the CWC. During the concluding day, Russia and its bloc also objected to references regarding Moscow's stockpiling of the banned nerve agent.

## COMMENTS

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCCW), which prohibits the use of incendiary weapons in civilian areas. Protocol III of the [1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons](#) addresses Incendiary Weapons, defining them as weapons designed to set fire to objects or burn individuals through the action of flame or heat, such as napalm and flamethrowers. Article 35 of Protocol I of the [Geneva Conventions](#) also outlaws any weapon that inflicts unnecessary or excessive suffering. However, white phosphorus is not explicitly covered by this treaty, as its primary purpose is believed to be the creation of a smokescreen. Russia has succeeded in blocking the resolution during the conduct of Fifth Review Conference of CWC.

## UKRAINE

### VISITS

Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Germany, where the German government announced €2.7bn (\$2.95bn) of [military aid](#) for Ukraine ahead of his arrival. Earlier, Mr Zelensky met Italy's Prime Minister, [Giorgia Meloni](#), in Rome. After visiting Saudi Arabia, President Zelensky arrived on May 20, 2023 at Hiroshima for the Group of seven leaders' summit-his first trip to Asia since Russia's invasion. He met French President Macron, Brazilian President Da Silva and German chancellor. Zelensky's visit comes on the heels of a White House announcement that it would allow allied countries to supply Ukraine with U.S.-built F-16 fighter jets and financial aid. The US President Joe Biden on May 19, 2023 told allies he would back an international plan to train Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets.



Source: Los Angeles Times



### COMMENTS

Ukraine President Zelensky is trying to isolate President Putin by visiting various countries and meeting heads of state before the onset of Spring offensive.

### UKRAINE OFFENSIVE

Ukraine launched a major drone attack on Moscow on May 30,2023 though all of them were destroyed by air defence systems, Russia's defence ministry said. Ukrainian armed forces have fired large number of weapons inside Russian held territory, to strike on the Russian rear, from Kharkiv to Kherson activity along the frontline. Ukraine debuted Storm Shadow missiles supplied by Britain to strike key Russian logistics nodes, command-and-control posts and other high value military targets, degrading Russia's ability to resist Ukrainian advances. Storm Shadow is an air launched cruise missile supplied by Britain with a range of 155 miles. Kiev conducted Storm Shadow strikes in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region using modified Su-24 frontline bombers to launch the missiles whose AD cover is being provided by MiG-29 and Su-27 fighters armed with American made HARM anti-radiation missiles to clear through Russian Air Defences. On May 16,2023,Ukraine claimed that it had shot down six Russian hypersonic Kinzhal missiles . On May 22,2023, alleged Ukrainian "sabotage group" entered Russian territory of Belgorod, which is a Russian military hub holding fuel and ammunition depots. This attack has been repelled by the Russians. Several drones had been intercepted above this territory.



Source: News Nation

### RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

Russia has stepped up its missile bombardments of Ukrainian cities. Between May 1st and May 26th there were 13 strikes on Kyiv, mostly during the night. Yet Ukraine maintains that the country's air-defence systems are stopping most of the rockets. On May 16,2023 ,Russia launched an exceptionally intense air attack on Kyiv, using drones, cruise and probably ballistic missiles. On May 18,2023, Russian claimed that its forces had hit a large ammunition depot in the Ukrainian city of Mykolayiv.

Russia and Belarus have agreed to formalize the deployment of Russian nuclear missiles on Belarusian territory as tensions escalate with the West. While Russia will retain control over the weapons, Belarusian staff have been trained at Russian training centres. Ukraine says Russia launched an attack using its Tu-95MS strategic bombers and cruise missiles.

### COMMENTS

Russia's way of using long-range missiles has evolved significantly since the start of the war. Until now, the Ukrainian air defences have kept Russian aircraft behind the frontlines, forcing them to launch only stand-off cruise missile attacks that are mostly intercepted by tactically placed defense systems. Ukraine is waging an innovative form of warfare that utilizes a range of highly creative and often improvised tech solutions. The Ukrainian military has already demonstrated its ability to use everything from drone technologies to satellite communications to effectively manage the modern battlefield. The electronic intelligence on the Russian aircraft movement supplied by the western powers has made the Ukrainian AD active. The Soviet-era long and medium range AD, short-range air defense system along with MANPADS integrated with western AD systems like NASAMS and IRIS-T and Patriot have made Kh-101, Kinzhal and UAVs vulnerable. The saturated Ukrainian airspace has forced Russia to turn to cheap expendable kamikaze drones. This emphasis on defense technologies has been instrumental in many of Ukraine's most striking military successes of the past fifteen months.

The Russian tactics are changing as the conflict progresses and lessons learnt from the failures are being implemented before the start of the much awaited Spring offensive. Russian Armed Forces pose a significant challenge for the Ukrainian military on the defence. Recent evidence indicates the Russian side has made tactical and operational improvements that are having an impact on the ground in Ukraine. Russian forces have already adapted to the game-changing weapons that Ukraine introduced into the war last year, like the US-provided High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and will have to plan their tactics with Storm Shadow. Russians infantry are generally used for ground holding and defensive operations. Russian engineers have constructed concrete reinforced trenches and command bunkers, wire-entanglement and anti-tank ditches posing a major tactical challenge to Ukrainian offensive operations. Russian armour is largely in a fire support function and artillery has refined its reconnaissance strike complex by operating in closer integration with drones with ISR capabilities to support commanders to apply fires. Russian EW are heavily weighted towards the defeat of drones and tactical communication interception and decryption of Ukrainian systems. Tactical nuclear weapons have lower yields and are designed for battlefield use. President Putin has said repeatedly that Russia would be ready to use nuclear weapons to defend its "territorial integrity".

### PEACE INITIATIVES

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced On May 16 ,2023 that he would be joining his counterparts from Egypt, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia, for an upcoming trip to the rival capitals of Kyiv and Moscow.



