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GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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Xi Jinping Meets Former US Secretary Of State Henry Kissinger In Beijing

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/xi-jinping-meets-former-us-secretary-of-state-henry-kissinger-in-beijing/articleshow/101976628.cms>

Chinese leader Xi Jinping met former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in Beijing on July 20, 2023, the Chinese state media reported, describing the 100-year-old as a "legendary diplomat".

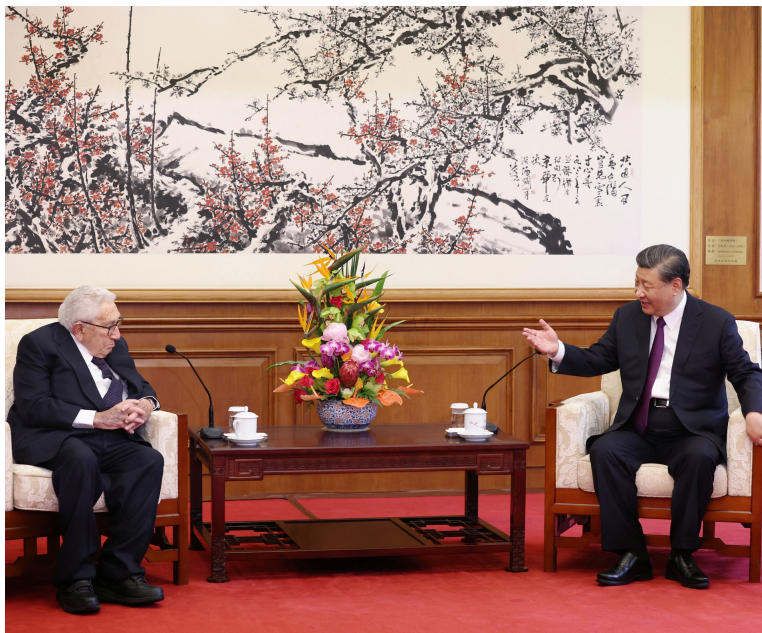
COMMENTS

The US China relations are going through a tumultuous phase. Post-Covid and with the ongoing Russian Ukrainian conflict, there has been a marked hardening of the US stance on geopolitical aspects concerning Taiwan, South Korea and activities in the South China Sea. The US has simultaneously enhanced diplomatic engagements with the Quad partners and regional allies.

The former US Secretary of State, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the 100 year old Henry Kissinger was on a surprise visit at short notice to Beijing. He met the Chinese Premier Xi Jinping. Prior to that he met the Defence Minister of China, Li Shangfu and Wang Yi, the Chinese top diplomat. Details of the meeting with Xi Jinping are yet to be made public. Li Shangfu said, "Some people in the US did not meet China halfway, causing China-US relations to hover at the lowest point since the establishment of diplomatic relations". Wang Yi, said, "US policy towards China requires Kissinger-style diplomatic wisdom and Nixon-style political courage".

Chinese State news agency Xinhua reported Kissinger having said, "History and practice have repeatedly proved that neither the US nor China can afford to treat the other as an adversary". Kissinger has served as US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor in the administrations of President's Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. He had undertaken a similar secret visit to China in July 1971 to improve relations with China, the progress made laid the ground for US President Richard Nixon to visit China, possibly help in ending the Vietnam war, further leading to thaw in relations between the US and China, besides driving a wedge between Soviet Union and China. The US state department has responded by saying that it was aware of the Kissinger visit and termed the visit to be a personal one. The visit however has been highly appreciated by the US media, terming it as the most pragmatic and rational.

China has been conducting various military drills close to Taiwan and South Korea. Chinese fighter aircraft in big formations are known to be buzzing Taiwan airspace, with the 1955 defined 'Median Line' at regular intervals. These actions tend to coincide with visits of senior officials and other geopolitical events related to the US or its regional partners. The last such buzzing was in the first week of July by 37 Chinese fighter aircraft. China has also been exercising blockading manoeuvres and practicing precision aerial strikes. Last such exercise took place in April this year, coinciding with the meeting of Taiwan's President with the US House Representative in the US.



Source: Reuters

The US too has been responding to these provocations and the last few months have witnessed escalating tensions in the Indo-Pacific region with a marked increase in aerial activity by the USAF as a demonstration of their reach and response in support of their regional allies and partners. The US response seems to be in consonance with its February 2022 published 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' of strengthening its relations with its regional partners, including expanding its diplomatic presence. This has translated into the US flying over the Korean peninsula and participating in various military exercises with friendly countries in the region.

In fact, at the time of this Kissinger visit, a joint major aerial exercise was underway in the region with the US deploying joint fighter bombers, mid-air refuellers, force multipliers and transport aircraft from UK, Canada, Australia, Japan, and France.

Events in the last few weeks indicate that there seems to be an attempt on part of the US administration to continue with diplomatic engagements. Even though in May this year, the Chinese Defence Minister had refused to meet Pentagon Chief Lloyd Austin on the sidelines of Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. Other US diplomats, however, have been accommodated. Antony Blinken visited on June 18/19 and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen visited on July 8, 2023, both interacted with their respective counterparts. Kissinger seems to have had a good interaction with the Chinese hierarchy.

The timing of visits by US top officials and by Kissinger tends to indicate an attempt on the part of Biden administration to amend ties. Both countries seem to have realised the need to open up more channels of communication and need to have more constructive insights towards getting the relationship back to normal through official functionaries, track two diplomacy through Kissinger and business magnates like Bill Gates. Both countries seem to be looking for stable and predictive relations in which a healthy environment can foster peaceful co-existence. The US seems to be wanting to create a geopolitical environment in the region that facilitates growth of its trade under the strategy of "diversification and de-risking, not decoupling". Apparently, the US assumption to compartmentalise bilateral economic and political relations is at odds with the Chinese approach, which lumps these together. Moreover, since recent US policy measures regarding advanced technology are driven by non-negotiable National Security imperatives, their relations are likely to remain strained since their core National interests are conflictual.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

1. *The Economist* https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/07/04/why-ukraine-needs-american-cluster-bombs?utm_medium=email&utm_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm_campaign=espresso.AP&utm_content=the-world-in-brief-july
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UKRAINIAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE

Kinetic War. The bombing of the Kerch road bridge that connects Russia to Crimea was damaged and temporarily halted for car traffic. Russia attributed this attack to Ukrainian naval drones. The Ukrainian air force on July 22, 2023 said that it had overnight brought down 14 Russian drones, including five Iranian-made ones, over the country's southeast, where battles are raging. Ukraine has started using US-supplied cluster munitions on Russian forces in southeast Ukraine to degrade heavily defended Russian positions. US has furnished Ukraine with missile systems, ammunition supplies, drones and electronic warfare equipment in addition to fuel trucks and tactical vehicles. Norway too pledged the Black Hornet drone in addition to 1000 small reconnaissance drones.

Russia accused **Ukraine** of launching a "terrorist attack" after a drone strike damaged at least two buildings in Moscow on July 24, 2023. A Ukrainian drone hit an ammunition depot in central Crimea on Jul 22, 2023 sparking an explosion in an oil depot and Russian arms warehouses in the Krasnohvardiiske area, less than a week after a predawn strike on a key bridge linking the peninsula. Russian drones destroyed grain storage warehouses on the Danube river in Ukraine, a vital export route.

