



CENTRE FOR  
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# GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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# US, Indonesia and Five Other Nations to Begin Super Garuda Shield 2023

<https://id.usembassy.gov/united-states-indonesia-and-five-other-nations-to-begin-super-garuda-shield-2023/#:~:text=JAKARTA%20%E2%80%93%20In%20a%20powerful%20demonstration,multiple%20training%20locations%20in%20Indonesia>

Military services from the United States, Indonesia, Japan, Australia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and France will participate in Super Garuda Shield 2023 at multiple training locations in Indonesia.

## COMMENTS

Exercise Super Garuda Shield 2023 (XSGS 23), is an annual joint military exercise, planned to be conducted from August 31 to September 13, 2023 at multiple training locations in Indonesia. The exercise traditionally involves, demonstration of strategic airlift capability, air drops by multilateral countries and exercise with land forces. The exercise offers an opportunity to the armed forces of friendly countries to conduct training and work out interaction with partner nations to effectively deploy significant ground forces, including armoured vehicles and firepower across the Indo-Pacific region. The exercise holds a great deal of importance for the US and its regional allies in the Indo-Pacific region as it is being held in the midst of growing Chinese air and maritime activity in the region. China has enhanced military manoeuvres around Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and South China Sea (SCS).

Exercise Super Garuda Shield 2023 is an annual exercise that has significantly grown in scope and size since 2009, when it started as a joint bilateral exercise between the US and Indonesia. Indonesia is strategically critical to the region and has long been a key US partner. This exercise complements the Garuda Shakti exercise, which India and Indonesia also hold annually. Last November, a contingent of Indian Special Forces troops engaged in a bilateral joint training Exercise Garuda Shakti with Indonesian Special Forces.

Last year XSGS 22 saw the largest edition of the exercise with over 5000 military personnel participating from the US, Indonesia, Australia, Japan and Singapore in the joint combat exercises, conducted off Sumatra Island in Indonesia. The US and Indonesia had a largest contingent comprising of more than 2000 personnel each. Many other countries also sent observers to the exercises. Last year, Japan's Ground Self Defence Force also participated for the first time. This year (XSGS 23) has 6 participating nations. India is part of 12 observer nations, others include Brunei, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Timor Leste. Also, this year, Australia is participating a big way and has sent its military equipment abroad for the first time since the Vietnam War. Along with its contingent of 125 troops, it has sent M1A1 tanks, armored personnel vehicles, trucks and tow trucks for the joint military exercises with the US in Indonesia.



*Source: Arab News*

In the region, China has been taking certain unilateral decisions in the South China Sea (SCS) and disturbing the peaceful environment and adding several problems in the SCS, including illegal fishing, intruding into territorial waters, accessing EEZ of the littoral countries and not following UNCLOS.

However, participating forces have always been careful to suggest that XSGS is not aimed against any country. The exercises are designed to strengthen interoperability, capability, trust and cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The tri-service exercise would also include training, academic exchanges and professional development workshops focused on the corps-level and below. HADR will also be in focus as well as training and combat activities for combating hybrid threats would also be practiced.

General Charles Flynn, Commanding General of US Army Pacific said, "Super Garuda Shield 2023 builds on last year's tremendous success. This joint, multinational training exercise displays our collective commitment and like-minded unity, allowing for a stable, secure, and more peaceful, free and open Indo-Pacific."

This XSGS serves to reinforce the US commitment to its regional allies and partners towards maintaining joint readiness, interoperability to fight in a multilateral environment and above all a commitment towards a robust partnership for a free and open Indo-Pacific.



## Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

1. *The Economist*: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/08/16/ukraines-counter-offensive-is-making-progress-slowly?>. <https://www.economist.com/international/2023/07/27/russia-is-attacking-ukraines-agricultural-exports>  
<https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/06/01/ukraine-gets-its-f-16s>
2. *The Hindu*: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/yevgeny-prigozhin-the-wagner-chief-killed-in-a-plane-crash/article67229968.ece> & <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/zelensky-vows-retaliation-for-chernihiv-attack-that-killed-seven-people-and-wounded-almost-150/article67216219.ece>
3. *Indian Express*: [https://pdf.indianexpress.com/pdf\\_dated Aug 27,2023](https://pdf.indianexpress.com/pdf_dated_Aug_27,2023)

### NEW INDUCTIONS

Denmark and the Netherlands have agreed to donate F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, with first deliveries due around New Year. Denmark would deliver 19 aircraft; the first six will “hopefully” be shipped to Ukraine around New Year, followed by eight in 2024 and five the following year. The Netherlands has 42 F-16s available in all but has yet to decide on the number. On Aug 25,2023 , Norway became the third country to promise the aircraft to Kyiv. On August 19,2023, Ukraine’s Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said the F-16 training for Ukrainian pilots and support staff had begun. The training program will last at least six months. In August, after the US agreed to issue re-export licenses to other countries with F-16s, which allowed them to transfer their jets to Ukraine, the Netherlands and Denmark agreed to send 42 and 19 jets, respectively, to the country under certain conditions which include (but are not limited to) successfully selected, tested, and trained F-16 personnel in Ukraine, authorizations, infrastructure, and logistics.

