



CENTRE FOR
JOINT WARFARE
STUDIES
(CENJOWS)

GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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Road
Initiative: Is
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Trillion-Dollar
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Hamas Claims To Fire 5,000 Rockets At Israel, Declares ‘Operation Al-Aqsa Flood’

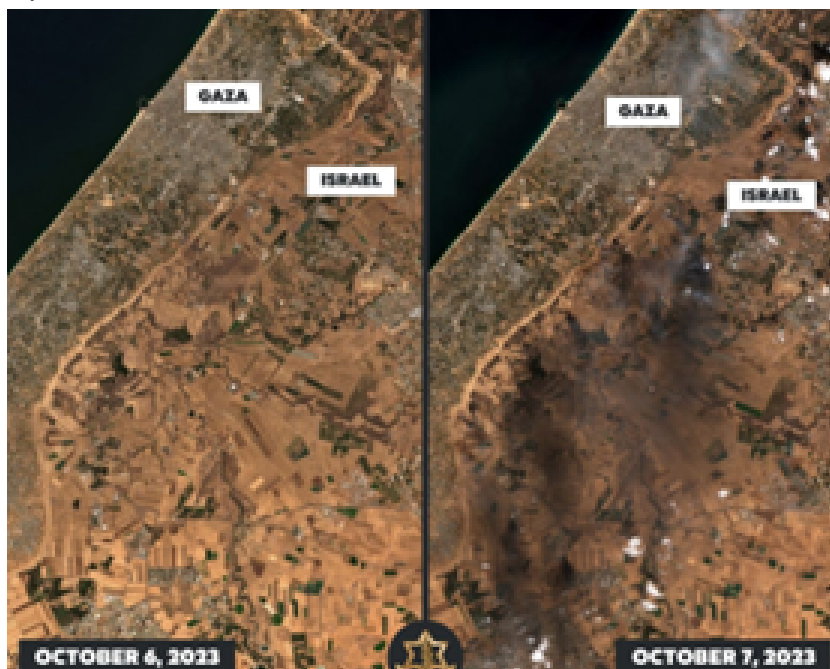
https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/hamas-calims-to-fire-5000-rockets-at-israel-declares-operation-al-aqsa-flood/

Hamas had launched 5,000 rockets at Israel on 7th October in an early morning surprise attack, calling it “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.” Mohammad Deif, the Hamas military commander, issued a statement saying that the ongoing attacks are in retaliation for Israel’s “desecration” of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. He added that Israel killed and wounded hundreds of Palestinians this year, and that Israel rejected offers for prisoner exchange deals.

COMMENTS

Marking fifty years to the Yom Kippur War, the unprecedented attack on Israel by Hamas through the southern flank of Gaza took the world by surprise. Mistakenly believing it to be a training exercise of HAMAS, the IDF was caught off guard, with a presumed intelligence breakdown, while demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister Netanyahu.

A staggeringly identical series of events that unfolded during Yom Kippur War with the Arab world raising concerns over Israel-Palestine, effectively forcing Israel, for a brief period, to shift focus in their patrolling activities from Sinai & Golan Heights, Israeli intelligence saw the Egyptian military formation but believed mistakenly that it only participated in combat drills; similar miscalculation transpired again during this ongoing war. According to the latest updates by the IDF, more than 1228 People have been killed in Israel and over 3,000 people have been injured due to the Israel Hamas War. Over 1400 People are killed till now in Gaza (Palestine) and 8583 People are injured till now in Palestine Israel war in Gaza. Combined Death Count has surpassed 3000 from Palestine and Israel Combined.



Source: Defence News

INTELLIGENCE FAILURE OR MISCALCULATED MISTAKE BY ISRAEL?

Israel suffered operational, logistical, and tactical difficulties following the terror strike. Reports allude to an apex-level meeting taking place on 5th October 2023, with participation from the Israeli security and service chiefs in mapping the probability of Hamas increased activities.[1] Though there was general consensus among the representatives to monitor the sudden surge of Hamas's peculiar conduct as simply an operational drill or the start of a potential assault, however the coalition, comprising the Shin Bet director, Mossad chief, and chief of staff of the IDS, settled on waiting for additional information rather than preparing to launch an offensive. Despite the settled plan of action in the meeting, the IDF chief and Shin Bet Director planned to send in a small team of special forces operatives and counterterrorism special unit for ISR, who later ended engaging as the front line of defence on 7th October.[2]

According to two senior Israeli security officials, shortly before attackers from Gaza poured into Israel on 7th October, Mossad detected a surge in unusual activity on some of the Gazan militant networks it monitors.[3] Realizing something unusual was happening, alerts were sent to the Israeli soldiers guarding the Gazan border. However, the troops overlooked the alert, either because they failed to comprehend it or because they missed it.[4] Further the drone attacks on the Israeli communication outposts and surveillance towers rendered the command and control ineffective.

The digital warfare in the conflict is currently in full scale, with numerous malware vulnerabilities, misinformation tactics, and hackers enlisting, as observed on either side. [5] Cyberattacks on Israeli companies and public institutions are on the rise, concurrent to Hamas's assault of Israel.

What potentially led to the colossal intelligence breakdown, is an amalgamation of Israel's own internal strifes, an inaccurate appraisal of Hamas's potential, an overestimation of the capacity of IDF's capabilities and perhaps a neglect to act upon intelligence alerts.