Source: NPR

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

While internal conflicts have continued to plague Africa, these woes have been compounded over the past year by the distant war between Russia and Ukraine. The impact of Ukrainian-Russian conflict has affected all parts of the globe. Ukraine supplies 50% of world's neon gas-an important ingredient in the manufacturing of chips and has threatened the chip supply across the world. Many NATO countries, notably Germany, plans to meet or exceed spending of 2% of GDP on defence. Japan plans to double defence out lays through to 2027 turning it into world's third largest spender. However, Russia has ruled out talks with Ukraine as long as the regime led by President Volodymyr Zelensky remains in power. As both sides are determined to continue the war, there is no hope for peace or talks on the horizon.



*Source: PIB*



## UN Expert Says Russia, China Sending Deadly Aid to Myanmar's Military

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/un-expert-says-russia-china-sending-deadly-aid-to-myanmars-military/articleshow/100311034.cms> - 17 May 2023 and <https://www.reuters.com/world/un-expert-says-russia-china-sending-deadly-aid-myanmars-military-2023-05-17/>

- Myanmar's military has imported at least \$1 billion in arms and other material since it staged a coup in February 2021, a UN expert said on Wednesday in a new report that calls out Russia and China for aiding the junta's deadly campaign to crush its opposition. Since the military seized power and jailed democratic leaders, some opponents of military rule have taken up arms, in places joining ethnic minority insurgents and the military has responded with air strikes and heavy weapons, including in civilian areas. Russian made Mi-35 helicopter, MiG-29 fighter jets and Yak-130 light aircraft and Chinese K-8 jets, have been most frequently used to conduct air strikes that have hit schools, medical facilities, homes and other civilian sites, said the report by Tom Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar. A single attack on a village gathering organized by the military's opponents in Sagaing region on April 11 killed at least 160 people, reportedly including nearly 40 children, the report said. Myanmar's military says it is targeting insurgents and after the Sagaing attack said any civilians killed were probably supporters of opponents it calls "terrorists."
- The UN expert used trade data to detail transfers of arms and other goods, including raw materials for Myanmar's domestic arms production, to the military since the coup worth \$406 million from Russia and \$267 million from China, including from state-owned entities in both countries.



Source: Republic World

## REGIONAL SCAN: MYANMAR

- “The good news is we now know who is supplying these arms and the jurisdictions in which they operate,” Andrews said in a statement, calling for UN members to “step up and stop the flow of arms” with a complete ban on the arms transfers to Myanmar’s military, enforcement of existing bans and coordinated sanctions. Some \$227 million of material came from Rosoboron Export, Moscow’s state owned arms exporter, which has transferred SU-30 fighter jets, supplies for MiG-29 jets and rocket launch systems to Myanmar, the report said. Other Russian companies provided a range of tools, equipment and spare parts for Russian-supplied weapons systems, it said. “Weaponry provided by Russian suppliers has been used to commit probable war crimes and crimes against humanity in Myanmar,” the report said. Andrews said he had informed the countries named in the report of his findings ahead of publication.
- At a news conference in New York, Andrews said Chinese officials had earlier criticized his reporting, saying he was vilifying legitimate trade in arms and operating outside his mandate by conducting analysis. Russian officials had expressed a similar response, Andrews said.



Source: Republic World



Source: The Washington Post

## COMMENTS

This UN report is a compilation of various inputs on the matter, providing an analytical and comprehensive UN view on the subject and is in line with the views of the Western powers on the current and evolving situation in Myanmar. The \$267 million worth arms trade from China for Myanmar’s Junta for domestic arms production in the past more than two years since the coup is quite a significant transfers of arms and other related goods and is likely to be followed continuously by the UN and the Western powers in the times to come.

## Pakistan Rattled By G20 Meet In Srinagar, Bilawal Bhutto Claims 'Violation Of International Law'

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/world/pakistan-rattled-by-g20-meet-in-srinagar-bilawal-bhutto-claims-violation-of-international-law>

As India hosts the third G20 tourism working group meeting in Srinagar, a frustrated Pakistan has been rattled by the overwhelming response to the summit in the Union Territory. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari arrived in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) and claimed the G20 meeting in Srinagar was a "violation of international law". "Organising international events in Srinagar shows India's arrogance. When the time comes, we will respond in a manner that India will always remember," he added.

### COMMENTS

The G20 tourism working group meeting was held at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) from 22nd-24th May 2023 in Srinagar. The Srinagar G20 meeting was the first major international event in Jammu and Kashmir since the Central government abrogated Article 370 and bifurcated the state into two Union Territories. Pakistan has protested against India's move to abrogate Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, which granted special status to the erstwhile state. It has repeatedly tried to internationalize the Kashmir issue at bilateral and multilateral forums but with little success.



Source: *The Indian Express*

There are compelling reasons for Pakistan to seek better relations with India. The nation also appears to be interested in building on the relatively peaceful situation on LoC since a ceasefire was revived in 2021. India has been maintaining that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment free of terror and hostility for such an engagement. The window for any engagement too appears extremely narrow, with Pakistan set to hold elections this year and India in 2024. Relations between India and Pakistan have been strained over the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.



# Unrest Spreads to PoK, Gilgit-Baltistan As Separatists Rally Against Pakistan Army

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/world/unrest-spreads-to-pok-gilgit-baltistan-as-separatists-rally-against-pakistan-army-exclusive>

The issue of human rights abuses and the fear of dissidents of the government as well as the army being tried under the Pakistan Army Act and trials in military courts is serving as a wake up call for people living in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Amidst all of these events, human rights abuses continue unabated in PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Recent arrests under the draconian Army Act have heightened fears among the people living there. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan feel they are being held hostage by Islamabad.

## COMMENTS

Separatist leaders have also organised marches against the Army as well as against taxes levied on the residents of the region. The US and the UN have raised the alarm regarding the disturbing plan to revive the use of military courts to try civilians. Pakistan has shot back at the US saying that the use of draconian military rule is its internal issue.



*Source: News18*

A major reason for Pakistan to keep the status of Gilgit Baltistan ambiguous till now, while at the same time exercising administrative control over it from Islamabad (and, in the process, denying the people of this region their legitimate democratic rights) is that Pakistan regards this as a 'liberated' territory of Jammu and Kashmir. India has always justifiably considered the continued occupation of Gilgit Baltistan as illegal. In 1994 the Indian parliament had passed resolutions claiming both Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir as part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, forming an integral part of Indian territory. Despite the complexity of the sectarian issue in Gilgit-Baltistan, its roots in Pakistan's fractious religious politics, and the power games of external forces, a long-term approach to building peace is still possible. The long-term solution has to include education, political inclusions, and equity in access to economic and social opportunities.