### KINETIC WAR

#### UKRAINIAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE

On Aug 18, 2023, Russian forces Air defences thwarted a Ukrainian missile attack in the Kaluga region southwest of Moscow and destroyed Ukrainian drones targeting, Russian Black Sea Fleet, off Crimea, officials said on Aug 25,2023. This is the latest in a surge of attacks on the capital. Hours before the strike on Moscow, Russia thwarted a Ukrainian marine drone attack on the warships based at Southwest of Sevastopol -- the base of its Black Sea Fleet, the latest in a string of assaults on its fleet.

On August 20, five people were wounded when a Ukrainian drone crashed into the roof of the railway station building, with a fire subsequently breaking out on the rooftop of a train station in the city of Kursk, regional Gov. Roman Starovoit said. Kursk is the capital of the western region of the same name, which borders Ukraine. Ukrainian authorities generally avoid commenting on attacks on Russian soil but didn’t say whether it launched the attacks.

## RUSSIAN ATTACKS

On Aug 16, 2023, Russia resumed its targeting of grain infrastructure in Ukraine's southern Odesa region using drones in overnight strikes on storage facilities and ports along the Danube River that Kyiv has increasingly used for grain transport to Europe after Moscow broke off a critical wartime export deal through the Black Sea. On August 20, a Russian missile strike in the centre of the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv killed seven people and wounded almost 150 others the day before.

## WAGNER

Exactly two months since the Wagner mutiny, on August 23, 2023 the private Embraer Legacy aircraft carrying Prigozhin and Utkin, traveling from Moscow to Saint Petersburg, crashed near the village of Kuzhenkino in the Tver Region, killing all passengers. Vladimir Putin sent "condolences" to the families of the ten people killed. In a televised speech, Mr. Putin said Mr. Prigozhin was a "talented businessman" and that the crash would be investigated. President Vladimir Putin has ordered Wagner fighters to sign an oath of allegiance to the Russian state after a deadly plane crash. Earlier on the same day, the Defence Ministry announced that Gen. Surovkin, who had gone missing since the mutiny, had been sacked.

## COMMENTS

Mr Prigozhin's death is likely to have a negligible effect on the front lines in Ukraine. The impact on African countries, where Wagner was and remained active, is more uncertain. Mr Prigozhin's death could help consolidate Mr Putin's power. The first batch of F-16 fighters will reach Ukraine only by the end of 2023 and will be ready for deployment next year and onwards and will not have any impact on the current counteroffensive. The induction of offensive and defensive capabilities aircraft might escalate the conflict to another level. The damage to the Russian land forces has been significant and Russians who have conserved their air power will have to gear up for the next challenge. Attacks deeper inside Russian territory have increased since a drone was destroyed over the Kremlin in early May. Successful strikes have exposed the vulnerabilities of Moscow's air defense systems. During the second year of conflict, Ukraine has bolstered its air-defense units, which have become adept at intercepting Russian drones and missiles fired at the capital, mostly at night or in the early hours of the morning. Ukrainians are steadily forcing the Russians out of their prepared defensive positions in ways that the Ukrainians can take advantage of to make operationally significant advances. It depends on the West providing Ukraine with a constant flow of equipment, likely over many months, so that Ukraine can maintain its pressure until the Russian forces offer the kinds of frontline cracks the Ukrainians can exploit. The current conflict is different from others in the sense that the world opinion, material and information with psychological support by the allies is a significant factor in shaping the operations. The war in Ukraine marked a sharp reversal from decades of European peace. For the continent's arms makers, it points to a more profitable future. Last year, military budgets worldwide rose by 3.7%, to \$2.2trn. They increased by 13% in Europe, faster than in any other region. Growth was particularly pronounced in countries nearest to Russia. Finland's military budget rose by 36%, Lithuania's by 27%, Sweden's by 12% and Poland's by 11%.