The Danube river ports are close to Romania, a NATO member. Since it withdrew from the deal that allowed Ukraine to export grain from its Black sea ports, Russia has targeted the country's port infrastructure. In north-eastern Ukraine, along a roughly 60-mile front that runs around the towns of Kupiansk, Svatove and Kreminna, the Russians are once again mounting sustained offensive operations with heavy artillery, drones and waves of ground assaults.

RUSSIA UKRAINE CONFLICT

GRAIN DEAL

On Jul 17, 2023 Russia withdrew from a deal that had allowed Ukraine to export grain through Black Sea. Russia's defence ministry said that all ships bound for Ukraine's Black Sea ports would be considered "potential carriers of military cargo" starting at midnight on Thursday. Earlier Ukraine said that Russian strikes on ports in Odessa and Chornomorsk, both in southern Ukraine, had destroyed 60,000 tones of grain. The price of wheat futures jumped by more than 8% on Jul 19, 2023 .



Source: Al Jazeera

WAGNER REVOLT

A Russian general, Ivan Popov , was dismissed after accusing the military leadership of failing its troops, the latest sign of rising tensions in the army after a mutiny by Wagner mercenaries on June 24th. Mr Popov had criticised the high casualty rate and lack of artillery support on the frontline in the Zaporizhia region.

The heads of Russia's regions will be allowed to create their own paramilitary companies under legislation adopted by the State Duma, the country's parliament. The creation of such companies would be financed by federal and regional budgets.

Tensions between Russia and Poland are heating up after Poland moved troops near its border with Belarus amid concerns about the Wagner Group's presence in the region. The Polish Armed Forces announced earlier today the deployment of additional Armor and Mechanized Units from the West of the Country towards the border with Belarus due to the recent arrival of Wagner PMC Forces onto Belarusian Territory within Miles of the Polish Border, which they stated is a "serious threat."

Tensions simmer over the contentious Suwałki Gapa strip of land along the Polish and Lithuanian border separating Belarus to the east from the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad to the west—have grown after Wagner Group mercenaries started to relocate to Belarus in July.

COMMENTS

1. Ukrainian counteroffensive will soon enter its eighth week and is likely to stretch into the autumn. The progress has been slower and harder than expected. The conflict is defined by application of artillery, drones and entrenched defence fronts.
2. Though Russia is implementing a defensive strategy banking on air superiority and mines planted along 600 mile frontline, it is concurrently conducting offensive activities at the tactical and operational levels. So far they have been able to prevent a major Ukrainian breakthrough. Russia's main effort is to hold ground around Crimea and Donbas and in the Southern region from Donetsk to Kherson. The \$3.6 billion bridge is the longest in Europe and is crucial for Russia's military operations in southern Ukraine in the nearly 17-month-old war. Control of the Crimean Peninsula is critical for Russia as well as Ukraine as it offers access to key ports on the Black Sea.
3. Electronic Warfare is playing a key role during the conflict. All Iranian-made Shahed136 exploding drones launched by Russian troops during the night were brought down, pointing to Ukraine's increasing success rate in neutralising them. Similarly, the Ukrainian attack on Moscow on Jul 24, 2023 where two drones were successfully neutralised using countermeasure. Moscow used this attack to mount revenge strikes on Ukraine during the last week.
4. Russia jolted world grain markets with an escalation in the Black Sea, mounting a third straight night of air strikes on Ukrainian ports and issuing a threat against Ukraine-bound vessels.
5. Following an attempted mutiny by Wagner Group head Yevgeny Prigozhin against Moscow's military leadership last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin exiled the Wagner Group to Belarus, raising concerns about stability throughout Eastern Europe. However, Prigozhin's presence at the Russia-Africa Summit on 27-28 July, and his comments on the coup in Niger on 26th July, indicate that he still enjoys Putin's confidence and support, and will continue to play a geo-strategic role.



Source: RAND
Cooperation

India Built Sittwe Port Raises Myanmar's Hopes for Boosting Arakan Infrastructure - Key Details

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/infrastructure-india-built-sittwe-port-raises-myanmars-hopes-for-boosting-arakan-infrastructure-key-details-3182383/>

Myanmar has high hopes for the India-built Sittwe Port, anticipating it to be a significant catalyst for regional connectivity and a boost to trade with India, according to a ET report. The port, a vital component of the Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project, was inaugurated on May 9. This ambitious project aims to establish an alternative route for connecting India's Eastern Coast with the North Eastern States through the Sittwe Port. The port is linked to Paletwa in Myanmar through an inland waterway and from Paletwa, a road segment connects to Zorinpui in Mizoram. Local communities are optimistic that direct trade with India will bring economic prosperity to the Arakan State.

Both Myanmar and India are in the process of finalising agreements to commence direct trade. However, the signing of a coastal shipping pact between the two countries is holding up the official launch of trade between Sittwe and Kolkata. The terms of this pact will determine the frequency of cargo shipments between the two ports, such as operating one ship per week or two ships per month. Initially, shipping lines may not see substantial profits during the early stages of operation.

While the port is now open, its full operational capacity will only be realised once a regular shipping line between Kolkata and Sittwe is established. U Tin Aung Oo, the Chairman of Rakhine State Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is optimistic about the port's potential impact, as per the reports. At present, Arakan State primarily engages in cross-border trade with Bangladesh. With the Sittwe Port, direct trade opportunities with India's Kolkata Port will expand, providing more choices for traders and creating additional job opportunities. U Tin believes that this enhanced trade will lead to improvements in the region's economic landscape.



Source: PIB

REGIONAL SCAN: MYANMAR

There are ongoing negotiations to allow the use of coastal ships owned by Myanmar business owners for this trade. U Tha Tun Hla, Chairman of the Arakan National Party, expressed that the Sittwe Port will bring benefits to the Arakanese people, provided that products from Arakan State are permitted to be traded through the port.

COMMENTS

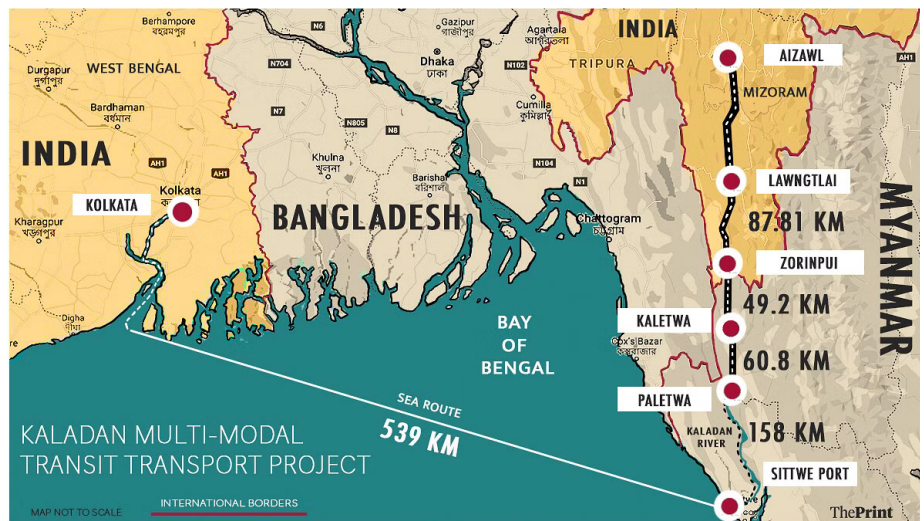
Sittwe Port is a deep-water port, located at Sittwe City, the capital of Myanmar's Rakhine (Arakan) State. It is part of Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, a joint initiative between India and Myanmar.