[1] Israel had intel on Hamas activity but didn't put the Gaza border on high alert. (2023, October 12). AXIOS. <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/12/hamas-attack-israel-intelligence-failure-high-alert-shen-bet>

[2] Pti. (2023a, October 9). "Colossal intelligence failure" as Israel caught unprepared, unguarded to face Hamas attack: Experts. The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/colossal-intelligence-failure-as-israel-caught-unprepared-unguarded-to-face-hamas-attack-experts/articleshow/104245588.cms?from=mdr>

[3] Bergman, R., & Kingsley, P. (n.d.). How Israel's Feared Security Services Failed to Stop Hamas's Attack. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-security-failure.html>

[4] E. Barnes, J., E. Sanger, Mr., & Schmitt, E. (n.d.). Hamas Attack Raises Questions Over an Israeli Intelligence Failure. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/08/us/politics/israel-hamas-intelligence.html>

[5] The Hamas-Israeli war is also being fought in cyberspace. (2023, October 16). SiliconANGLE. <https://siliconangle.com/2023/10/12/hamas-israeli-war-also-fought-cyberspace/>

Despite the rigorous drills by Al Qassam Brigades (Hamas Militant faction), Israelis presumably believed Hamas was more concerned towards economic growth [6]. This belief became superimposed with "superior border technology" as the first line of defence, providing IDF and int agencies a false sense of security. Post the 2021 ceasefire, mediated by Egypt, Hamas as an active threat was kept on the sidelines temporarily as compared to Hezbollah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, Iran and others.[7]

The other major flaws include failing to put effective surveillance on Hamas C2 establishments despite repeated cautions from The General Intelligence Service, Egypt [8] and placing top military officials at a particular regional base. However PM Netanyahu has denied having to have received any intel from his Egyptian counterparts.[9]

With the recent backlash against Netanyahu's govt, Israel was engulfed into vocal criticism from retired senior officials from the government and IDF, questioning how the sectarian strife in Israel was detrimental to combat readiness. The IDF's timeline for response stretched up to 4 hours, demonstrating that its defensive capabilities had certainly fallen apart.[10] In addition, Israeli troops had redirected supplies from Gaza to the West Bank in response to frequent unrest in Jericho, Jenin where Palestinians confronted Israeli migrants, and the PIJ had expanded its footprints.

Hamas' improved competence, particularly operational security, proved evident during the offensive. Several Hamas officials were not informed about the heist [11] since Israeli int agencies are adept at securing contacts among the potential Palestinian armed outfits. As a result, important details concerning the mission remained mostly unknown to Israeli intelligence. Teaming up with Hezbollah to provide troops, funds and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force for cutting-edge resources, Syria and Lebanon became the base for increased exercises with special commando groups.

[6] Grove, T., & AbdulKarim, F. (2022, February 8). Israel offers economic help to Palestinians in bid to stem influence of Hamas. WSJ. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-offers-economic-help-to-palestinians-but-not-peace-talks-11644319692>

[7] Said, S., Faucon, B., & Kalin, S. (2023, October 8). Iran helped plot attack on Israel over several weeks. WSJ. <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-israel-hamas-strike-planning-bbe07b25>

[8] Sabbagh, D. (2023, October 13). Egypt warned Israel of Hamas attack days earlier, senior US politician says. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/12/israel-hamas-war-egypt-warned-foreign-affairs-gaza>

[9] Agencies. (2023, October 9). Egypt intelligence official says Israel ignored repeated warnings of 'something big.' Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-intelligence-official-says-israel-ignored-repeated-warnings-of-something-big/>

[10] Hutchinson, B. (2023, October 16). Israel-Hamas conflict: Timeline and key developments. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/timeline-surprise-rocket-attack-hamas-israel/story?id=103816006>

[11] Clarke, C. P. (2023, October 14). Israel's intelligence blunder on Gaza: Misreading Hamas abilities, intentions. Al-Monitor: Independent, Trusted Coverage of the Middle East. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/10/israels-intelligence-blunder-gaza-misreading-hamas-abilities-intentions>

CALCULATED APPROACH BY HAMAS

Assault by Hamas was spurred on by three separate factors.

The far-right Israeli government's support for settlement aggression throughout the West Bank and Jerusalem triggered a feeling of despair among Palestinians, who grew more and more insistent on retaliation. Israeli forces had been ordered to secure the colonies due to increasing hostility brought on by these actions.



Source: Business Standard

This offered Hamas an excuse and a chance to launch an assault. Second, the accelerated normalisation of Arab-Israeli relations made the Hamas command feel obliged to take action. For Arab politicians, who have been less motivated to put pressure on Israel on this subject in recent years, this trend further undermined the importance of the Palestinian question. The dispute between the Arabs and Israel might have been neglected if a normalisation agreement was reached, which already is at a slim chance of a two-state solution. Hamas included this in their calculations. Third, Hamas gained confidence after it was able to mend relations with Iran. In recent years, the organisation has been forced to reevaluate the political stance that it took in defiance to Iran and its partner, the Syrian dictatorship, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring in 2011.