## China Says Will Back Bangladesh Against 'External Interference'

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-says-will-back-bangladesh-against-external-interference/article67231493.ece>

□ Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday said Beijing would support Bangladesh in “opposing external interference” and would deepen economic cooperation including through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In talks with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, Mr Xi said China was “willing to strengthen the synergy of development strategies with Bangladesh, deepen practical cooperation in various fields, push bilateral strategic cooperative partnership to a new level and better benefit the people of the two countries.” “China supports Bangladesh in safeguarding national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and in opposing external interference, so that the country can maintain domestic unity and stability and achieve development and revitalisation,” he was quoted as saying by State media, adding that Beijing was “willing to continue to work with Bangladesh in firmly supporting each other in issues involving their respective core interests.”

□ China’s support to Bangladesh comes against the backdrop of Dhaka’s recent differences with Washington, which issued a public call for “free and transparent” elections that are scheduled for later this year.

□ Bangladesh-US ties hit a low in May when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced a visa ban against individuals that the US holds responsible for “undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh”. The US has also sanctioned senior officials of the Rapid Action Battalion, a tool of Prime Minister Hasina’s in her crackdown against terrorism. In April this year, Ms Hasina slammed the US saying that “it has the power to topple governments in any country and the Muslim countries in particular are experiencing a tough time.”

□ The Prime Minister’s meeting with the Chinese President also had a personal touch as she was accompanied by her daughter Saima Wazed, Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders.

□ Ms Hasina has put forward a foreign policy of “friendship with all and malice for none” that she has often highlighted to create space for engaging stakeholders in Bangladesh and for balancing ties with global and regional powers. Though Bangladesh has expressed support for the Belt and Road Initiative ahead of its expected joining of the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade deal, Dhaka hasn’t seen significant financial support from Beijing on the Rohingya issue, for which the US has provided at least \$1.6 billion since 2017 to deal with the refugee crisis.



Source: Xinhuanet

## COMMENTS

The US needs to revisit its policies on Bangladesh, as these policies and pressures are ultimately pushing Bangladesh towards China. The above mentioned meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to lead to increased Chinese support to Bangladesh in joining BRICS and Chinese assurances of supporting Bangladesh in the Rohingya crisis, besides promises of Chinese help in development of energy, renewable energy and infrastructure.

□ There have been some recent developments on Bangladesh formally joining China-led RCEP, aimed to enhance the economic, commercial and strategic relevance of Bangladesh, which have been quickly followed by some positive response from China in the above mentioned meeting. As a follow up of these developments, the likelihood of speeding up of some Chinese-funded projects in Bangladesh, which are now stuck in a fund crisis, is not ruled out.

As per some other print media articles, India has reportedly conveyed its concerns to the US, that US pressure on the issue of free and fair elections could push Bangladesh closer to China, a development that can have ramifications for the region and may end up encouraging the extremist and fundamentalist forces that the Sheikh Hasina government has successfully kept at bay. India has been supporting the present Bangladesh government and it is in India's interests that we support the free and fair elections and counter Chinese influence in Bangladesh.



## President Arif Alvi Signs Into Law Bills Amending Official Secrets Act, Army Act

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1101937-alvi-signs-into-law-bills-amending-official-secrets-act-army-act>

President Dr Arif Alvi signed the Official Secrets Amendment Bill and the Army Act Amendment Bill. After getting the nod of President Dr Arif Alvi, both the bills are now enacted into Act.

### COMMENTS

The Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Pakistan Army Act (Amendment) Bill, 2023 that were passed by Pakistan's Parliament of the outgoing government were reported to have been approved by Pakistan's President on 19 August 2023 and enacted into laws. However, President Arif Alvi, posted on the social media platform 'X', the very next day, that he disagreed with laws and had not signed them. He stated that he had instructed his staff to return them to the legislature without his signatures within the stipulated time but his staff didn't comply. To this, Pakistan's Ministry of Law and Justice reacted that the President failed to return the draft bills to the Parliament within 10 days with his observations which was in contradiction to the procedure. Therefore, as per the constitution, since the bills had been passed by the legislature and did not bear the President's specific observations, they were enacted as laws. Following his refusal of having signed the bills, President Arif Alvi wrote to the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister asking him to withdraw the services of Mr Waqar Ahmed, Secretary to the President and demanded Ms Humaira Ahmed to fill up the position.