The project's main objective is to establish a multimodal transportation network that connects India's Eastern Coast (Kolkata) with India's North-Eastern States through Myanmar's waterways and road networks. Its strategic location in the Bay of Bengal, makes it a crucial maritime gateway in the region and its operationalisation provides the desired geo-strategic advantage to India in the Indian Ocean Region.

The port has a significant role in promoting trade and connectivity between India and Myanmar and its functioning is expected to bolster both bilateral and regional trade, while also making a positive impact on the local economy of the Rakhine State.



Source: Inventia



Source: Civils Daily

Pakistan Warns Afghan Taliban Against Harboring Militants

<https://www.dw.com/en/pakistan-warns-afghan-taliban-against-harboring-militants/a-66240251>

Pakistan's military chief threatened the Taliban in Afghanistan with an "effective response" if it does not stop harbouring militants who plot cross-border attacks in Pakistan. General Asim Munir said the army has "serious concerns on the safe havens and liberty of action" allegedly afforded by Kabul to the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), more commonly known as the Pakistani Taliban.

COMMENTS

Pakistan has accused Afghanistan's Taliban government of harbouring TTP militants and lack of action against operatives of the group and their activities. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has rejected Pakistan's claims of TTP's or any other militant outfit's presence in their country. There has been a surge in militant activities, suicide blast and targeted attacks in Pakistan and it also believes that Afghan nationals too are involved in these terror activities. In the past, TTP militants have claimed responsibility for attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan province and at other places in the country. Pakistan asserts that TTP has sanctuaries across the border and also has access to the latest weapons left behind by the withdrawing US forces.

The Pakistan government has expressed its concerns over the Afghanistan government not abiding by the Doha Agreement of 2020 that it signed with the US, "guaranteeing to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any international terrorist groups or individuals against the security of the United States and its allies". However, Taliban counters that the Doha Agreement was signed with the US and not with Pakistan. Moreover, Taliban claimed that the TTP operates not from Afghanistan but from Pakistani soil itself, and, therefore, it is Pakistan's problem to tackle.

Pakistan Government to Dissolve Parliament on August 8

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/pakistan-government-to-dissolve-parliament-on-august-8-report/articleshow/101869341.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

The five-year constitutional term of the incumbent National Assembly expires on August 12 at midnight - four days after the date on which both parties have reportedly agreed to dissolve the legislature. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) - the two major stakeholders in the federal government - have agreed to dissolve the National Assembly on August 8, the Geo News reported.

COMMENTS

The five-year term of the incumbent National Assembly commenced on August 12, 2018 under the Tehreek-e-Insaf government led by Imran Khan. Imran Khan, however, lost a no-confidence vote in the Parliament giving way to the PML-N and PPP coalition government under Shahbaz Sharif's in April 2022. The five-year constitutional term of the current National Assembly will be expiring on the midnight of August 12, 2023. However, the ruling coalition of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) have agreed to dissolve the National Assembly four days shy of completion of its constitutional term, on August 8th, , 2023.

According to the Constitution of Pakistan, a general election to the National Assembly or a provincial assembly should be held within a period of 60 days immediately following the day on which the term of the Assembly is due to expire. However, if the Assembly is dissolved before its constitutional term is completed, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is bound to hold the general polls within 90 days of the dissolution. This will give the coalition partners extra time for general elections. It has been reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had spoken to his ally and PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari before announcing the early dissolution of the National Assembly.

Pakistan Facing 'Exceptionally High' Risks, Needs Another IMF Programme, Says Global Lender

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/pakistan-facing-exceptionally-high-risks-needs-another-imf-programme-says-global-lender/articleshow/101920820.cms?from=mdr>



Pakistan needs another IMF programme and support from other multilateral lenders beyond the coming election cycle and the ongoing standby arrangement, according to the Washington-based global lender.

Source: DAWN

COMMENTS

Pakistan's economy has been struggling and marred by sky-high inflation and staggeringly low foreign exchange reserves. The Pakistan government, in its efforts to stabilise the country's economy AND after months of negotiations, was able to get the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approve a 9-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) worth \$3 billion on July 12th. However, less than a week later, the IMF released a 120-page report which analysed cash-strapped Pakistan's macroeconomic outlook. The report is based on the Memorandum of Economic and Fiscal Policies (MEFP) signed by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed. As per IMF, Pakistan needs another programme and support from other multilateral lenders to restore the country's medium-term viability and capacity to repay. IMF also said that "Pakistan's economic challenges are complex and multifaceted, and risks are exceptionally high. Addressing them requires steadfast implementation of agreed policies, as well as continued financial support from external partners. Consistent and decisive implementation of programme agreements will be essential to reduce risks and maintain macroeconomic stability".

Pakistan Prepares Fresh Arms Supplies To Ukraine As Kuleba Makes 'Emergency Visit' To Islamabad

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-prepares-fresh-arms-supplies-for-ukraine/articleshow/101966693.cms>

ET has learnt that a merchant vessel has been berthed at the Karachi port Karachi Port since last week to load nearly 200 containers of defence stores by Pakistan Ordnance Factories. The consignment is expected to be delivered at Poland's Gdansk Port for the Ukrainian ministry of defence.

COMMENTS

It has been reported that Pakistan has decided to send a consignment of arms to Ukraine consisting of rockets and other defence supplies. Reportedly, these supplies have been manufactured by the Pakistan Ordnance Factory and will be delivered to Ukraine through Poland. This decision also coincides with the emergency visit of Ukraine's Foreign Minister on 20 July 2023. Pakistan has been supplying arms and ammunition to Ukraine on behest of the Western countries in exchange for financial assistance from the West. Earlier also such consignments have been delivered to Ukraine through other countries. In return, Ukraine has agreed to supply engines and other spares for Mi-17 helicopters to Pakistan.

However, in their press statements, both countries' Foreign Ministers have denied any such agreement on arms supplies during the visit. The partnership between Pakistan and Ukraine in defence is almost three decades old.

Pakistan Navy Inducts Modern Warships PNS Tipu Sultan, Shahjahan

<https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/20-Jul-2023/pakistan-navy-inducts-modern-warships-pns-tipu-sultan-shahjahan>

Pakistan Navy has strengthened its fleet by inducting two modern warships – PNS Tipu Sultan and PNS Shahjahan – during a ceremony in a southern port city of Karachi. The ceremony was attended by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif as chief guest while Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi and other officials were also present on the occasion.

COMMENTS

The Pakistan Navy added two frigates of Chinese origin to its surface fleet on 20 July 2023. These frigates have been christened PNS Tippu Sultan (FF-263) and PNS Shah Jahan (FFG-264) and add to the capability of the Pakistan Navy.