QUAGMIRE

Iran has not admitted any participation in the recent Hamas attack, but has pledged to promote it. [12] On the other hand, the political climate in Lebanon appears to be not favourable for a confrontation with Israel, which makes it difficult to back Hezbollah. [13] The Israelis are currently preparing for an upcoming ground invasion into Gaza. Even for highly skilled armed forces, urban warfare is a tremendous challenge. The fact that there is a massive system of hidden underground tunnels is a highly uncommon resource for Hamas. To get a grasp of the dimensions of the labyrinth since, 2014, Israel has been investing over \$1 billion to create ground-based obstruction along its 60-kilometer border with Gaza[14], and several

[12] Reuters. (2023c, October 9). Iran's UN mission says Tehran not involved in Hamas attacks. Reuters. [https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-un-mission-says-tehran-not-involved-hamas-attacks-2023-10-09/#:~:text=NEW%20YORK%2C%20Oct%20%20\(Reuters,Israelis%20and%20abducted%20dozens%20more.](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-un-mission-says-tehran-not-involved-hamas-attacks-2023-10-09/#:~:text=NEW%20YORK%2C%20Oct%20%20(Reuters,Israelis%20and%20abducted%20dozens%20more.)

[13] Ghaddar, H. (2023, October 16). Hezbollah's escalation will depend on Lebanese politics and Iran. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/10/16/hezbollah-nasrallah-lebanon-israel-hamas-escalate/>

[14] Meyer, H. (2023, October 13). Hamas' Secret Tunnel Network Complicates Israel's Gaza Offensive. Bloomberg.com. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-10-13/the-secret-tunnel-network-complicating-israel-s-ground-offensive-in-gaza>

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

of dollars more on a network of sensors that allows for and prevents the digging of underground passageways with the Israeli 'Iron Wall' and 'Iron Spade.' With more than reportedly 200 hostages including American nationals, spread out over these tunnels in Gaza makes the situation more complicated.

The conflict could widen into a regional or even global crisis. For energy markets and the global economy, the risks are considerable and could swerve or accelerate in response to multiple variables. Structurally, the global economy is in a moment of flux, with persistent inflationary pressure, lack of fiscal space for many indebted economies, competitive industrial policy in renewables that may detract from decarbonization incentives in the developing world, lack of clarity in the growth and direction of China's economy, and an on-going war in Ukraine.

Despite the flagrant intelligence miscalculation, the IDF, and Mossad continues to be in West Asia the most effective combat force and intelligence agency. The Israelis are seeking retribution, so Hamas and its backers in Tehran could possibly repent misreading the opponents which sparked this cycle of carnage. Israel might target Hezbollah across the northern flank in the conflict if it conducts a complete combat assault. If this occurs, there is a very real chance that the crisis in Gaza may escalate and turn into a regional confrontation that involves Iran and the United States along with its allies. Without real diplomatic maneuvers, West Asia may be headed for an additional dreadful conflict post Russo-Ukraine war.



Source: Bloomberg

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

1. *Reuters* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-pummels-east-ukrainian-town-avdiivka-heavy-fighting>
2. *The Economist*: <https://www.economist.com>
3. *The NEWSWEEK*: <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-tank-losses-avdiivka-battle>
4. *The NDTV*: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/israel-gaza-war-palestine-hamas-how-israel-hamas-conflict-may-help-russia-in-war-against-ukraine-4470275>
5. *TIME Magazine*: <https://time.com/6315601/west-mammoth-ukrainians-soldiers/russia-putin-nuclear-test-threat/>
6. *The Politico*: <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/10/13/ukrainian-pilots-expected-to-start-f-16-training-in-arizona-next-week-00121460>
7. *The Eurasian Times*: <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/russia-baits-ukraine-to-attack-its-new-black-sea-fleet-hq-to-justify-retaliatory-strike-on-nato-assets-oped/>

UKRAINE

TRAINING OF PILOTS

Ukrainian pilots are expected to begin training to fly the F-16 fighter jet at an Air National Guard base in Tuscon, Arizona from Oct 16, 2023.

COUNTEROFFENSIVE

Russia reportedly suffered significant equipment losses in a battle for the Ukrainian-held eastern Donbas town of Avdiivka on Oct 11, 2023. It lost 990 soldiers, 42 tanks, and 32 artillery systems overall in one day, according to Kyiv's military. Videos circulating on social media showed what one online commenter described as a "Russian kamikaze attempt" to take the largely destroyed town, which resulted in a large number of Russian tanks and equipment being destroyed by Ukrainian Artillery.

RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

Russia unleashed new air strikes on Ukraine early on Oct 06, 2023, on the city of Kharkiv and damaging grain and port infrastructure in the Odesa region in the south, Ukrainian officials said. At least 51 people were killed in a Russian attack on the village of Hroza, in north-eastern Ukraine, on Oct 08, 2023. Russian forces pummelled the eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka from the ground and air on Oct 22, 2023, the fourth day of intense fighting in the biggest offensive by Russian forces in months.

Russia may have moved its Black Sea Fleet away from Crimea to check if NATO's intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance (ISR), electronic warfare (EW) planes, and drones continue to aid Ukrainian forces in attacking Russian warships at Novorossiysk. A NATO-backed Ukrainian attack at Novorossiysk, an internationally recognized Russian territory, legitimizes Russia's shooting down NATO planes flying over western Ukraine and eastern Poland.