According to the Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill, a person will be guilty of an offense if he intentionally creates a problem of public order or acts against the state. In addition, if a person attacks or damages a prohibited place and the purpose of this is to directly or indirectly benefit the enemy, then it is also punishable. Under the said amendment bill, the accused will be tried in a special court and a decision will be taken after completing the hearing within 30 days[1]. The Army Act has provisions relating to retirement of military personnel. According to this law, no military personnel will be able to participate in any political activity for two years after retirement, resignation or dismissal, while military personnel or officers performing duties related to sensitive nature of duty shall not participate in political activities for five years after termination of service. A retired army officer found guilty of violating the Army Act will be punished with imprisonment for a term of up to two years. Also, if any serving or retired army personnel scandalises or ridicules the army on digital or social media, he will be punished under the Electronic Crimes Act. According to the said law, any serving or retired officer who causes defamation of the army or spreading hatred against it will be punished with imprisonment of two years and fine under the Army Act[2].

[1] Press Correspondent, "Official Secrets, Army Act amendment bills become law", The Express Tribune, 20 August 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2431501/official-secrets-army-act-amendment-bills-become-law>

[2] Press Correspondent, "Official Secrets, Army Act amendment bills become law", The Express Tribune, 20 August 2023. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2431501/official-secrets-army-act-amendment-bills-become-law>

## India Officially Grants Dornier-228 Maritime Patrol Aircraft To Sri Lanka

[https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking\\_news/India-officially-grants-Dornier-228-maritime-patrol-aircraft-to-SL/108-265410#:~:text=India%20officially%20handed%20over%20a,Senior%20Advisor%20on%20National%20Security.](https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/India-officially-grants-Dornier-228-maritime-patrol-aircraft-to-SL/108-265410#:~:text=India%20officially%20handed%20over%20a,Senior%20Advisor%20on%20National%20Security.)

India officially handed over a Dornier 228 maritime surveillance aircraft to Sri Lanka to be used by the Sri Lanka Air Force on 16 August 2023.

### COMMENTS



*Source: Deccan Herald*

During a ceremony held at the Sri Lanka Air Force Base in Katunayake on 16 Aug 2023, the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Mr Gopal Baglay, officially handed over a Dornier-228 maritime patrol aircraft belonging to the Indian Navy, to the Chief of Presidential Staff and Senior Adviser on National Security to the President of Sri Lanka, Mr Sagala Ratnayaka.

The Indian government, in response to Sri Lanka's request, had earlier provided a Dornier-228 maritime surveillance aircraft of the Indian Navy, to Sri Lanka in order to strengthen the surveillance capabilities of the country. The aircraft, after spending one year in service, was returned to India for maintenance in August 2022. As a replacement, another Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft was leased to Sri Lanka. This aircraft has now been officially handed over to Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF).

The addition of the maritime patrol aircraft to SLAF's fleet adds to its surveillance capabilities towards addressing the shared security challenges of human trafficking, smuggling and drug trafficking in the region. It also highlights India's commitment to its 'Security And Growth for All in the Region' initiative. Sri Lanka also expressed its gratitude for the support provided by India during the challenging time of economic difficulties that it faces.

## Cash-Strapped Sri Lanka To Receive Help From China Ahead Of IMF Bailout Plan In September

<https://www.livemint.com/news/world/sri-lanka-to-receive-help-from-china-ahead-of-imf-bailout-plan-11692252650033.html>

Cash-strapped Sri Lanka is likely to get help from its largest bilateral creditor China ahead of IMF's bailout plan.

### COMMENTS

Sri Lanka has been promised by China that the latter is going to help the country in addressing its financial debt challenges before the IMF conducts its review in September 2023. Sri Lanka received the first tranche of the USD 2.9 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) from the IMF soon after it was approved in March 2023 to help it bailout of the financial crisis.

The grant of the next tranche is subject to the review by the IMF of Sri Lanka's performance on its commitments and restructuring of its USD 41 billion domestic and external debt. Currently, Sri Lanka is in conversation with its bilateral creditors to finalise the terms of debt restructuring. China had refused to be a part of the 'official creditor committee' of 17 countries set up to negotiate the foreign debt owed by Sri Lanka which made these countries wary of the need for the terms of negotiation to be comparable, at par and transparent. India had extended USD 4 billion assistance to Sri Lanka last year through multiple credit lines and currency support. Though China has promised that it will help Sri Lanka in debt restructuring, there has been no official announcement on the countries having reached an agreement on the issue.