Reportedly, the Tughril class frigate has a displacement of 4200 tonnes, and is 134 metres long and 16 metres wide. The frigate is powered by four Shaanxi 16 PA6 STC diesel engines generating 5700 kW each. It can reach a speed of 27 knots and has a range of 8,025 nautical miles. It has a crew complement of 165. The frigate is equipped with SR2410C AESA radar, Type 517 (SUR17B) VHF air-search radar, Type 344 fire-control radar for SSM, and four MR-90 Front Dome systems for SAM. It also has MR-36A surface-surveillance radar, Type 347G fire-control radar for the H/PJ-26 naval gun, and two Racal RM-1290 I Band navigation radars. The frigate carries MGK-335 medium frequency active/passive sonar system and the H/SJG-206 towed array sonar.



Source: Pakistan Daily

The armament carried by the frigate consists of LY-80N surface-to-air missiles for anti-air warfare, 4 CM-302 anti-ship missiles for anti-surface warfare, two Type 87 anti-submarine rocket launchers and 2 Yu-7 anti-submarine torpedo launchers for anti-submarine warfare, one 76mm H/PJ-26 naval gun and two Type 1130 CIWS. It is also equipped with two Type 726-4 decoy-launchers for decoys.

The frigate has a flight deck and an enclosed helicopter hangar that is capable of housing a Harbin Z-9 or a Kamov Ka-27 helicopter.

India, Sri Lanka Agree To Boost Economic And Energy Ties

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/21/india-sri-lanka-agree-to-boost-economic-and-energy-ties>

The leaders of India and Sri Lanka have agreed to improve their countries' economic and energy ties, as well as consider building a land link between them. The announcements on Friday came during Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe's visit to India where he held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

COMMENTS

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe came on a two-day visit to India on 20th and 21st of July 2023. He met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the two leaders discussed a host of issues concerning the two countries. This was Sri Lankan President's first visit to India after assuming office in July last year. The two countries released an Economic Vision document for strengthening maritime, air, energy and people-to-people connectivity and to accelerate mutual cooperation in tourism, electricity, business, higher education, and skill development.

One of the highlights of the talks was an agreement on boosting economic ties and connectivity between the two nations. This includes a proposed connection of power grids and feasibility studies on laying a petrol pipeline from India to Sri Lanka. A feasibility study on construction of a land bridge between India and Sri Lanka was also proposed to provide access by land to the ports of Trincomalee and Colombo. Starting of passenger ferry services between Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu to Kankesanthurai in Sri Lanka was also decided. Sri Lanka is also considering the possibility of allowing usage of Indian Rupee for local transactions in Sri Lanka like Dollar, Euro and Yen that are already in vogue. There was agreement on operationalising UPI-based digital payments enhancing trade and transactions between businesses and common people. Towards this the Network-to-Network Agreement between NPCI International Payments Limited and Lanka Pay for UPI application acceptance in Sri Lanka has been signed.



Source: The Press

PM Modi announced a developmental package for the Indian-origin Tamil population of Sri Lanka and a separate multisectoral package for the economic development of the Sri Lankan Muslim and Tamil dominated eastern province. He pushed for the welfare of Sri Lankan Tamils, who mark the 200th anniversary of their arrival to the country this year, with the Sri Lankan President.

The PM also raised India's concerns over increasing Chinese footprint in the region and remarked that the two countries need to work together respecting the safety and sensitivities of each other.

Major General Sanjaya Wanasinghe Appointed As Chief Of Staff Of Sri Lanka Army

<https://www.newswire.lk/2023/07/14/major-general-sanjaya-wanasinghe-appointed-as-chief-of-staff-of-sri-lanka-army/>

Major General Sanjaya Wanasinghe has been appointed as the Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Army.



Source: Daily News

COMMENTS

Major General Sanjaya Wanasinghe has been appointed as the new Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Army. Maj Gen Wanasinghe is from the Artillery regiment and succeeds Maj Gen CD Weerasuriya. His previous appointments include Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, Commandant of the Sri Lanka Army Volunteer Force Headquarters at Kosgama and Commander, Security Forces Headquarters at Mullaitivu. He is also the current Colonel Commandant of the Sri Lanka Artillery Regiment and is the eldest son of General Hamilton Wanasinghe, the 11th Commander of the Army from 1988 to 1991 and the first 4-Star General of Sri Lanka.

Japan, EU To Launch Security And Chip Supply Chain Talks

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Japan-EU-to-launch-security-and-chip-supply-chain-talks>

Leaders of Japan and the European Union on Thursday agreed to establish a strategic dialogue to deepen their security partnership, while also bolstering cooperation on semiconductors and other economic issues. The talks, to be held at the foreign ministerial level, are designed to facilitate cooperation between Japan and the 27 members of the EU amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's military build-up.

COMMENTS

China's military build-up and Russian military aggression in Ukraine have created a security dilemma that affects not only Europe but also East Asian powers like Japan. This has encouraged the leaders from the European Union (EU) and Japan to enhance their strategic partnership along with their economic interest which would involve supply of semiconductors. Both the parties have already commenced a strategic dialogue and came up with a joint statement. In the joint statement, the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida along with the European Commission President and European Council President stated, "We oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion anywhere in the world." Moreover, the war in Ukraine has underlined the significance of having backup energy supplies for emergencies. This has encouraged both the parties to collaborate on distribution systems and global regulations, especially hydrogen, which is viewed as a crucial energy source for the future. In order to reduce the risk of their supply networks, the EU and Japan realised the need to create an economy less dependent on Beijing. This will eventually encourage Japan to expand its engagement with Asia outside of China.

China has expressed concern over Tokyo's decision to include cutting-edge semiconductor tools on its export restriction list. According to Mao Ning, the Foreign Affairs Ministry's spokesperson, it would harm businesses and destabilise the global supply chain. She stated "China deeply regrets and is dissatisfied with the move, and it has made solemn representations to Japan at different levels." She also added, "We will closely monitor the impact of the regulatory policy and resolutely safeguard our own interests." Meanwhile India is considered a like-minded partner by both the EU and Japan. The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategies consider India as a very significant country and for Japan, India is crucial in achieving its free and open Indo-Pacific. Therefore, both the parties bolstering collaboration in supply of semiconductors would undoubtedly be advantageous for India. In the meantime, India is also focusing on producing semiconductors indigenously and seeking for foreign investments. India and Japan have talked about working together in the semiconductor and supply chain industries, with a goal of \$35.9 billion in Japanese investment in India by 2027. Therefore, engagement and cooperation between the EU and Japan in the semiconductor industry would unquestionably benefit India and further its interests outside of bilateral relations.