## Soldiers Among Four Killed In Northwest Pakistan Suicide Bombing

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/24/soldiers-among-four-killed-in-northwest-pakistan-suicide-bombing>

## At Least 19 Members Of Security Forces Injured In Suicide Blast In Northwest Pakistan

<https://indianexpress.com/article/pakistan/at-least-19-members-security-forces-injured-suicide-blast-northwest-pakistan-8632116/>

At least 19 members of Pakistan's security forces were critically injured when a suicide bomber with an explosive-laden motorcycle targeted their convoy in the restive tribal district in northwest Pakistan bordering Afghanistan. Attack took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that borders Afghanistan and is a former stronghold of the militant Pakistani Taliban group, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP.

### COMMENTS

Since its formation in 2007, the TTP has been waging a rebellion against the state of Pakistan, demanding stricter imposition of Islamic laws, the release of its members arrested by the government, and a reversal of the merger of Pakistan's tribal areas with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. TTP poses a huge national security threat to Pakistan state. It has a huge support base in the KPK region and Karachi, where many Pashtuns reside. Pakistan still looks forward to the Taliban's help in eliminating TTP, but ironically, the Taliban claims the entire KPK region and rejects the colonial Durand line. This growing security instability in Pakistan does not augur well for India or regional security. Taking advantage, Pakistan-based anti-India terror groups such as LeT and JeM will undoubtedly feel encouraged to carry out more attacks in J&K. General Asim Munir has also signaled a hawkish approach towards India through his statements, alleging India's involvement in terror-related incidents in Pakistan. If Pakistan wants to come out of its mess, then it must listen to Indian advice and should stop providing a haven to terrorist outfits and its leaders, take active steps to prevent the radicalization of its masses, and make efforts in improving relations with its neighboring countries to slowly march towards gradual economic growth.



Source: NBC



## Establishment Strikes Back: How Pakistan Army Is Trying To 'Run Out' Imran Khan

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/establishment-strikes-back-how-pakistan-army-is-trying-to-vanquish-imran-khan/articleshow/100473859.cms>

The discord between ousted Pakistan PM Imran Khan the country's powerful military establishment has deepened in the last few days following the 09 May violence triggered by the firebrand opposition leader's arrest. Imran Khan's close aide Fawad Chaudhry became the latest high profile leader to quit the party. He decided to take a break from politics, therefore, resigned from the party position and parted ways with Imran Khan.

### COMMENTS

With Imran's back to the wall, the Shehbaz Sharif government as well as the army are now planning a coup de grace by threatening to ban his political party altogether. While no decision has been taken yet, a possible ban may spell more trouble for Imran Khan who is himself facing several cases. The relationship between Imran Khan and the Pakistani military, known unofficially as the "establishment", has witnessed an interesting arc of love and hate over the last few years. Khan became the prime minister in 2018 with the tacit support of the military. Imran Khan was soon ousted as prime minister after losing a confidence vote in 2022. Ever since then, there has been growing acrimony between Khan and the military which came to a boiling point on 09 May 23.

Over the last few months, Khan has often lashed out at the military and ISI, accusing them of hatching a plot to assassinate him. While civilian organizations have historically been unable to stand up to the military's might in a country where no elected prime minister has completed a full term, Khan is unlikely to be a pushover. Khan has shown an uncanny ability to mobilise crowds and some analysts say he still has the support of many in the rank-and-file of the military. However, Khan is vulnerable on many fronts. If he is found guilty in any of the numerous cases against him, ranging from corruption to inciting terror, it would in all probability disqualify him from participating in the polls. The army's vast intelligence apparatus has already started turning the screws on PTI's leadership, which is clear from the exit of top party leaders.

Khan risks meeting a similar fate as previous prime ministers, who have been jailed, exiled or executed following power struggles with Pakistan's generals. Khan predicament stems from his attempts to mess with military hierarchy — a red line for Pakistan's most powerful institution, which has directly controlled the nuclear-armed nation for much of its post-independence history. Khan's connection with the outside world and ability to marshal support is already being eroded. Since his ousting as prime minister last year following a parliamentary no-confidence vote, Khan has campaigned relentlessly for fresh elections.



## Pakistan To Try Those Who Attacked Military Under Army Law: PM

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/22/pakistan-to-try-those-who-attacked-military-under-army-law-pm>

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says people who attacked military properties during anti-government protests earlier this month will be tried under the country's army law.

## Imran Khan Faces 'End Of The Road' As Pakistan Army Cracks Down

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/imran-khan-faces-end-of-the-road-as-pakistan-army-cracks-down/articleshow/100520547.cms>

Former Pakistani PM Imran Khan is looking increasingly besieged and isolated, as Pakistan's military instigates a sweeping crackdown against his political party.

## Pakistan's Imran Khan Calls for Immediate Talks Amidst Stand-Off With Military

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-05-26/pakistan-hands-33-protest-suspects-to-military-for-trials>

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan appealed for immediate talks with state officials, as pressure increased on him amidst a crackdown on his top aides and supporters that has seen thousands arrested as well as many leaving his party. Khan has been embroiled in a tussle with the military since he was removed from power last year in a parliamentary vote that he says was orchestrated by the country's top generals. The military denies this.

### COMMENTS

The political unrest has worsened as Pakistan. Imran Khan distanced his party from the attacks on military installations during the unrest that followed his arrest and reiterated a called for an investigation to determine who was involved. Several high-profile leaders belonging to Khan's Pakistan PTI have either quit or are in prison after the army warned of stern action against protesters who attacked its properties on 09 May 23. Imran Khan attempts to speak to the country's powerful generals have gone unanswered. The civilian government, a coalition of his political rivals, have told that they are not interested in talks.