# China Includes Arunachal Pradesh, Aksai Chin In Its New 'Standard Map

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-releases-new-official-map-showing-territorial-claims/article67245869.ece>

China's government on August 28 released the "2023 edition of the standard map of China", which continues to show the entire State of Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin region within China's borders. The 2023 map was released by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The territorial claims on China's western borders, as also the so-called nine-dash line covering the entire South China Sea, are shown on the map as in previous editions. Also as in previous maps, a "tenth dash" is placed east of Taiwan, underlining Beijing's claims over the island. The latest map follows Beijing in April announcing it would "standardise" the names of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh, including a town close to the Arunachal Pradesh capital of Itanagar. This was the third such list "renaming" places in Arunachal Pradesh, and was seen by observers as a response to India holding events in the lead-up to the G-20 summit in the State, which Beijing had opposed. Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to attend the September 9-10 summit in New Delhi. The 2023 map, State media reported, was released during what is being called "National Mapping Awareness Publicity Week" in China.

Under Mr. Xi, Beijing has tightened management of border areas, passing in 2022 a new border law that lists various responsibilities for civilian and military authorities in China to take steps to "safeguard national sovereignty". The issuing of new names is related to Article 7 of the law, which calls for promoting border education at all levels of government. Article 22 calls for the Chinese military to carry out border drills and to "resolutely prevent, stop and combat" what it calls "invasions, encroachments and provocations".

## COMMENTS

China's territorial claim on the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh is a critical foreign policy concern for India. This claim has tended to assume aggressive rhetorical dimensions on the part of China in recent years. It is therefore critical to establish an understanding of local perspectives on the Chinese claim. The perspectives of the various tribes on the Chinese claim to Arunachal Pradesh are quite similar. Most people across tribes stated that the Chinese claim is not validated by history.

Tawang monastery, which is perhaps the core reason for the Chinese claim given its historical linkages with the monastery at Lhasa, revealed that while the monastery had historical links with Lhasa which included religious, education, barter trade, and exchange of religious documents, these links with Tibet did not include China. The monks argued that for China to claim that Arunachal Pradesh is part of southern Tibet in view of its historical ties with Tibet is a distortion of history as China's occupation/claim over Tibet itself is controversial.



## CHINA



Source: Outlook India

Last month, China and India were at loggerheads yet again after Beijing issued stapled, not stamped, visas to Indian athletes hailing from Arunachal Pradesh, who were to participate in the wushu (martial art) championship in the mainland. The athletes applied for a Chinese visa on July 16. The applications of all athletes were processed in time and stamped visas were issued subsequently barring applications from three Arunachal athletes -- Nyeman Wangsu, Onilu Tega and Mepung Lamgu. They were first asked to resubmit their applications and later were issued stapled visas. Beijing considers AP a part of its sovereign borders and calls the state as "Zangnan, the southern part of Tibet". It disputes the legality of the McMahon Line which was agreed upon at the Simla Convention of 1914 between Tibet and British India.

Notwithstanding the optics of 'Modi-Xi Jinping Conversation' in BRICS Summit 2023, this illegal map further increases the trust deficit between the two countries, and no change in ground position is anticipated. The political intentions of China is to continue the standoff, put in façade of talking with no results, hoping that the existing positions become new normal with passage of time, even if India continues to say "India-China relations cannot be normal unless border situation is". India on the other hand has learnt not to believe China and will continue to firmly defend its position on borders and its territorial integrity.

Both sides will have to bear the burden of additional deployment until India can generate some more leverages in multi-dimensional powerplay along with other strategic partners. Unless the political cost of not resolving border tension becomes more than resolving it, for China, the possibility of normal relations is remote. India said that it was an "old habit" of China to put out maps claiming territories that don't belong to them, and reiterated that the government is very serious about the issue.

Putting out maps with parts in India doesn't change anything. Government of India is very clear about territory. India has lodged a strong protest through diplomatic channels with the Chinese side on the so-called 2023 "standard map" of China that lays claim to India's territory."

# Meta Says It Has Disrupted A Massive Disinformation Campaign Linked To Chinese Law Enforcement

<https://www.cnbc.com/2023/08/29/meta-disrupts-chinese-misinformation-network-linked-to-law-enforcement-.html>

Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta on Tuesday has disrupted a disinformation campaign linked to Chinese law enforcement that the social media company described as the “largest known cross-platform covert influence operation in the world.” The company took down more than 7,700 accounts and 930 pages on Facebook.

The influence network generated positive posts about China, with a particular focus on positive commentary about China’s Xinjiang province, where the government’s treatment of the Uyghur minority group has prompted international sanctions. The network also attempted to spread negative commentary about the U.S. and disinformation in multiple languages about the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic, Meta said.

The network was or is present on nearly every popular social media platform, including Medium; Reddit; Tumblr; YouTube; and X, formerly known as Twitter. Meta began looking for signs of a Chinese influence operation on its own platforms after reports in 2022 highlighted how a disinformation campaign linked to the Chinese government targeted a human rights nongovernmental organization.