North Korea's Kim Vows To Boost Cooperation With China To 'New High'

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/north-koreas-kim-vows-develop-cooperation-with-china-new-high-2023-07-28/>

SEOUL, July 29 (Reuters) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met the Chinese delegation which visited Pyongyang to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the end of the Korean War and vowed to develop the two countries' relations to a "new high", the North's state media said on Saturday. Kim hosted a reception for the Chinese officials led by Communist Party Politburo member Li Hongzhong on Friday, the North's KCNA news agency said. The Chinese delegation was the first to visit the reclusive state since the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un Meets With Russian Defense Minister To Discuss Military Cooperation

<https://indianexpress.com/article/world/north-korean-kim-jong-un-russian-defense-minister-military-cooperation-8863827/>

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu to discuss military issues and the regional security environment, state media said Thursday, illustrating North Korea's support for Russia's war in Ukraine as the isolated country celebrated the 70th anniversary of an armistice that halted fighting in the 1950-53 Korean War. The North Korean festivities were to be highlighted by a military parade Thursday evening in the capital, Pyongyang, where Kim – possibly in the presence of Shoigu and a visiting Chinese ruling party official – could showcase his most powerful, nuclear-capable missiles designed to threaten neighboring rivals and the United States.

COMMENTS

North Korea's resumption of diplomatic ties with Russia and China at the height of the Ukrainian Conflict is very clear of extreme geopolitical changes in the region. North Korea under the Kim Jong Un regime is clearly on the path of reinitiating normal ties with its two greatest allies in the region that may not only help the famished North Korean economy but also further worsen the situation on the Korean peninsula and beyond.



Source: Reuters

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

It has become clear that North Korea is using the Ukraine Conflict to its advantage of developing nuclear armed weapons and further proliferation. Meantime, South Korea under Yoon Seok Yeol has taken an extremely aggressive stand on resuming normal ties with Pyongyang. The situation on the Korean Peninsula is worsening as a result of power politics. The situation currently indicates the re-emergence of a 'strategic triangle' much similar to the Cold War politics. The US-ROK-Japan on one side and China-North Korea- Russia on the other. The visit by high delegations from both China and Russia to Pyongyang also shows a challenge for US and its allies and therefore calls for diversification of solutions in handling issues emanating from the region. Further, the display of North Korean drones Saetbyol-4 and Saetbyol-9 [1] at the grand parade, which have similarities to the US RQ-4 Global Hawk and MQ-9 Reaper may serve as a reminder of North Korea going beyond just nuclear proliferation.

There is a view within South Korea to look inwards at the peninsula without aligning with the US narrative and seek domestic opinions and ways that could sprout chances of negotiations between the two Koreas.



[1] Ashish Dangwal, (2023), "Airframe With Zero Tech! Experts Decode N.Korea's MQ-9 Reaper, RQ-4 Global Hawk Duplicate Drones" [online: web] URL: <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/airframe-with-zero-tech-experts-decode-n-koreas-mq-9-reaper/> Accessed 30 July 2023

Lebanon's Hezbollah Sees Israel On A Path Of 'Collapse'

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-sees-israel-path-collapse-2023-07-24/>

The Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah said its arch-foe Israel was on a "path of collapse and fragmentation," referring to divisions in Israeli society over a contested overhaul of its judiciary. Israel's parliament on Monday ratified the first bill of an overhaul sought by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after last-gasp compromise efforts collapsed and failed to ease a constitutional crisis convulsing the country for months.

COMMENTS

Friction with Hezbollah has lately been on the rise along Israeli-controlled borders. Since the beginning of June, Israelis have attempted to raze the tents built by Hezbollah within the disputed Mt Dov area (Shebaa Farms). Israeli troops had dismantled one of them, giving an ultimatum to the latter of a possible military strike, should they fail to relocate. Under the pretence of a confrontation around Israel's northern borders, the state-backed extremist group intends to keep the prospect of encroaching within Galilee while assisting Iran's intentions of creating its presence inside Syria. In case of a full flare-up between IDF and Iran-backed proxies, possibilities exist of Israel's northern borders might gradually developing into an operational theatre, identical to the Buffer Zone in South Lebanon before the Israeli withdrawal.

The Lebanese administration has further endorsed Hezbollah's assertions, refusing any kind of diplomatic talks with Israel regarding the border issue. Hezbollah persists in antagonizing and disregarding the IDF across the Blue Line, thereby aggravating and breaking the rules of engagement. Growing animosity has caught America's attention, seeking to mediate both Lebanon and Israel to avoid a full-fledged conflict. Following a covert discussion between the Iranian Quds Force and Hezbollah, both parties ruled out that the state of affairs is already crippling Israeli society and mutually agreed to refrain from carrying out any confrontations, assuming this would allow the Israeli PM to blame the proxy groups for the crisis.[1]

Hezbollah's latest approach exhibits its strong backing by Iran. Hezbollah is considered one of Iran's strategic forces directed at Israel. Iran strives to avert a flare-up with Israel to guarantee no war-like situation takes place, and the ammunition can be saved for Hezbollah to employ for tactical purposes.

Despite some conflicting views regarding Israel's internal policies, CENTOM(USA) has assured the continuous supply of weapons and ammunition to Israel. Additionally, they indicated ongoing collaborative efforts by defence forces to counter both Iranian threats and Iran-affiliated proxy groups in the region.

[1] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israels-enemies-see-opportunity-its-crisis-2023-07-25/>

Saudi Arabia Buys Turkish Drones During Erdogan's Visit

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-turkey-sign-mous-energy-defence-other-fields-2023-07-18/>

Saudi Arabia agreed on Tuesday to buy Turkish drones in the biggest defence contract in Turkey's history as President Tayyip Erdogan reaped the benefits of his diplomatic push to repair ties with Gulf powers and help Ankara's struggling economy. Erdogan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman attended the signing ceremony between Turkish defence firm Baykar and the Saudi defence ministry, Saudi state news agency SPA reported.



Source: Yahoo News

COMMENTS

The series of defence procurements between Saudi and Turkey come during a time when America is reducing its footprint in the region to keep up its support for Ukraine. This sale alludes to Turkey's emergence as a key security ally for Gulf countries. Additionally, Middle Eastern nations appear dissatisfied with the interventionist measures of the West. Hence, to procure the latest defence technology, they are shifting from their typical vendors who impose restrictions on the use of defence products, to Türkiye.

The Turks and Saudis, despite having a strong alliance with the West, have always been major adversaries, aiming for power and control in West Asia. However, an extensive normalization effort in 2020 between middle eastern nations took place for regional security solutions. The improvement in relations between the two will influence power dynamics in the Balkans & EU. Erdogan, who initiated a fresh chapter for Turkey-West ties at the NATO summit, has also launched an entirely novel strategy in Turkey-Arab ties. Given the current valuation of the Turkish Lira, Arab nations like Qatar and the UAE offered swapping of currencies worth roughly twenty billion dollars.

Even though co-production and tech transfer are the agendas for boosting cutting-edge R&D for both nations, Turkey's manufacturing facilities in response to increased global requests of TB2 drones, still face challenges. In a surprise historic deal in Sep 2022, Turkey sold 20 TB2 drones to the UAE, despite manufacturing constraints.. It likely signals that UAE was not satisfied with the Wing Loong 1 and 2 drones that it has. It also indicates that Türkiye accepted the risk that UAE might utilize Turkish drones in capacities that contravene Ankara's territorial goals (like earlier in Libya), or even transfer these on to other entities who might jeopardize Türkiye's objectives, in order to gain geopolitical leverage.