NUCLEAR

A Resumption of nuclear tests by Russia, the United States, or China could indicate the start of a new nuclear arms race between the big powers who stopped nuclear testing in the years following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

COMMENTS

The comments by President Putin and Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin suggest that Russia is considering revoking ratification of the treaty, which bans nuclear tests by everyone, everywhere.

Russian leadership sees itself as a significant power with a sizeable military-industrial base and considers this conflict as an existential conflict that it must win. President Zelensky is facing two challenges: one is overseeing his country's attrition, multi-pronged counter-offensive against Russia, and the second is to maintain support from allies whose military and financial aid is crucial to sustaining the operations.

The defence industry is booming in the US, given the demand for weapons to supply Ukraine. In the aftermath of the surprise Hamas attack on Israel, it may, at the very least, distract the US-European attention. There is a possibility that there may be a risk of diversion of weapons.

Ukraine conflict has demonstrated the dominance of fires over the manoeuvre. The biggest battlefield killers are the loitering munition (kamikaze drones) and First Person View drones. In addition to the lesson on using armed drones, the growth of ground-based air defence systems capable of engaging cruise missiles (LACMs) with stealth with more incredible speed and ranges will be challenging for nations. Developing long-range single-role weapons will pave the way for developing multi-role weapons capable of engaging a broader set of targets.

The attack on Avdiivka is one of the few significant assaults Russia has mounted since Ukrainian forces launched a counteroffensive in early June to drive out Russian troops occupying large swathes of territory in the east and south. Avdiivka is home to a big coking plant. It has become a symbol of resistance, preventing Russia from taking complete control of the Donetsk region, which Russia claims to have annexed.

Ukraine faces the second winter of lengthy power outages amid relentless Russian drone and missile attacks on the energy systems. Ukrainians must be ready to face long nights without light, heat, and water. This conflict has demonstrated that a robust Military Industrial Complex is necessary to support modern force-on-force warfare, which consumes much in terms of ammunition, material, and soldiers' lives. Ukraine has demonstrated tactical agility, resilience by population, capability to adapt at strategic, operational, and tactical levels, and carry out innovation to withstand the Russian attacks.

U.S. To Pursue Stronger Collaboration With Allies In Military Space Programs

<https://spacenews.com/u-s-to-pursue-stronger-collaboration-with-allies-in-military-space-programs/>

WASHINGTON — Strengthening ties with foreign allies has been a key priority for the U.S. Space Force, whose leaders stress that securing outer space requires global cooperation. To that end, the United States has signed numerous intelligence sharing and data exchange agreements with partner nations worldwide. But collaboration has not usually applied to the acquisition of satellites or other space systems. The Space Force is now working to advance collaboration with allies in development and acquisition programs, said Deanna Ryals, director of the Space Systems Command's International Affairs Office in Los Angeles.

COMMENTS

With an aim to develop space capabilities, there is an understanding emerging in the US Space Command circles that there is prudence in going ahead with collaboration with partner nations. The Director of the Space Systems Command's International Affairs (IA) Office for the US Space Force's Space Systems Command, said, "The Space Force is now working to advance collaboration with allies in development and acquisition programs". The US has already signed various intelligence and data sharing agreements with foreign allies. In the past two years, the concerned US offices have hosted visitors from 14 countries, including the members of Five Eyes (Australia, Canada, New Zealand & UK), Korea, Norway, Germany and Japan among others. The change in stance indicates intention to collaborate in the field of acquisition of satellites and other related systems.

The US is concerned that Russia and China have developed significant capabilities in space. Both countries have demonstrated capabilities to target satellites in orbit. The US is planning to pursue stronger collaboration with allies in military space programmes. It is looking to leverage on the emerging space capabilities globally, especially in the private sector. US does not seem to be averse to collaborating in acquiring dual use technologies. US Chief of Space Force, Gen. Chance Saltzman is on record having said last month that the US wants its allies to train and plan together for space operations.

Space Systems Command's International Affairs Office has been created consequent to a deep understanding of strength through partnerships in the space domain. There is a growing realisation that to build a resilient infrastructure and meet future space threats there is a requirement to prioritise space cooperation with allies. Priorities include Space Domain Awareness, SATCOM, Space C2 (Command and Control), and Data/Data Transport. It allows the US to prioritise funding, create cost savings due to economies of scale and gives the US Space Force an easy access to cutting-edge technology developed around the globe.



Source: Space News

The US has opined that the need and benefits from partnerships outweigh the risk created by sharing information and capabilities with allies. By understanding both the policy and technology hurdles the US and its allies will be better placed to prioritize allied engagements and work together to develop integrated architectures, a more robust enterprise solution at a lower cost point and while also allowing partners to on-ramp capabilities when the time is right. The US aims to leverage the innovation and venture capital investment that is going into space industries, globally. This change of approach in the US strategic sector offers opportunities for India to seek mutually beneficial space capabilities, as well as for Indian private space industry to expand their footprint globally. Collaborative approach by US Space Command has great potential to benefit Indian private industry, especially those in the ISR or SSA domain, eg. Indian companies like Pixxel, a leader in cutting-edge earth-imaging technology, has been recently awarded a 5-year contract by the NRO for Commercial Hyperspectral Capabilities. Pixxel Aerospace of India is also set to manufacture miniaturised multi-payload satellites for the Indian Air Force (IAF) under the iDEX Challenges announced last week. It will manufacture a Miniaturized Multi-Payload Satellite (EO, IR, SAR, Hyperspectral) up to 150 Kgs for the IAF.