Meta researchers were able to link this latest disinformation network to a prior influence campaign in 2019, code named Spamouflage. Meta also identified and disrupted other operations and published a more detailed analysis of a Russian disinformation campaign it identified shortly after the beginning of the 2022 war in Ukraine.

## COMMENTS

The disruptions come ahead of what will likely be a contentious election cycle. Concerns over the role of influence campaigns in past elections led social media platforms, including Meta, to institute stricter guidelines on both the kind of political content allowed and the labels it adds to that content.

Influence campaigns have affected Meta users in the past, notably a Russia-backed campaign to inflame popular sentiment around the 2016 U.S. presidential election. But this disinformation network, while prolific, was not effective.

The campaign’s pages collectively had more than 500,000 followers, most of which were inauthentic and from Bangladesh, Brazil and Vietnam

# Australia To Host Exercise Malabar For The First Time

<https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2023-08-11/australia-host-exercise-malabar-first-time>

Australia welcomes key partners India, Japan and the United States to Sydney as it prepares to host Exercise Malabar for the first time. Exercise Malabar is an important Indo-Pacific military exercise that seeks to deepen interoperability between participating regional partners. This year marks the 27th iteration of the Malabar series and will be held in the Sydney and across Australia's east from 10 to 21 August. Royal Australian Navy Ships HMAS Brisbane and HMAS Choules are participating in the exercise, with Navy MH60R helicopters and Royal Australian Air Force F-35A Lightning II, Hawk 127 and P-8A Poseidon aircraft. They will join partner nations in high-end training including air defence and anti-submarine exercises, aviation, communications and replenishment at sea between ships.

## COMMENTS

The Malabar is a series of naval exercises which started was commenced between the Indian Navy and US Navy in 1992. Over the years, it has grown developed in stature and now consists of four of the Indo-Pacific region's leading navies which includes Australia and Japan too. This year the multilateral naval exercise was held off the east coast of Sydney, Australia for the first time and not in the Indian Ocean. Oceania and Solomon Islands remain a serious concern for Australia especially after the Solomon island's closeness with China and its leader's recent visit to China. However, the Vice Admiral Karl Thomas, Commander of the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet affirmed. "The exercise was not pointed toward any one country and would improve the ability of the four forces to work with each other. The deterrence that our four nations provide as we operate together as a Quad is a foundation for all the other nations operating in this region." The Indian Navy Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi opined that the world has been seeing enough shifts since 1992 when Malabar was held for the first time immediately after the end of the Cold War. Oceania which is towards the Northeast of Australia is not just important for Australia but for all the QUAD members. On their way to Sydney, Japanese and Indian military ships stopped in the Pacific Island nations of Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. This exhibits the strategic significance of the region at a time when China and the United States are at odds. Although it wasn't pointed against any country as mentioned by Vice Admiral Karl Thomas, the but the main motive of the exercise seemed to display the shared values, strong cooperation and collective ability of the four QUAD nations which nations had which significantly concerned China. The Indian Navy strongly commented that there exists a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, promoting peace and security for all. The exercise had two phases: the harbour phase and the sea phase. The sea phase offered an opportunity for the maiden deployment of the Indian Navy Scorpene-class submarine INS Vagir to reach Fremantle on the west coast of Australia. The Indian Navy thus, stated. "The joint exercises at sea honed the war-fighting skills and enhanced interoperability between the four navies to undertake advanced maritime operations." From the above background, it is evident has been noticed that the exercise offered the Indian Navy a chance to improve and exhibit interoperability and also learn from its partner nation's best practices in maritime security operations.

# BRICS Welcomes New Members In Push To Reshuffle World Order

*<https://www.reuters.com/world/brics-poised-invite-new-members-join-bloc-sources-2023-08-24/>*

The BRICS bloc of developing nations agreed on 24 August to admit Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates in a move aimed at accelerating its push to reshuffle a world order it sees as outdated.

## COMMENTS

The BRICS roughly accounts for one-fifth of the global economy. BRICS comprise 41% of the world's population size, 24% of the world's GDP, and 16% of international trade.[1] It has been opined that this shift offers an opportunity to promote currencies other than the US dollar, specifically by establishing an ecosystem of governments that improves the usability of their national currencies. The Middle Eastern nation's willingness to be a member of BRICS indicates that it no longer views its ties with the rest of the globe through the prism of America. The China-mediated Saudi-Iran peace accord in March was perceived by some as America's declining status in the Middle East. The alliance now includes five of the world's largest ten oil-producing economies, bolstering its fiscal and political influence. The West Asian nations are important OPEC members. Reports allude that Saudi Arabia has defied numerous US proposals, last year not to curtail output to mitigate the adverse effects of sanctions on Russia.