US Orders Deployment Of Fighter Jets And Navy Destroyer To Middle East In Response To Iranian Activities

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/17/politics/us-jets-middle-east-iran/index.html>

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has ordered F-35 and F-16 fighter jets deployed to the Middle East, as well as the destroyer USS Thomas Hudner, in response to Iranian activities in the Strait of Hormuz.

COMMENTS

Iran attempted to take control of two cargo ships within the Strait of Hormuz while charging at one of the vessels. The deployment of fighter planes is meant to provide aerial assistance to cargo vessels passing across the strait while also increasing the US military's presence in the vicinity to act as deterrence to Iran. The United States is examining a variety of armed solutions in response to rising Russian aggression in Syria, which has temporarily obstructed attempts to eliminate ISIL outfits. The West has observed increased ISR capabilities, which is QPQ between the Russian and Iranian Quds units. Moscow is obligated to Iranians for their support in the Ukraine conflict, and Iran's interests lie in the withdrawal of American troops from Syria so that it can arm Hezbollah as per its interests and use them for its proxy war against Israel.



Source: CNN

The US action came amidst the aggressive gestures by Russian planes towards the US troops stationed in Syria, triggering a discussion involving the defence leaders from both nations. Even though there weren't any armed reprisals in the aftermath of the event, the incident played a crucial part in escalating tensions between the two nations. The Strait of Hormuz is an essential chokepoint for transporting the world's 20-30% of energy. Hence, a collaborative approach between regional and global powers should be undertaken for regular surveillance to uphold peace and stability in the region and avoid confrontations at sea which could potentially endanger global energy supply chains.

Qin Gang: The Swift Rise And Mysterious Fall Of China's Missing Foreign Minister

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-66302235>

In just a few sentences on the state news agency Xinhua - which were then read out on the main evening TV news bulletin - it was announced that Qin Gang, a rising star catapulted into the role of foreign minister by the leader Xi Jinping himself, had been removed. The presenter said that Chairman Xi had signed the order, ratifying the decision at the National People's Congress Standing Committee. And with that it spelt the dramatic end of Mr Qin's time as the global public face of China, only half a year after he had been appointed.

COMMENTS

Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang's disappearance from the media last month questioned CCP centrality, various rumours around his disappearance ranged from ill health, having a relationship with a TV presenter and corruption to losing Xi's support. The 57-year-old foreign minister quickly rose to the rank of party becoming the youngest foreign minister in China. Suspicion grew when the Chinese ministry announced that Qin will miss meetings in Jakarta because of health reasons He was in charge of the protocol department from 2014-2017, and being an ambassador to the US he earned the reputation of wolf warrior, of a strong nationalist defending Chinese foreign policy by regularly criticizing US discourses towards China. Last week on Tuesday, state media announced the replacement of the foreign minister after seven months of his job with Wang Yi, a veteran diplomat who enjoys high privileges in CCP. Chairman Xi signed the order, ratifying the decision at the National People's Congress Standing Committee. On July 28th, Wang Yi pledged to "firmly defend" China's sovereignty and security. The disappearance of leaders, actresses, sports players, and businessmen is common in China. Jack Ma also went off last year, and in 2018 head of Interpol went missing, director of Chinese SOAS. Back in 2012 Xi Jinping also disappeared from the public eye but came back as the head of Politburo, but the absence of the foreign minister at a time when he is serving is questionable and unusual. There has been speculation over where Qin Gang is, why he has been replaced and what it tells us about China's opaque system. Qin Gang's foreign policy has always been aggressive towards rivals while defending China's actions, not much information was available to check whether he made any anti-rhetoric towards China or CCP that could upset Xi. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs erased references to Qin from its website on Tuesday as China's foreign minister in 2023, results of 2020 pop up when he was serving as a Vice Foreign Minister of China. Amid this development, the international community attacked China's autocratic governance where a party official is also not safe. China reverted by abusing the international public for creating "malicious hype" over Qin Gang's disappearance. Qin visited New Delhi as foreign minister twice this year, in February for a G20 meeting and again in June for SCO in Panaji, Goa. Qin and Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs hold a dialogue on the sidelines of SCO where Jaishankar recognized that peace and tranquillity among nations is not possible unless border disputes get over whereas according to Qin China-India border situation is generally stable. The difference between their remarks highlights China's intention of maintaining this uncomfortable relationship with India. The disappearance and replacement of China's foreign minister is an important concern to India as China is in our immediate neighbourhood with whom we share territorial disputes, its political system reveals the nature of China, and understanding that nature in its true colour is imperative for India.

Germany's New China Strategy

<https://www.voanews.com/a/analysts-germany-s-new-china-strategy-prudent-highlights-indo-pacific-/7182176.html#:~:text=Germany%20released%20its%20first%20China,on%20its%20largest%20trading%20partner.>

Germany released its first China strategy this week, which calls Beijing a “systemic rival” and stresses the need for Europe’s largest economy to reduce economic dependence on its largest trading partner. Analysts tell VOA the policy shift outlined in the 64-page report that notes “China has changed” highlights Germany’s attempt to be more “prudent” in its economic relations with Beijing. They also assert that the plan’s focus on the Indo-Pacific and the need to step up military cooperation shows Germany’s recognition of the link between security in Asia and Berlin’s interests. Ian Chong, a political scientist at the National University of Singapore, said the strategy is “a reflection of some of Germany’s thinking following the war in Ukraine,” and he said it shows Berlin has learned economic interests can’t necessarily help to maintain peaceful relations with certain countries.

COMMENTS

Germany’s new China Strategy outlines the risk and opportunities with China for the country. [1] A fortnight before the release of the China Strategy, Germany released its first National Security Strategy, identifying China as a “partner, competitor and systemic rival.” The China Strategy document briefly extends and explains the areas of partnership, competition and disagreements in the international system. It provides these in three dimensions: bilateral relations with China, strengthening Germany and the EU, and international cooperation.

Germany has followed suit of the US and the EU's policy framework for dealing with China. The US published its China Strategy last year and the EU this June this year, in light of increased tensions between the US and China, and drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine, on the threat of economic dependency. The west has chosen to de-risk rather than to decouple with China. As China is the largest trading partner of Germany, Berlin seeks to diversify and reduce its dependence on China. At the systemic level, Germany aims to reform the WTO or the Bretton Woods System in the larger sense. Since China joined the WTO in 2001 as a developing country, it holds certain privileges till date. Germany has called upon China to give up these privileges. Germany has also alleged that China places its own interests above multilateral principles in the UN and its voluntary contributions are not proportionate to its economic strength. Berlin has also called on China to cooperate and engage in various international legal agreements and treaties for the welfare of the world. The China Strategy mentions India twice in the document, first in the context of Indo-Pacific and second under trade diversifications. In the context of the Indo-Pacific, Germany perceives India to be a partner in the region in terms of both security and trade aspects. As Germany tries to de-risk and diversify its trade with China, India can be a significant partner to fill the gaps. Another aspect important for India is the intention of the China strategy document itself. India also needs to reassess its neighbors' threats from all dimensions and draw a comprehensive policy framework to deal with China. New Delhi has to clearly outline the risks and opportunities China poses to India and the World with possible areas of cooperation.