Source: Arab News Pakistan

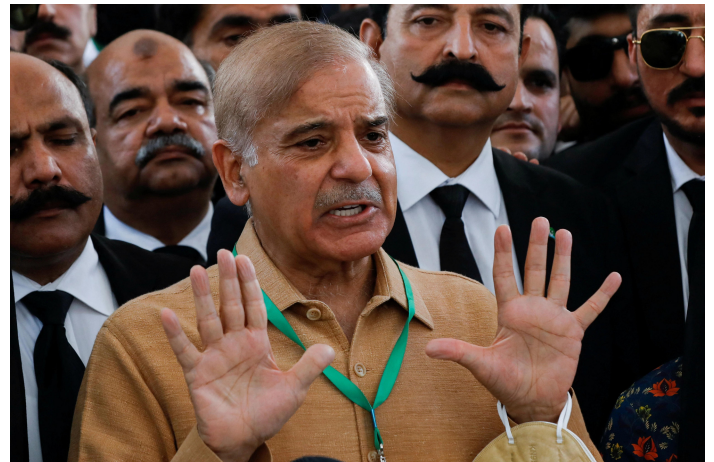
## REGIONAL SCAN: PAKISTAN

The appeal for talks came as the pressure mounted on his party and supporters, 33 of whom been handed over to the army to face trial in military courts on charges of attacking armed forces' installations. Rights groups have raised concerns over military trials of civilians, saying they cannot ensure a fair trial. Such courts are closed to outsiders and the media. Imran Khan can also be tried in a military court since the government feels that he was the architect of all this mess and planning.

On the surface, it seemed an outburst of anger by Imran's party, but there is also an undercurrent of people's outrage against an almost dysfunctional government over other issues. One is the suffering of the people as a result of the current economic crisis. With Pakistan's more than 240 million people grappling with record inflation and the country on the verge of default thanks to stalled bailout talks with the IMF, the military is unlikely to bail out the elected government and take direct control. Pakistan's last coup leader, General Pervez Musharraf, stepped down as a deeply unpopular and diminished figure fifteen years ago. At some stage, the two most powerful people in the country, the chief of army staff and Imran Khan, have to sit down and discuss a way forward. Public sympathy for the military has also risen since the attacks on army property and officer's homes. Trade associations have conducted rallies in support of the armed forces, while television and film stars have taken to social media to declare their love and support for the military.



Source: Deccan Herald



Source: NDTV

# PM Modi Arrives In Hiroshima For G7 And Quad Summits

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/presence-in-g7-summit-particularly-meaningful-as-india-holding-g20-presidency-pm-modi/article66868992.ece>

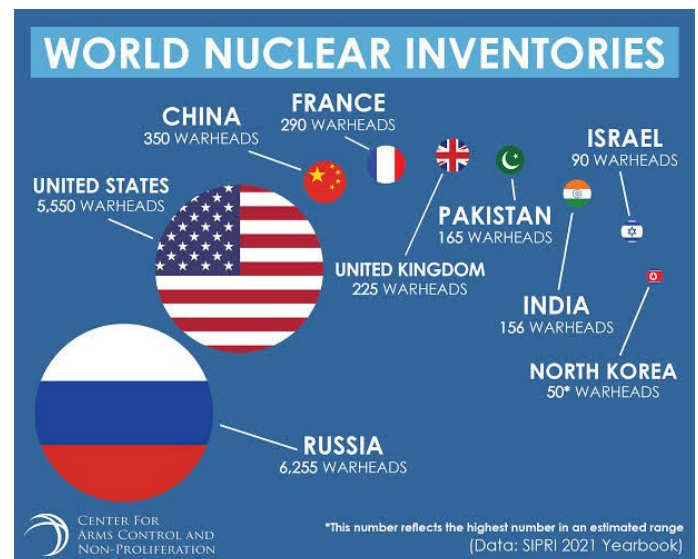
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with over two dozen world leaders in summits as well as in bilateral meetings, officials said.

"I look forward to exchanging views with the G7 countries and other invited partners on challenges that the world faces and the need to collectively address them. I would also be holding bilateral meetings with some of the leaders attending the Hiroshima G7 Summit," Mr. Modi said in his departure statement.

## COMMENTS

The challenges that the world face need a collective measure to address them. Prime Minister Modi intends to exchange views with the G7 countries along with bilateral meetings with some of the leaders attending the Hiroshima G7 Summit. The G7 summit is particularly significant because India is in charge of the G20 this year. Although the topics of discussion vary but areas such as global economic cooperation, climate change, global health, trade and security remain a common concern. Apart from this, Modi's visit to Hiroshima has another significance because India is one of the few nations that has not ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) meanwhile nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are among the topics that will be discussed at the summit along with Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

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Source: Centre For Arms Control and Non-Proliferation



## G7 AND INDIA

India strongly voiced the Global South in the G7 Summit in Hiroshima. The last session of the G7 Summit on 'Towards a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous World' witnessed a synergy between the G7 leaders, the eight invited countries, including India and Ukraine. PM Modi's vision for a multipolar world was flagged again, with India's abiding support for dialogue and diplomacy as the only means of resolving global conflicts. PM Modi also called for a reformed structuring at the UN, followed by his vision of leading a resilient and sustainable planet. Additionally, the Indian Prime Minister strongly advocated the path of non-violence and peace when he unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Hiroshima.

As part of the three leg official visit, PM Modi marked his maiden visit to Papua New Guinea, followed by a meeting with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. India with Papua New Guinea co-chaired the 3rd Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) Summit. Overall, by paying attention to the South Pacific Islands, including Papua New Guinea, India aims to safeguard its strategic interests, promote regional stability, ensure maritime security, access natural resources, expand diplomatic outreach, and strengthen cultural ties. The visit to Papua New Guinea further highlighted India's vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific along the side lines of India's 'diplomacy for development' approach. These efforts are driven, in part, by the need to balance China's growing influence in the region and maintain India's own position as a major player in the Indo-Pacific.



Source: Twitter

# S. Korea Successfully Launches Space Rocket Nuri In Major Milestone For Space Program

<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20230524009656320>

SEOUL, May 25 (Yonhap) -- South Korea on Thursday successfully launched its homegrown space rocket Nuri to put eight practical satellites into orbit, achieving another milestone for the country's space program. The 200-ton Nuri, also known as KSLV-II, blasted off from Naro Space Centre in the country's southern coastal village of Goheung at 6:24 p.m., and successfully completed its flight sequence, according to the Ministry of Science and ICT and the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI).