Instead, Saudi Arabia has joined forces with Russia in OPEC+ to take measures to keep the prices stable. Both Iran & Saudi Arabia have determined to carve out an independent niche in the globe to serve their interests. Iran has greater strategic goals and wishes to exercise more influence on the world arena on its terms, whilst the UAE is focused on advancing its business interests. Joining BRICS helps Iran convey clearly that the US effort of isolating the nation did not succeed.

The organisation has the potential to be a major advocate for change in international governance structures. However, it is yet to be seen if this enlarged grouping is more efficient than the original BRICS members in establishing consensus regarding how global leadership can fulfill the needs of Global South. Iran and Saudi Arabia both value India's viewpoint. Hence their assistance in the OIC to thwart Pakistani aspirations can be extremely beneficial. The UAE and India have traditionally enjoyed close ties that span various domains, notably commerce, defence, and space exploration. Despite Pakistan's ongoing attempts to internationalise the Kashmir problem with the help of China, the UAE and Saudi Arabia still retain neutrality. Iran is significant for the Chabahar port to connect with Central Asian nations and serves as an intermediate point in the International North-South Transport Corridor. Both countries share similar objectives in Afghanistan and both favour an inclusive government.

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[1] BRICS INDIA 2021 | Ministry of External Affairs. (n.d.). <https://brics2021.gov.in/about-brics>



## Akylbek Japarov Meets With Member Of Politburo Of Communist Party Of China

[https://24.kg/english/272769\\_Akylbek\\_Japarov\\_meets\\_with\\_member\\_of\\_Politburo\\_of\\_Communist\\_Party\\_of\\_China/amp/](https://24.kg/english/272769_Akylbek_Japarov_meets_with_member_of_Politburo_of_Communist_Party_of_China/amp/)

As part of a working trip to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China, Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan Akylbek Japarov met with a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Secretary of the Party Committee of the Communist Party of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Ma Xingrui. Press service of the Cabinet of Ministers reported. During the talks, the parties considered a wide range of issues of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of energy, transport, logistics, postal services, agriculture, tourism, culture, and education. Akylbek Japarov conveyed greetings on behalf of the President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov to the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping.

### COMMENTS



*Source: AKI Press*

Kyrgyzstan has roughly 60,000 Uyghurs in a nation that is 85% Sunni Muslim and shares a 1000-kilometer border with China along southern Xinjiang. At the China-Central Asia Summit, President Sadyr Japarov declared that relations between China and Kyrgyzstan are at their greatest point in history, further, he added that the Kyrgyzstan firmly supports China's unwavering positions on issues related to Taiwan, Xinjiang, Hong Kong and other core interests, and supports the Global Security Initiative and the Global Development Initiative proposed by China. Kyrgyzstan is now China's second largest trading partner in Central Asia. As a result of the Russia-Ukraine war, which compelled China to search for a more safe and sanctions-free railway line, Kyrgyzstan is now an important partner for China's BRI program through Central Asia (China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway deal 2022). However, the growing cooperation between these two nations has brought up greater problems for the Uyghur community in Kyrgyzstan. To add to the tension, Kyrgyzstan became the only country in Central Asia to designate "East Turkestan terrorists."

# Royal Canadian Navy Ships Deploy To Indo-Pacific Region

<https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/canadian-warships-depart-for-indo-pacific-operation-fulfilling-promise-to-increase-naval-presence-in-region-1.6518853>

The Canadian military is delivering on its promise to increase the number of warships deployed annually to the Indo-Pacific region from two ships to three, starting this summer. Royal Canadian Navy frigates HMCS Ottawa and HMCS Vancouver left Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, west of Victoria. The ships will be accompanied by naval supply vessel Asterix and a pair of Royal Canadian Air Force Cyclone helicopters on their nearly five-month deployment.

## COMMENTS

The deployment follows the March deployment of HMCS Montreal from Halifax to the Indo-Pacific area, which marked for the first time a Canadian warship was sent to the Indo-Pacific region from Canada's East Coast as part of its Indo-Pacific policy[i]. Canadian Government stated last year that it will invest about \$2.3 billion over five years to strengthen connections with countries in the Indo Pacific area.[ii] The investment includes \$493 million to strengthen Former Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand remarked on June 3 at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore that Canada is dedicated to supporting a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, and that Canada is strengthening its military presence in the area. She revealed that Canada will significantly increase its military presence in the Indo-Pacific region through Operation Horizon.