[1] The China Strategy Document can be found here: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2608580/49d50fecc479304c3da2e2079c55e106/china-strategie-en-data.pdf>

U.S. Announces \$345 Million Military Aid Package For Taiwan

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-announces-345-million-military-aid-package-for-taiwan/article67134322.ece>

The U.S. on Friday announced \$345 million in military aid for Taiwan, in what is the Biden administration's first major package drawing on America's own stockpiles to help Taiwan counter China. The White House's announcement said the package would include defence, education and training for the Taiwanese. Washington will send man-portable air defence systems, or MANPADS,[1] intelligence and surveillance capabilities, firearms and missiles, according to two U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters ahead of the announcement.

COMMENTS

The U.S. announcement of \$345 million in military aid for Taiwan is a significant development in the ongoing tensions between China and the island. This aid package, which includes man-portable air defence systems, intelligence and surveillance capabilities, firearms, and missiles, represents the first major utilisation of America's own stockpiles to assist Taiwan in countering China. The U.S. decision to provide military aid to Taiwan is a necessary step to deter China from taking any military action against the island.

The U.S. has a long-standing commitment[1] to Taiwan's security. The aid package is to be seen as a warning to China not to take any military action against the island. It is likely that this military aid package will further increase tensions between the U.S. and China, which are already at their highest level.[2] The significance of the \$345 million military aid package becomes even more profound within the broader global geopolitical context, particularly in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. By tapping into its existing military stockpiles to expedite the delivery of weapons to Taiwan, the Biden administration intends to send a message of unwavering support. This approach enables Taiwan to rapidly acquire crucial military equipment, bypassing any logistical delays caused by supply chain issues. This aid package underscores the United States' commitment to maintain stability and deter aggression in the region. Furthermore, the timing of this announcement, amidst heightened tensions with Russia, demonstrates America's dedication to maintaining a strong presence in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, this decision has broader implications for global power dynamics. By providing significant military aid directly from its own stockpiles, the United States showcases its arsenal and capabilities, reinforcing its position as a dominant player in the international arena. It is a well-calculated move by the Biden administration that not only serves as a necessary show of support to Taiwan but also sends a clear signal to China that the United States will stand by its allies.

[1] Man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS) are short-range, lightweight, and portable surface-to-air missiles commonly used in military conflicts, counter-terrorism operations, and for air defence of critical infrastructure.. They are designed to provide defence against low-flying enemy aircraft and helicopters.

[2] This obligation stems from the Taiwan Relations Act enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1979.

[3] [1] Liu Pengyu, Spokesman for China's embassy in Washington. Statement made on Friday [July, 28, 2023], expressing China's opposition to U.S. military ties with Taiwan.Liu urged the U.S. to refrain from actions that could escalate tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

13th BRICS NSA Meeting At A Glance

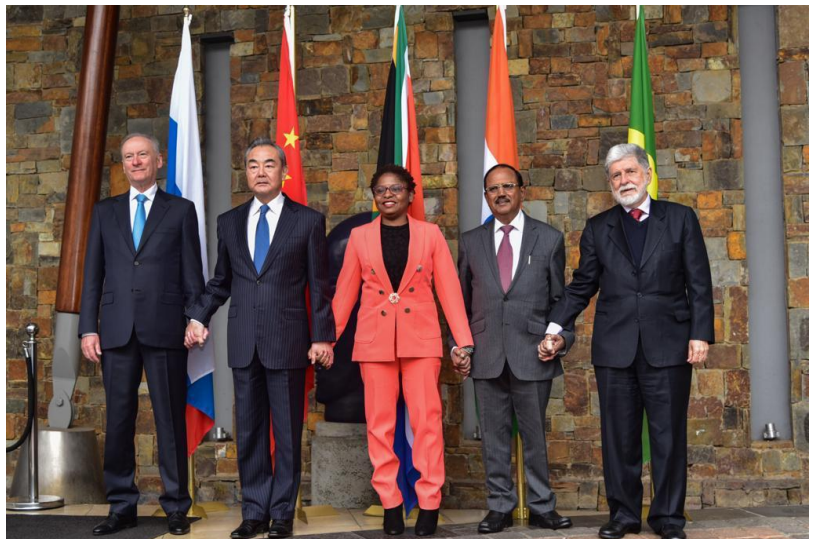
<https://theprint.in/world/at-brics-nsa-meet-nsa-doval-calls-terrorism-one-of-key-threats-to-national-peace/1686068/>

Ajit Doval, the national security adviser, attended the 13th NSA conference of the BRICS on Tuesday in Johannesburg. He claimed that one of the biggest dangers to the country's peace and security continues to be terrorism. He claims that working with the UN's counterterrorism sanctions system, which includes a list of terrorists and their middlemen, is one area where the BRICS could cooperate.[1]

NSA Doval added that uncertainty and escalating tensions characterise the current state of international security. Additionally, he thanked South Africa for cooperating with India's G20 Presidency and assured South Africa of India's ongoing support for its one-year tenure as BRICS Chair.

According to NSA Doval, stress has been placed on non-traditional concerns related to the security of food, water, and energy.[2] Water has become politicised, and this needs to be stopped. Disruptions in the supply chain have disproportionately affected vulnerable populations' access to food. He stressed that there is a shared commitment and shared obligation to address the issue immediately. He also discussed examples of water being used as a weapon and urged the necessity for complete openness and unrestricted information exchange with regard to shared cross-border water resources. South Africa's inclusion of these themes at the BRICS NSA Meeting shows that it has a thorough awareness of the bigger picture of security. The potential offered by the digital age, he claimed, will also bring about difficulties, necessitating cooperation in order to strengthen cyber defences, encourage global enterprises, and create a robust national cyber infrastructure.

Doval issued a warning that tomorrow's food disaster could result from today's fertiliser shortfall. Doval also emphasised the necessity to guarantee fertilisers are always available.[3] He also expressed happiness that various cutting-edge fields, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cloud security, blockchain, and the internet of things, have been highlighted as potential research topics by the BRICS working group on ICTs.



Source: DD News

[1] <https://www.newsx.com/nsa-ajit-doval-at-brics-nsa-meet/>

[2] <https://www.newsx.com/nsa-ajit-doval-at-brics-nsa-meet/>

[3] <https://theprint.in/world/at-brics-nsa-meet-nsa-doval-calls-terrorism-one-of-key-threats-to-national-peace/1686068/>

COMMENTS

Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are the five significant emerging economies that make up the BRICS organisation. The organisation, which was founded in 2009, seeks to improve member-to-member commerce, economic collaboration, and political discussion. The BRICS countries collectively account for over 31 percentage of the global GDP and have a sizable impact on world affairs. Annual summits are held to discuss a range of topics, including sustainable growth, finance, and development. BRICS provides a platform for these countries to represent their shared interests on the international arena while promoting bilateral investments, trade agreements, and financial cooperation.

While BRICS remains important as a forum for significant developing economies to work together on a range of economic and political issues, its continued relevance may rely on how well its member nations are able to overcome shared obstacles and use their combined weight on the world arena.