## COMMENTS

The successful launch of Nuri by South Korea is a push towards the development of indigenous space capabilities. South Korea so far relied on mostly foreign countries, particularly the US to develop its space programs. Nuri, for South Korea is an attempt to leverage the domestic space technologies and further join the space race in the region.

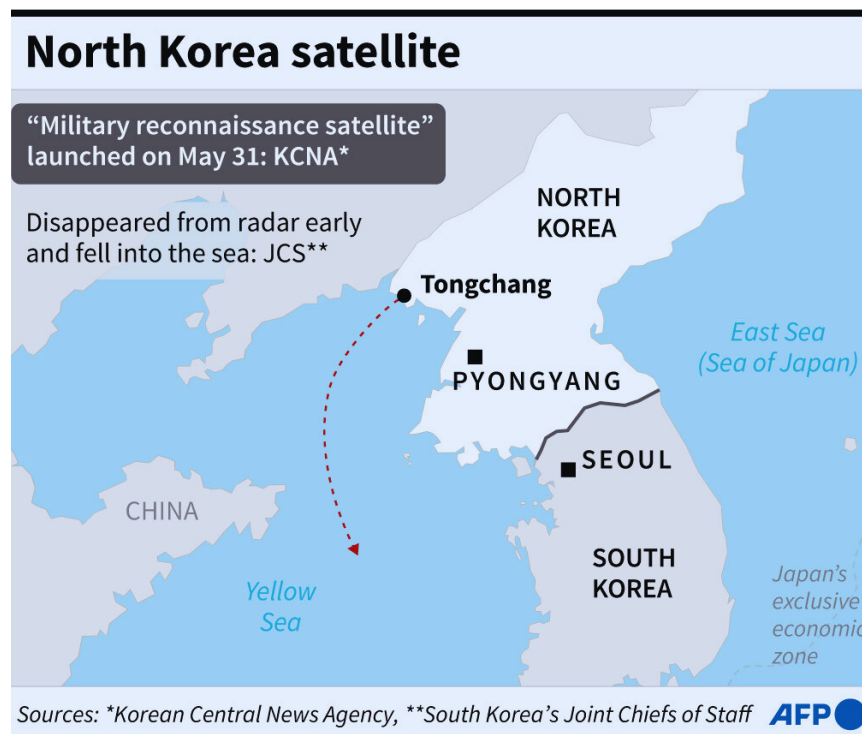


*Source: NBC News*

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The launch coincides with North Korea escalating its space capabilities to have its first spy satellite. The state media of North Korea, KCNA had previously released images of Kim Jong Un inspecting military reconnaissance satellite No 1. North Korea has rampantly been working on its 'Sohae' Launch Facility between April 30 and May 16 2023.[1] Despite all the developments initiated, North Korea remained unsuccessful in placing its spy satellite in space.

The spy satellite that was launched on 30 May 2023 fell in the East Sea. The failure of the rocket launch proves the reservations by South Korea and the US to be true. The two countries have had high reservations against the technology and capability of the North Korean Spy satellite.



Source: BARRONS

South Korea is also expected to launch its first indigenous spy satellite at the end of this year with larger range that could also possibly deter security threats from both China and Russia. With two Koreas engaged in enhancing their space capabilities, it is unlikely that any pragmatic consensus will likely prevail.

But a new era in South Korea's space programme has begun with the country having acquired the essential independent technology for creating and launching space rockets carrying domestic satellites and create space-based surveillance systems.



# Assad Banks On New 'Global Order' To Help His Own Rehabilitation

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/22/middleeast/assad-new-global-order-rehabilitation-mime-intl/index.html>

"Today we are faced with an opportunity of change in the global order, which has become multipolar due to the hegemony of the West, which is devoid of principles, morals, friends or partners". Assad was warmly welcomed by summit host Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. In a landmark meeting, the two leaders were seen embracing before posing to be photographed together. During his address, Assad presented himself as an elder statesman, lecturing his neighbors about the need to take advantage of changes in global politics.

## COMMENTS

Following the Ukraine Russia conflict and an emerging multipolar world order, Arab nations have stated their neutral position without getting dragged into an East-West power struggle and provoking their Western allies. This comes soon after a group of US legislators introducing the "Assad Anti-Normalization Act," preventing the US from normalizing relations with Assad.

(a) Despite Qatar and Turkey resisting, other nations in the Arab world decided to embrace the "political circumstances" with attempts to "normalize" ties and examine the matter more pragmatically and realistically.

(b) The future development of Saudi-Iran-Syria ties is dependent on a number of issues. The states' reliance on each other for power sharing and influence in the region, and the nature of relationships that these nations will encounter when confronted with their stances on the West, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon.

(c) Syria-Israel ties have remained difficult since the Abraham Accords (2020). The issue of Golan Heights and statehood of Palestine will continue to be a challenge. The normalization of ties with Syria and Iran may alter Saudi Arabia's relations with Israel.

(d) As the needs of the state take precedence, the issues and views of the Syrian citizens appear to be ignored. This will only lead to further marginalization and alienation of citizens, with increased turmoil and crisis. It is critical to emphasize that restrictions do not affect the Assad regime, but rather the Syrians who have been left to their fate. The intent to reshape a new regional order following a supposed "withdrawal by Western troops in the Middle East, prompted regional players to engage with Syria.



*Source: Reuters*

# China Urges Israel To Stop ‘Provocations’ And ‘Encroachment’ As Palestinian Tensions Flare

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3221784/china-urges-israel-stop-provocations-and-encroachment-palestinian-tensions-flare>

China urged Israel to stop “provocations” and “encroachment” on Palestinian land and resources in a strong rebuke of illegal West Bank settlements and a recent holy site visit by an extremist Israeli official. Chinese ambassador to the UN Geng Shuang called on Israel to de-escalate tensions, which have flared since the country signed an order last week paving the way for more Israeli settlements in the northern West Bank.