Source: Space News

Space cooperation is the norm globally. India and the US, during PM Modi's State Visit in June this year have agreed to scale up their space-related collaboration in three areas including planetary defence, commercial space activity and human space flight. India on June 21, 2023 became the 27th country to sign the Artemis Accord. Another project involving joint satellite development is being jointly steered with NASA under Project NISAR. It carries L and S dual band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), which operates with Sweep SAR technique to achieve large swath with high resolution data. The satellite is likely to be launched by end-2023.

The US' over a period of past six years has issued six Space Policy Directives (SPDs) that provide information on US policies and procedures as they relate to space activities. Reference here is made of SPD-3 National Space Traffic Management Policy (issued 2018) that calls for a new method of space traffic management (STM) that would meet current and future risks; set priorities for space situational awareness and STM innovation; aligns with national security priorities; and encourages US commercial space growth. This SPD, calls upon collaboration with nations to develop STM and undertake joint steps towards debris mitigation.

The US would be aiming at filling the space surveillance gaps, especially in the region south of the equator. Having a complete gap free coverage is considered essential for effective space surveillance capabilities. These gaps can be filled by having radars and optical sensors to track space activities in this region. There are already some Indian private space companies like Digantara that have been making forays in this field.

The Combined Space Operations Vision 2031 accord commits the seven nations (US, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Australia and New Zealand) to a code of conduct in space, including a mission to "generate and improve cooperation, coordination, and interoperability opportunities to sustain freedom of action in space, optimize resources, enhance mission assurance and resilience, and prevent conflict."



Source: *The Space Report*

Belt And Road Initiative: Is China's Trillion-Dollar Gamble Worth It?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-67120726>

This week, China is throwing a huge party to celebrate one of its biggest experiments in engaging with the world: its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Officials and leaders from all over the globe are in Beijing to attend a high-level summit marking the BRI's 10th anniversary. Participants expected to show up range from Vladimir Putin to the Taliban. Chinese media is awash with coverage of the BRI's achievements, including a six-part documentary on state TV. A signature policy of President Xi Jinping, the BRI is aimed at stitching China closer to the world through investments and infrastructure projects. With an unprecedented glut of cash pumped into nearly 150 countries, China boasts it has transformed the world - and it is not wrong.

COMMENTS

From the moment the BRI was unveiled in 2013 with comparisons to the ancient Silk Road, it was clear China had sprawling ambitions. "Belt" refers to overland routes connecting China to Europe through Central Asia, as well as to South Asia and South East Asia; while "Road" denotes a maritime network linking China to major ports through Asia to Africa and Europe. It started off with heavy state-driven investment into hard infrastructure abroad. Most of the estimated \$1tn (£820bn) has been poured into energy and transport projects, such as power plants and railways.

Beijing touted this as an economic win-win - it told other countries these investments would stimulate development, while at home it sold the BRI as a way to help Chinese companies, boost the economy and burnish the country's reputation. It had limited success in meeting some goals, such as internationalising the yuan and solving Chinese companies' overcapacity. But China reaped a huge economic benefit in trade. A slew of agreements brought access to more resources such as oil, gas and minerals, especially as the BRI's focus widened to include Africa, South America and the Middle East. About \$19.1tn of goods were traded between China and BRI countries in the past decade.

Having become the lender of first resort for many low or middle income countries through the BRI, China is now the world's biggest international creditor. The true scale of the debt - thought to be at least hundreds of billions of dollars - is unknown because many of the loan agreements are shrouded in secrecy. Now, from Sri Lanka and the Maldives to Laos and Kenya, countries are struggling with BRI debt. This puts the Chinese government in a tight spot. "For China to simultaneously engage in debt write-downs overseas while domestic economic issues are not fully resolved - it will be politically challenging internally. Some critics accuse China of engaging in "debt trap diplomacy" by luring poorer countries to sign up for expensive projects so that Beijing could eventually seize control of assets put up as collateral. Many analysts argue there is little evidence of this, but it has heightened fears that Beijing is using the BRI to undermine others' sovereignty.

China Launches New Yunhai Remote Sensing Satellite

<https://spacenews.com/china-launches-new-yunhai-remote-sensing-satellite/>

China added to its series of Yunhai remote sensing satellites late Saturday with a launch from the Gobi Desert. A Long March 2D rocket lifted off from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center at 8:54 p.m. Eastern, Oct. 14 (0054 UTC, Oct. 15). The China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp. (CASC), confirmed launch success within an hour, also revealing the payload for the mission to be Yunhai-1 (04). CASC's Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology provided the launcher for the mission and developed the Yunhai-1 (04) satellite. Chinese state media describe the satellite as providing "services for the detection of the atmospheric, marine and space environments, disaster prevention and mitigation, and scientific experiments." This is a generally used description of Yunhai spacecraft. The Yunhai series are assessed to be military meteorological satellites by some Western analysts.