The new mission will replace Canada's existing mission Projection in the Indo-Pacific. [iii] Canada's naval posture with the deployment of a third frigate and increased participation in regional military exercises.

Canada previously deployed two Royal Canadian Navy vessels out of Halifax harbour on July 3, which were destined for the Baltic region and to assist in a NATO mission to prevent Russian aggression. As part of Operation Reassurance, the warships HMCS Shawinigan and HMCS Summerside assisted NATO forces with mine-hunting and disposal in the North Atlantic.[iv]

The ships will take part in a variety of bilateral and multinational exercises, with HMCS Ottawa focusing on Southeast Asia and HMCS Vancouver on Northeast Asia. HMCS Vancouver will also support the long-running Operation Neon, Canada's commitment to UN sanctions enforcement and monitoring actions against North Korea. The Indo-Pacific region is critical to global security and will only grow in prominence in the coming years.

[i] GAC. (n.d.). GAC. <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/strategic-environmental-assessment-evaluations-environnementales-strategiques/2022-indo-pacific-pacifique.aspx?lang=eng>

[ii] Chapter 5: Canada's Leadership in the World | Budget 2023. (n.d.). Chapter 5: Canada's Leadership in the World | Budget 2023. <https://www.budget.canada.ca/2023/report-rapport/chap5-en.html>

[iii] Canada to "significantly" enhance military presence in Indo-Pacific region, Anand says | CBC News. (n.d.). CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-indo-pacific-anand-1.6864775>

[iv] Pdf View - CENJOWS. (n.d.). Pdf View - CENJOWS. <https://cenjows.in/pdf-view/?url=2023/07/Geo Strategic Scan 1-15 July 2023.pdf&pID=20794&pg=23>

# Israeli Firm Looks To Expand Arctic Footprint Of Loitering Munitions

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/mideast-africa/2023/08/16/israeli-firm-looks-to-expand-arctic-footprint-of-loitering-munitions/>

Israeli manufacturer U-Vision tested its Hero-120 loitering munition for the first time in the Arctic, as company officials say they are looking to expand their footprint in the region. Earlier this year, in a location the company did not disclose, where temperatures reached below -20 degrees Celsius, U-Vision conducted a series of flight missions to assess the capabilities of the Hero-120 loitering munition under extreme weather conditions.

## COMMENTS

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on August 12, inspected Russian troop and military preparedness in the Arctic "to defend especially important installations" in this strategic zone.[1] This development of Hero-120 comes after the Russian strategic bombers conducted normal flights over international Arctic waters on August 14. Russia routinely flies its Tu-160 and Tu-95MS long-range bombers over international waters, both of which are capable of carrying nuclear cruise missiles.[2]

Moreover, Russia has more bases in the Arctic region than the NATO countries which is a cause of concern for the A5 western countries. None of the Nordic nations are known to be using Hero systems at the moment or poses loitering kamikaze drones, but they are regular clients of Israeli weapons. This move by an Israeli firm to develop munition for Arctic nations can have multi-faceted uses. Finland ordered anti-tank missiles from the German-Israeli armaments company Euro-spike[3], while the US approved the purchase of the David's Sling air defense system. In January, Norway also presented a tender notice to buy small, tactical unmanned aerial systems. The airborne weapon's ability to operate effectively in inclement weather met the unique needs of military troops stationed not just in the Arctic but also in Europe's northern and eastern countries. The HERO Loitering Munitions testing in the region is planned, since it is on the R&D roadmap to not only improve the capabilities of the Hero-120, but also to adapt other members of the Hero family for use in Arctic conditions.[4] This strategic contest to gain more armament and militarisation shows that Russia is not the only nation which is militarising but the Nordic-Arctic countries are building up their armoury as well.

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[1] Russia's Shoigu inspects Northern Fleet, warships sent to Arctic. (2023, August 12). Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/russias-shoigu-inspects-northern-fleet-warships-sent-arctic-2023-08-12/>

[2] Russian Bombers Fly Over International Waters in Arctic. (2023, August 14). US News & World Report. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-08-14/russian-bombers-fly-over-international-waters-in-arctic>

[3] Manuel, R. (2023, January 31). Finnish Armed Forces Obtain Anti-Tank Missiles From Eurospike. The Defense Post. <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/01/31/finland-anti-tank-spike-missiles/>

[4] Eran. (2023). HERO-120 - Uvision. Uvision. <https://uvisionuav.com/loiteringmunitions/hero-120/>