## COMMENTS

(a) The Chinese envoy to UN Ambassador Geng Shuang emphasized the recurrent pattern of hostilities between both nations, highlighting the shortcomings of a long-stalled negotiations for peace and the unpredictable nature of handling crises techniques. The latest move by Beijing comes after it expressed plans to amend ties between the two parties in April 2023. Earlier in May 2023 US vetoed a Chinese led initiative to have the UNSC release a unanimous statement expressing concern over the continued Gaza aggression.

(b) This shows China's increasing stake in the matter, and the intent to replace America as a mediatory power. China wishes to maintain its connection with Israel while maintaining strong ties with the Muslim nations.

(c) China's main goals in West Asia are to acquire advanced technology Israel and to boost its BRI projects in West Asia. For Israel the main agenda is to gain market access in the Chinese economy by expanding the market for exports and capital sources.

(d) China's stance on international security has yielded dividends in the Middle East, however, Israeli sentiments have altered over a variety of factors including the general recognition of Chinese surveillance, China's negligence of the COVID-19 outbreak, unfavourable declarations by Chinese media in favour of Hamas and constant UN votes against Israel. Arguably the most significant was China's approach towards Iran. By choosing to acquire oil and the recent mediation with Saudi, China has given Iran a financial advantage and strategic cooperation with a dictatorship sworn to the destruction of Israel.



Source: South China Morning Post

# Russia And Iran Sign Rail Deal For Corridor Intended To Rival Suez Canal

<https://www.reuters.com/world/russias-putin-irans-raisi-oversee-railway-deal-signing-2023-05-17/>

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi on Wednesday oversaw, via video-link, the signing of a deal to finance and build an Iranian railway line as part of an embryonic international North-South Transport Corridor.

## COMMENTS

- (a) Moscow sees this corridor as a possible alternative to the Suez Canal, which provides a far lengthier option for trading with northern Europe.
- (b) The Raisi administration is attempting to de-dollarize trade and establish alternative financial and payment systems beyond the global financial system.
- (c) The Corridor's completion will result in stronger cooperation between India and Iran, connecting New Delhi significantly with Tehran's geo-economic interests.



*Source: Money Control*



# US Congressional Panel On China Suggests NATO+ Status For India

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/us-congressional-panel-on-china-suggests-nato-status-for-india/articleshow/100542283.cms>

- A US congressional committee has recommended that India should be added to an expanded group of close American allies currently called NATO+5 as part of a broader effort to deter any Chinese military aggression against Taiwan.
- "The US should strengthen the Nato Plus arrangement to include India," said the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the US and the Chinese Communist Party in a report released on Wednesday titled "Ten for Taiwan policy recommendations to preserve peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait".
- The Nato+5 group currently comprises all 31 member countries of Nato and Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Japan and South Korea, all countries that have bilateral defence and security treaties with the US.
- This is the first report from the select committee which was formed in January by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a Republican, to guide Congress on competing with and countering China.

## COMMENTS

Such a recommendation has not been raised for the first time. The same has been debated on both official and non-official channels for years now. This is not particularly surprising when we look at the backdrop of increasingly hostile relations between the USA and China and the steps that the former is actively taking to counter the growing influence of Beijing and to increase its military preparedness against an attack. India and US have been actively collaborating on a free and open Indo-Pacific for several years now and the efforts took a new shape post PM Narendra Modi came to power. Since then the two nations have increased their defence collaboration and the same can be seen from the joint military exercises, arms exchange, information sharing etc. that have occurred between the two countries to facilitate the same.

The USA has conveyed its concerns about Chinese aggression against Taiwan on multiple platforms and occasions especially post the recent Nancy Pelosi visit to Taiwan in end of 2022. However, while India is a "major defence partner" of the US, it has refused to ally with it in the past, largely owing to its historical Non-Alignment Policy. This raises the question of India agreeing to become a part of NATO+. In hindsight, this is less likely to happen especially given the already straining relationship between India and Russia, the former's alliance with the US is only much more likely to push Russia towards China which would result in a loss of an old friendship and a valuable partner.

It is also essential to understand that India has not established any direct diplomatic linkages communication with Taiwan, nor has it provided it with any political support over the years despite its economic and trade ties. This has been both a frequent complaint and a demand of the Taiwanese government. However, Taiwan and India have representative offices in each other's capitals since 1995.



While India has recently refused to outwardly accept or say anything in support of the One China Policy, it is still unlikely to respond to Chinese aggression against Taiwan. In such a situation, its membership in NATO+ with the US interest of getting involved only the Taiwan-Chinese conflict, becomes even less likely.

The journey to a possible membership is not going to be easy. To begin with, we need to analyse how/if the US decides to go ahead with this recommendation. If it decides to woo India and make it a part of the alliance, it will first have to satisfy the Indian critics in the US who are sceptical of the nation because of its friendship with Russia. Even after US efforts, there is a possibility that it does not come to fruition due to a consistent stance of India against "alliances".

# China Calls J-K "Disputed Territory," Opposes Holding G20 Meeting In Region

<https://aninews.in/news/world/asia/china-calls-j-k-disputed-territory-opposes-holding-g20-meeting-in-region20230520051957/>

China said that it will not attend the next week's G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Jammu and Kashmir, stating that it is "firmly" opposed to holding any such meetings in the "disputed territory." Under India's presidency, the third G20 Tourism Working Group meeting is scheduled to take place in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir from May 22-24, 2023.

## COMMENTS

China has again seized the opportunity to provoke India on the issue of Kashmir and tried to bring the issue of Kashmir again into international headlines by calling it a "disputed" territory. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey joined in support of Pakistan.

Though the Chinese delegation has very swiftly declined to attend meetings in Srinagar, a Chinese delegation visited Gilgit - Baltistan in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir without any hesitation to discuss matters of importing some farm products during the same period. [1] This clearly shows that China doesn't consider PoK as "disputed" but only the Kashmir under the control of India as "disputed." China has shown that on the issue of Kashmir, it will always support Pakistan. Recognising PoK as disputed will call into question Chinese investments in a disputed territory.