COMMENTS



Source: Xinhua News

China launched the first Yunhai satellite in November 2016. Yunhai-1 series satellites operate in roughly circular, 780-kilometer-altitude sun-synchronous orbits (SSO). The hypergolic Long March 2D has a launch capacity of 1,300 kilograms to a 700-kilometer SSO. Yunhai-2 series sats orbit with a similar altitude with inclinations of 50 degrees. Yunhai-1 (02), launched in 2019, suffered a suspected collision with a small piece of debris from a Russian satellite launch in March 2021.

U.S. Space Force cataloged a total of 37 fragments in orbit, with 23 having reentered the atmosphere to date. Yunhai-1 (04) was China's 47th orbital launch of 2023. CASC stated early in the year it would aim to launch more than 60 times, and has so far completed 33 launches. Commercial firms have contributed to the launch total. China has suffered one failure so far in 2023, seeing the loss of a Jilin-1 remote sensing satellite aboard a commercial Ceres-1 rocket from Galactic Energy. China is currently preparing for the launch of the Shenzhou-17 crewed mission. That launch will see a new, three-person crew head to the Tiangong space station later in the month. The Shenzhou-16 trio currently aboard the space station will handover Tiangong to the Shenzhou-17 crew for the start of their six-month-long stay in orbit. The country is also working towards the launch of its Einstein Probe, a wide-field x-ray space observatory designed to detect flashes from cataclysmic cosmic events. The spacecraft passed thermal vacuum and other tests across July and August. China plans to launch it in December from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center using a Long March 2C rocket.

Saudi-Chinese Naval Drill 'Blue Sword' Kicks Off To Face Marine Piracy

<https://www.spa.gov.sa/en/N1977500>

Chinese Zhanjiang City on Monday witnessed the launch of the second mixed naval drill "Blue Sword" with the participation of the Special Forces of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces and its Chinese counterpart. The three-week drill aims to build mutual trust, enhance cooperation between the Royal Saudi Naval Forces and the Chinese Navy, exchange expertise, and develop participants' capacity in combating maritime terrorism and piracy, as well as upgrade training and combat readiness for participating forces.

COMMENTS

The launch of the second mixed naval drill "Blue Sword" with the participation of the Special Forces of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces and its Chinese counterpart started on Monday in the Chinese City of Zhanjiang. The three-week drill aims to build mutual trust, enhance cooperation between the Royal Saudi Naval Forces and the Chinese Navy, exchange expertise, and develop participants' capacity in combating maritime terrorism and piracy, as well as upgrade training and combat readiness for participating forces.



Source: SPA

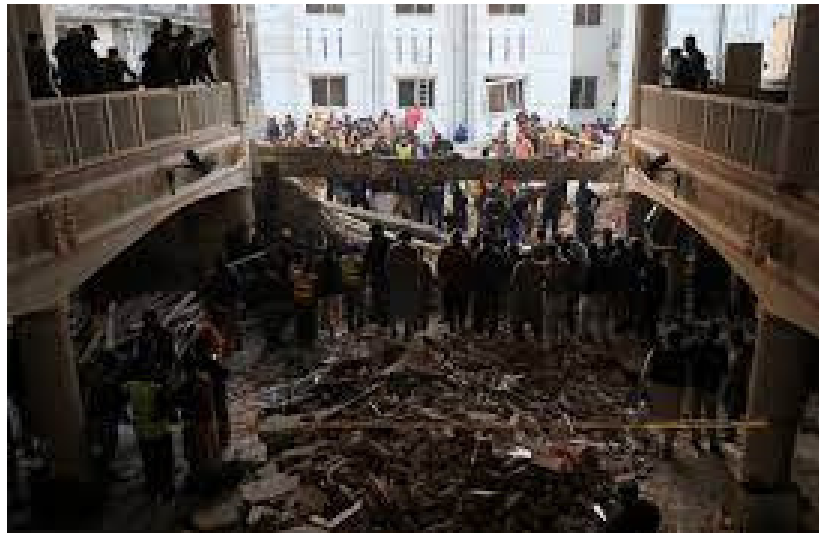
At Least 59 People Killed In Twin Attacks On Mosques In Pakistan

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/quad-and-asean-must-learn-to-work-together-101692625530090.html>

Suicide bombing kills at least 54 at parade to mark prophet's birthday, while five die in attack in police compound.

COMMENTS

On 29th September 2023, a powerful blast occurred near the Madina Mosque in the Mastung district in Balochistan province of Pakistan. The blast took place during the Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations when hundreds of people had gathered to commemorate the birth of Prophet Mohammed. A second bomb blast occurred a few hours later inside a mosque situated inside the premises of the Doaba Police Station in the Hangu city of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. The death toll from the two blasts was reported to have reached a figure of 59 with a much higher number of people injured that included women, children and the elderly. The bomb blasts were executed by suicide bombers at both the places.



Source: PBS

As to the executors of the bomb blasts, no group has claimed responsibility till now. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) outfit has, rather, denied any involvement in the blasts and has been reported to condemn the blast in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa citing that targeting mosques, schools, and public gatherings was against its policy. Pakistan, in its usual rhetoric, has blamed RAW for its involvement in these blasts without any proof. A day earlier, the Counter Terrorism Department had conducted an operation in the Mastung district during which a key ISIS commander was claimed to have been killed. Some experts and police suspect the hand of Daesh (ISIS) militants behind the blasts. Both Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces have been marred with terrorist attacks in recent history and Mastung, in particular, has been a major target of terrorist attacks during the last few years. It saw a major attack in 2018 in which 128 people lost their lives and also earlier in September this year when 11 people were injured in a blast.