India's economic power and geopolitical importance play a significant part in making BRICS relevant. India, one of the largest and fastest-growing economies, makes a considerable contribution to the GDP and trade potential of the BRICS. India increases the BRICS's relevance and potential influence on the world arena by actively engaging in its activities and fostering cooperation. This was reflected in the bi-lateral level talks on the sides of this BRICS NSA meeting.

NSA Doval and top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi met before the BRICS meeting in South Africa, and both sides came to the conclusion that the relationship between India and China is crucial not just for the two countries but also for the region and the entire world. According to a statement from the Russian embassy in India, Ajit Doval, the national security adviser, and Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of the security council of the Russian Federation, had an informal discussion regarding the two countries' economic and security cooperation outside of the meeting.

That being said, as Doval mentioned in this meeting, this year's G20 agenda, which is led by India, will actually take into account the demands of the entire world, particularly those of the Global South. One of the goals of India's G20 Presidency is to raise the concerns of developing nations. The interests and aspirations of developing countries are represented on the global stage by India, a significant voice of the Global South. India plays a crucial part in determining international policies that deal with poverty, inequality, and regional conflicts as a democratic country with a long history of non-alignment. India gives the Global South the tools they need through diplomatic engagement and open communication to tackle common problems and ensure a better future.

Western Sanctions And Distrust Draw China, Russia Closer In The Arctic

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3228477/western-sanctions-and-distrust-draw-china-russia-closer-arctic>

China and Russia have been strengthening their Arctic collaboration, from energy and science to defence, as climate change opens up the prospect of a viable northern sea route and turns the polar region into another front for US-China rivalry. EU sanctions in the wake of the war in Ukraine forced Moscow to seek new markets for its crude oil, with the bulk of its exports now going to China and India via the long and costly southern sea route through the Suez Canal. But melting sea ice has potentially opened a more lucrative passage, that Russia is understood to be testing with a cargo of crude oil crossing the Arctic Ocean and expected to arrive on August 12 at Rizhao, in the eastern Chinese province of Shandong. If successful, the venture would reduce the maritime distance between Europe and northeast Asia by 30 per cent, compared to the route via the Suez, and significantly reduce freight costs.

COMMENTS

The Arctic has always presented extreme conditions and vast distances, compelling even traditional rivals like the United States and Russia to collaborate in the region. However, the situation is rapidly changing as the Arctic experiences accelerated warming, surpassing any other part of the globe. And the China Russia relations are strengthening in this region as well. Notably, China has taken a proactive stance, self-proclaiming as a "near-Arctic state," a term they coined to advocate for increased involvement in Arctic governance. To establish a stronger presence, China has undertaken recent research expeditions .

China's 13th Arctic Ocean Scientific Expedition Team successfully reached its first operation station in the Chukchi Sea on July 26, after spending 15 days at sea, marking the official commencement of their research activities. Xue-long 2, embarked on its scientific investigation mission in the Arctic Ocean on July 12, departing from Shanghai. The entire voyage is expected to span about 15,500 nautical miles and is anticipated to return to Shanghai by late September. [1]

China's involvement in the North American Arctic extends to regions touching Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. On the other hand, counterparts in Sweden concentrate their efforts on the European side, which includes areas from Iceland, through the Nordic countries, and all the way to Russia. This expansion might help these two communist nations to increase their already growing and strong partnership which might come in the way of the India Russia relations and China pursuing mining and gas projects, and envisioned a comprehensive network of shipping routes across the Arctic, often referred to as a "silk road on ice."

[1] (n.d.). China's Arctic Ocean expedition team begins work. China's Arctic Ocean Expedition Team Begins Work - Chinadaily.com.cn. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202307/28/WS64c32677a31035260b8190fe.html>



Source: South China Morning Post

Last year, the Arctic Council, an entity responsible for governing Arctic States and representing indigenous nations where China is an observer nation, decided to suspend its meetings as a response to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine. In light of the situation, the Council opted not to engage with Russia during that period.

Russia may explore the possibility of creating its own Arctic governing council, in which it could potentially grant China a more prominent role as its ally. This move could be aimed at strengthening their collaboration and influence in Arctic affairs. In this pursuit, China portrays itself as an enthusiastic participant, builder, and contributor to Arctic affairs, emphasizing its dedication in offering valuable insights for the development of the Arctic region along with Russia which might be a source of concern for the west and India. The increased presence of Chinese investments or military activities could impact regional stability and have implications for freedom of navigation rights. Additionally, any territorial disputes or conflicts arising from competing claims among various nations may indirectly affect Indian interests due to its growing engagement with East Asia.

India needs to carefully assess this evolving situation by engaging with all relevant stakeholders including Russia, China, Arctic states Canada and Norway through diplomatic channels. It should emphasize peaceful resolution of disputes based on international law principles such as the United Nations Convention on Law of Seas (UNCLOS). Strengthening partnerships with other non-Arctic states Japan and South Korea who share similar concerns regarding maritime security will also be beneficial.

Central Asian Whack-A-Mole: Western Tech Evades Sanctions, Feeds Russian War Machine

<https://cepa.org/article/central-asian-whack-a-mole-western-tech-evades-sanctions-feeds-russian-war-machine/>

As Russia rains missiles on Ukrainian cities, the Kremlin remains hungry for Western electronics. Russian armaments deployed in Ukraine – including Iranian drones – are packed with dual-use components, including microchips from major US and European manufacturers such as Texas Instruments and Analog Devices. An important node in this network is Central Asia. Since Russia's February 2022 invasion, European Union exports to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan of dual-use technology found in Russian armaments have skyrocketed, an investigation by our RFE/RL team has found. During the same period, Kyrgyz and Kazakh exports of these same categories of electronics to Russia rose sharply. Russian customers include electronics suppliers with links to the Kremlin's war machine. One buyer openly boasts about its ability to import Western electronics, RFE/RL reporters found. US, EU, and UK officials have used diplomatic levers to curb the trade. They have lobbied governments to prevent the flow of sanctioned dual-use Western electronics through their territory to Russia. Rather than targeting governments and companies in the region with secondary sanctions, the West has focused on high-level discussions and tightening export restrictions.

COMMENTS

Since the Kremlin's military procurement system is not open to the public, it is difficult to determine what exactly these war-fuelling Russian electronic corporations do after getting Western dual-use technology via Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. It is worth noting that Russia has been able to effectively secure this supply network since the beginning of the war, which calls the US and EU's "sanctions apparatus" into question.

The western concern now is how to destabilise this supply chain network in order to halt the flow of this transfer. One way of doing so could be the imposition of secondary sanctions but the West wants another way, attempting to lobby the Central Asian governments through their diplomatic machinery. Fearing the risk of secondary sanctions, the governments of the alleged countries have now clearly stated their stance. Kazakh President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev said his government follows "all the rules that have been adopted in the international market. As for the so-called export of dual-use goods to Russia," he continued, "this is absolutely not true."

The challenge for the US and EU doesn't just end here; sanction evasion is easy for Moscow, as it has other secure supply chains too, such as those of countries that declined to join the sanctions against Russia, like China. According to a new RFE/RL report, a large portion of this technology transfer is now being settled in Yuan.

This incident has pointed out loopholes in the framework operated by the West; therefore, all eyes are now on their next move. Making supply chains longer and riskier can be one step away.