This can not be seen in the link with the ongoing dispute on LAC with China but must be seen as China taking sides with its "iron brother" and China coming out as an "all-weather friend" of Pakistan. China favors Pakistan on Kashmir as China has invested heavily in CPEC and hence sees its interests aligned with Pakistan.

India has given a sharp response. India's Minister of State in the PMO, Shri Jitendra Singh has said "that (China not attending the meeting) does not make any difference. China not coming is China's loss, not India's." [2]

India has done well by not mentioning the "One China Policy" now for many years and must rethink the same, since there is no reciprocity from China on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India by repeatedly supporting Pakistan on Kashmir. India must try to leverage the Taiwan issue by supporting it and sending diplomatic messages.

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[1] "Chinese delegation to visit Gilgit-Baltistan next week." 2023. ANI News. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/chinese-delegation-to-visit-gilgit-baltistan-next-week20230508204822/>.

[2] "It's China's loss, not India's: Union minister Jitendra Singh on Beijing skipping G20 meet in Kashmir." 2023. PTI. <https://www.ptinews.com/news/national/its-chinas-loss-not-indias-union-minister-jitendra-singh-on-beijing-skipping-g20-meet-in-kashmir/575585.html>.



## 39 Missing After Chinese Fishing Boat Capsizes In The Middle Of The Indian Ocean

<https://apnews.com/article/china-indian-ocean-fishing-vessel-sinks-13f3d978696d9db492c01504a98a24e4>

Several ships and aircraft searched Wednesday for 39 people reported missing after a Chinese fishing boat capsized in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said the accident happened around 3 a.m. Tuesday. The report said the crew includes 17 from China, 17 from Indonesia and five from the Philippines. Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Qiang have ordered Chinese diplomats abroad, as well as the agriculture and transportation ministries, to assist in the search for survivors.



*Source: Asia Society*

### COMMENTS

Indian Navy on request of the PLA Navy launched a SAR operation and deployed P-8I, a multirole surveillance aircraft to locate the vessel. It was successful in locating the vessel and relayed the information to PLA Navy for further rescue. Indian Navy also remained on standby for any further assistance.

This operation has established India as an important player in HADR and SAR efforts in the Indian Ocean Region and has demonstrated beyond doubt Indian credibility and capabilities to respond to such situations in almost no time successfully. The operation becomes all the more important, as India has responded to the call of China with which it is currently in conflict. This shows India is a responsible power in the region ready to provide assistance to everyone irrespective of the status of its relations with a particular country in good faith.

## Shift In Mongolia's Buddhist Leadership To Determine Its Relationship With China

<https://aninews.in/news/world/asia/shift-in-mongolias-buddhist-leadership-to-determine-its-relationship-with-china20230515120759/>

Dalai Lama recently recognized an 8-year-old US-born Mangolian boy as the third highest-ranking spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia after the positions of Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. This shift in religious leadership has huge potential to impact the relationship of Mongolia with China.

## COMMENTS

In March 2023, this young boy was presented as the 10th Khalkha Jetsun Dhampa Rinpoche or the 10th Jebtsundamba Khutuktu of the Gelug lineage of Khalka Mongols, one of the highest-ranking leaders in Tibetan Buddhism. The ceremony took place in Dharamshala, India headed by Dalai Lama. The boy is a US-born Mangolian child anointed in a ceremony conducted in India that has already rattled China a lot. China is more fearful also because more ethnic Mongolians reside in China than in Mongolia itself as it can spark tensions inside China.

This recognition sends a larger message to the whole Tibetan Buddhist community and China too regarding the next Dalai Lama. The Mongolian government is walking a tightrope between China and Dharmshala by not commenting on the matter till now. In the past too, China-Mangolia relations reached a nadir when Dalai Lama visited Mongolia. Mongolia, being a landlocked country is highly dependent on China and due to this, time and again has succumbed to pressures from China.

The whole event has upset China as it wants to control and authority over the whole incarnation process. But with this appointment, Dalai Lama has sent a strong message to China that it doesn't have and will not have any role to play in the future too in the incarnation of the next Dalai Lama.

## Thousands Of Ethnic Minority Muslims Defy Chinese Authorities In Defense Of Mosque

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/30/china/china-yunnan-hui-mosque-protest-intl/index.html>

Thousands of ethnic minority Muslims surrounded a mosque in southwestern China over the weekend in a last-ditch effort to prevent what they said was an attempt by authorities to remove its dome and minarets, as a crackdown on religious freedoms widens. The apparent alteration of a mosque belonging to the Hui ethnic group in Najaiying village, Yunnan province comes amid a sweeping campaign unleashed by China's leader Xi Jinping to "sinicize" religion.

## COMMENTS

China has continued its "sinicisation" campaign against minorities to integrate them more into Han culture. The most recent victim of this authoritarian attempt to sinicise is the Hui ethnic minority. This comes as a shock as Hui, unlike Uyghur, is very much similar culturally, and linguistically to the Han majority. Also, Hui is dispersed and integrated with the Han majority all across China, unlike Ughyurs who are concentrated in Xinxiang, North-western China. [1]



Source: The Diplomat

Chinese authorities have come down heavily on the protestors and have arrested them. This has brought to light that China is not only cracking down on Ughyurs but also on other Muslim ethnic minorities and expanding its sinicisation campaign. The repression is not just limited to mosques but also includes shutting down Islamic schools, ban on speaking Arabic, and barring children from learning about and practicing Islamic culture. This must have sent ripples across CCP leadership as the backlash from the Hui minority was strong and sent a message that not everything is in control of the CCP, as they would wish it to be. More importantly, this would send shockwaves as the Hui minority is otherwise very similar to Han Chinese, speak Mandarin and follow only some

Islamic practices like abstinence from pork, and has stayed peaceful all across these years and suppression similar to that of Ughyurs has been unthinkable for them. This indicates that CCP cannot tolerate even a little diversity. Residents now believe that this is just a start and more is yet to come.

The authoritarian and totalitarian rule of the CCP is expanding and it is worrying that the world community is silent on such gross human rights violations and bar on religious freedoms. Though this is a very visible attack on Islamic symbols, no major Muslim nation has condemned this act by China. It is noteworthy that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and the Gulf Cooperation Council which otherwise is very assertive in calling out even the bleakest of reports of violations of the rights of Muslims in any other part of the world have refrained from commenting on this issue.