Pakistan Speaks Out On Failure Of Nuclear States To Comply With Nuclear Disarmament Obligations At The UN General Assembly Meeting

COMMENTS

In the meeting of the First Committee, that deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community, on 6th October 2023 during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the speakers of member states shared their views on the increasing military expenditure, proliferation of nuclear technology and weapons and disarmament.

Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, indirectly hinting at India, said that there is a growing arms race in the South Asian region and nations are developing new military technologies and modernising weapons which is affecting the security scenario at a global scale. He asserted that there is a growing power rivalry and formation of new military alliances that is causing asymmetry and has destabilising impact in the region. He accused the bigger nuclear powers of failing to comply with nuclear disarmament obligations and promoted Pakistan's support towards a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. He said that the proposed treaty is flawed as it bans only the production of fissile materials and does not take into account the existing stocks that can be used to manufacture hundreds and even more new nuclear weapons thereby accentuating present asymmetries.

He talked about the need for equitable and balanced disarmament measures that ensure each State's right to security, with no individual State or group of States gaining advantages over others. All this is spoken while Pakistan itself has been culprit to acquiring nuclear technology by any means possible and continues to spend on procuring weapons and combat platforms despite the harsh economic environment it experiences and forcing its citizens to wade through the deluge of financial difficulties and crises.

Anupam Ray, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the UN Conference on Disarmament, presented the Indian context and reassured the country's position as a 'responsible nuclear-weapon State'. He reiterated that India follows a nuclear doctrine that is based on maintaining credible and minimum deterrence with a policy of no-first-use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. He said that India favours immediate commencement of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty. He also expressed grave concern for the illicit transfers of conventional weapons, which includes small arms and light weapons, to terrorists and non-State actors.

IMF Caught Off Guard As China Strikes Debt Deal With Sri Lanka

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/international-business/imf-caught-off-guard-as-china-strikes-debt-deal-with-sri-lanka/articleshow/104333348.cms?from=mdr>

China has reached a tentative debt agreement with Sri Lanka, catching other creditors by surprise. The Export-Import Bank of China has reached a preliminary agreement, although details of the deal have not been disclosed. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other creditors were expected to hold talks on a debt restructuring plan without China's participation. China accounts for 52% of Sri Lanka's bilateral debt.

COMMENTS

Sri Lanka suffered its worst economic crisis last year when it defaulted on its USD 83 billion debt. The economic situation in the country was rife with issues like food and fuel shortages with prices of essential commodities skyrocketing making lives of the Sri Lankans miserable. The reason for this crisis was a result of years of poor economic governance, corruption and mismanagement. What added to the economic woes of the country and exacerbated the situation were other reasons also like the introduction of huge tax cuts by the then President ahead of the 2019 elections, the slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the money borrowed from China for infrastructure projects that did not bring commensurate business opportunities.

Eventually, Sri Lanka defaulted on its debt repayments that included USD 42 billion of foreign debt. Sri Lanka, then, approached IMF and qualified for a USD 2.9 billion bailout package, the first tranche of which amounting to USD 330 million was paid in March 2023. However, the bailout package extended by the IMF was conditional on Sri Lanka securing debt restructuring from its creditors. India also helped Sri Lanka in this time of severe economic crisis with USD 4 billion assistance through multiple credit lines and currency support. The second tranche of the bailout package, however, is expected to be delayed as Sri Lanka has not been able to completely fulfil its obligations to the conditions of the IMF bailout package that includes the agreement with its foreign creditors for debt restructuring amongst others (like improving tax collections by adopting steps to strengthen tax administration, reduce tax exemptions as well as make active efforts to eliminate evasion of taxes).

As part of the debt restructuring, Sri Lanka has sought a 30% haircut from its foreign investors. Though India, Japan and France got onboard the 'official creditor committee' of 17 countries set up to negotiate the foreign debt owed by Sri Lanka, China refused to be a part of it. As a result, Sri Lanka has faced difficulty in coming to an agreement with the creditor committee as they are apprehensive of China being offered favourable payment terms.

PAKISTAN/ SRI LANKA

As per the Sri Lankan Finance Ministry, the total foreign debt of the country stands at SLR 36.4 billion as of March 2023 and as per the IMF debt sustainability targets, Sri Lanka plans to lower this by around USD 17 billion. Sri Lanka owes USD 11.3 billion in bilateral debt (including USD 4.7 billion to China, USD 2.68 billion to Japan and USD 1.74 billion to India), USD 10.3 billion in multilateral debt (including USD 5.65 billion to Asian Development Bank and USD 3.88 billion to World Bank) and around USD 14.7 billion in commercial debt [1].

Apart from the concern of China entering a private debt restructuring agreement with Sri Lanka and getting preferential treatment, the other contention that India has is that Sri Lanka wants the emergency assistance of USD 4 billion provided to it by India to be part of this debt restructuring programme to which India does not agree.