Source: Freedom House



# Taiwan Holds First Training For Female Reservists

[https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230511\\_27/](https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230511_27/)

- A group of 14 female reservists in Taiwan is undergoing military training this week, becoming the first women to do so.
- Training of reservists had been limited to men. But Taiwan's defense ministry started including women this year as part of efforts to bolster defense capabilities in the face of China's increasing military pressure.
- The 14 women reservists are taking part in the five-day training program that started Monday at a site in the northern city of Taoyuan.
- On Thursday, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen visited the site to observe live-fire rifle exercises. She thanked the participants for their action and expressed hope that many more women would join.
- Tsai said Taiwan stands on the frontlines of democracy's defense, and called for unity among the people, regardless of gender, in demonstrating resolve to defend their homeland.
- Taiwan faces a chronic shortage of troops. The minimum term of service for volunteer enlisted soldiers, who are regarded as the main force, is set at four years. But a ministry report covering the past five years shows about 20 percent leave early for personal reasons each year.
- The ministry plans to train 220 female reservists in the first year.

## COMMENTS

The initiative by the Taiwanese state and armed forces to include female reservists can be seen as an important step in ensuring the security needs of the island nation amidst the growing concerns with regards to the threat of a future invasion by Mainland China. These measures have been encouraged by military analysts and were announced by the Taiwanese government. According to Maj. Gen. Yu Wen-cheng, from the ministry's All-Out Defense Mobilization Agency, the move would be on a trial basis for this year[1].

While Taiwan does have a regular conventional military, its strength is only 190,000 people compared to its 1.6 million reservists [2]. Taiwan's 23 million population has started declining, leading to likely future recruitment shortfalls. The median age of China and Taiwan are a little over 38 and 40 years respectively. The recruitment of female reservists, can be understood from the following quote that one of the reservists gave "with no country, there is no home". This quote reflects an attitude that most Taiwanese have with regards to the security issue in this East Asian country.

[1] As reported by the CNN on the 18th of January 2023. Taken from-Taiwan to allow women into military reserve force training as China fears grow by Wayne Chang for CNN-<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/18/asia/taiwan-women-military-reserve-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>.

[2] Taken from Taiwan's military trains female reservist soldiers for the first time in its history by Emily Feng for npr-<https://www.npr.org/2023/05/11/1175403654/taiwan-s-military-trains-female-reservist-soldiers-for-the-first-time-in-its-his>

Some other measures that have been implemented by Taiwan to strengthen its military also include- extension of period of mandatory military conscription or all eligible men from four months to a year starting from 2024, and the requirement will apply to men born after 2005 [3]. Taiwan's efforts to stem the growing Chinese threat is commendable and also reflects various new and ingenious methods that countries have adopted to tackle the security and defense challenges that they face.

## Japan Opposition Party Protests Bill Aimed At Strengthening Defense Capabilities

[https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230516\\_17/](https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230516_17/)

- Japan's main opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party, submitted a no-confidence motion against Finance Minister Suzuki Shunichi on the 16th of May 2023.
- The party is protesting a bill that would allow the government to establish a fund aimed at strengthening Japan's defense capabilities.
- It obstructed a vote on the bill that was scheduled to be held in the Lower House Financial Affairs Committee on Tuesday by submitting the motion.
- The government and ruling camp regard the bill as a key piece of legislation, and they want to have it enacted during the current session of the Diet.
- In the motion, the CDP says defense spending increases are interfering with financial resources earmarked for the reconstruction work in areas affected by the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster that occurred on March 11, 2011.
- They say the bill should be the foundation of Japan's security. But they say they have no choice but to call it defective, as it has many problems. They add that the finance minister is trying to steamroller it through.

### COMMENTS

The CDP/Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan has consistently opposed the present regime's attempts at strengthening the JSDF. On the 8th of June 2022, it had passed a no-confidence motion against the Kishida administration in the Lower House of the Diet[4]. Recently, on the 16th of May 2023, it submitted a no-confidence motion against the Finance Minister Suzuki Shunichi. With the constant threats by China and North Korea[5], the Japanese Government is planning to reform the JSDF. An important component of this reform is the creation of a fund aimed at strengthening Japan's defense capabilities.



Source: South China Morning Post

[3] As reported by the CNN on the 18th of January 2023. Taken from-Taiwan to allow women into military reserve force training as China fears grow by Wayne Chang for CNN-<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/18/asia/taiwan-women-military-reserve-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>.

[4] Taken from-CDP submits no-confidence motion against Kishida Cabinet by Tamiyuki Kihara-<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14640246>.

[5] As recent as April 2023, a missile launch by North Korea brought in fresh terror for many Japanese residing in the Northern Island of Hokkaido.

## JAPAN

The primary aim of the bill is to boost defense expenditures through such means as spending reforms, using surplus from financial results and establishing a new fund from non-tax income. Such income would include that from sales of state properties and provisions from special accounts[6].

As reported earlier, the public sentiment in Japan regarding war is extremely negative. Many Japanese are against any form of conflict and do not want to intervene if China invades Taiwan. This sentiment is also reflected in CDP's actions with regards to Kishida's cabinet's actions. The FY 2023-2024 budget of 863 billion Yen features record military and welfare spend. Kishida plans to double Japan's defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2027. The Japanese Government has decided to issue 434 billion Yen construction Bonds to fund warships/military capabilities. The Defense spending will rise from 5.4 trillion Yen to 6.8 trillion Yen. It also set aside 3-4 trillion Yen to finance its 5 year Defence build up plan. For the CDP leader Izumi Kenta, "The government has no strategy and cannot protect people's lives".

Despite the protest by CDP, the bill has been approved in the Lower House of the Diet. It has now been passed to the Upper House where it is currently being deliberated upon[7].



Source: Twitter

[6] Japan's Upper House begins deliberating defense fund bill -[https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230524\\_24/](https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230524_24/).

[7] Japan's Upper House begins deliberating defense fund bill- [https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230524\\_24/](https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20230524_24/).