However, China surprised the IMF as well as the other bilateral creditors of Sri Lanka including India by announcing, on 11th October 2023, that the Export-Import Bank of China had reached a preliminary agreement with Sri Lanka on its debt restructuring in late September covering USD 4.2 billion of debt value[2]. The news was confirmed by the Finance Ministry of Sri Lanka, though no details of the agreement were revealed. By making this announcement, China takes a lead in Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process. Sri Lanka expects that the agreement with China would put pressure on the other lenders to come to an agreement on debt restructuring quicker and pave the way to the payment of the next tranche of USD 330 million of the IMF bailout package. However, the other creditors insist on being made aware of the details of the Sri Lankan deal with China before coming to an agreement to ensure equitable debt restructuring terms for all.

With this move, China indicates its intention of further deepening its ties with Sri Lanka and strengthening its control over the Indian Ocean Region. It will also help China in retaining more influence over Sri Lanka and in continuing its military presence in the region. This will allow China to continue its efforts of surveillance in India's immediate neighbourhood with, probably, an even more weakened resistance from Sri Lanka.

[1] Sakalasooriya, Indika. "China takes front seat to lead SL's debt restructuring process". Daily Mirror, October 13, 2023

[2] Parkin, Benjamin and Ratnaweera, Mahendra. "Sri Lanka reaches preliminary debt restructuring deal with China's Exim Bank". Financial Times, October 12, 2023. <https://www.ft.com/content/b1f6f3fa-13cd-43c6-a95a-aff1d629d478>

Jaishankar Says Respect for Sovereignty Key for Indian Ocean Region's Revival

<https://www.news18.com/world/jaishankar-says-respect-for-sovereignty-key-for-reviving-indian-ocean-region-as-strong-community-8612248.html>

India on Wednesday said a multilateral rules-based international order, along with sincere respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity remains the foundation for reviving the Indian Ocean as a strong community, in a veiled attack on China which is flexing its muscles in the region. Speaking at the 23rd Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that it is important to maintain the Indian Ocean as a free, open and inclusive space based on the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), as the Constitution of the Seas. India, the "Vishwa Mitra" or the world's friend, a Voice of the Global South, will work with IORA Member States to strengthen the institutional, financial and legal framework of IORA, towards realising the true potential of this dynamic grouping," he said.[1]

COMMENTS

Background

India assumed the responsibility of the Vice Chair for the period 2023-25 of the IORA, an intergovernmental organisation of 23 member states bordering the Indian Ocean which was constituted in 1997. The IORA also has 11 dialogue partners to include US, Russia, China & Turkey etc. Sri Lanka took over the Chair of the association during the occasion.

Challenges

Developmental issues, lack of robust connectivity, the burden of opaque and unsustainable debt generated by unviable projects, threats to social fabric posed by extremism and fundamentalism, dangers emanating from terrorism, natural disasters and climate change, are the challenges that the region faces. [1]

Comments

India has assured to continue to build capacity and secure safety and security in the Indian Ocean region including as first responder and a net security provider and that its specific focus will be in the areas of Maritime Safety & Security and Blue Economy as a coordinating country. [1]. The three nations, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, form a Troika and are expected to bolster the organisation's traditional cooperation. [2]

[1]<https://www.news18.com/world/jaishankar-says-respect-for-sovereignty-key-for-reviving-indian-ocean-region-as-strong-community-8612248.html>

[2]<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/oct/12/jaishankar-upholds-indias-commitment-for-well-being-of-indian-ocean-nations-2623191.html>

China-Backed Candidate Mohamed Muizzu Elected Maldives President

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/china-backed-candidate-elected-maldives-president-mohamed-muizzu/articleshow/104082176.cms>

Mohamed Muizzu, Male Mayor, defeated pro-India President Ibrahim Solih in the presidential runoff in the Maldives. Muizzu accused Solih of seeking India's endorsement for every decision, which he claimed undermined the Maldives' independence and sovereignty. Muizzu, was backed by former president Abdulla Yameen, widely acknowledged as a China lackey and the chief architect of the Indian Out campaign that seemed to have fired up the opposition. Yameen is currently in jail on corruption charges but Muizzu has promised to expedite his release. [1]

COMMENTS

The failure to check corruption, a lackadaisical approach to infrastructure projects and his differences with former president Mohamed Nasheed, who broke away from the ruling MDP to form his own party, seem to have caused Solih's downfall. [1]

Despite his continuing commitment to remove a supposed Indian military presence from the country, Muizzu has reaffirmed that his incoming administration will maintain an "India First" policy as also a senior foreign affairs advisor to Muizzu, Mohamed Hussain Shareef, has publicly stated that India remains the dominant stakeholder in the Indian Ocean.

Despite the international media framing the election as a geopolitical tug-of-war between Beijing and Delhi, the concerns of Maldivian voters remain primarily domestic themes, like housing crisis in the capital, stalled Greater Malé Connectivity Project, rampant corruption, a looming debt crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the tension between economic growth and environmental sustainability and not the external influence. [2]

Implications for India

India is currently implementing scores of community and development projects, including the flagship Greater Male connectivity project, the Coastal Radar system, New Defence Ministry Headquarters etc in Maldives. Muizzu has said his government won't block work on projects that are in the interest of the people, but the defence and security partnership that had been consolidated in the past few years is likely to come under strain. As president, Yameen had asked India to remove its navy choppers and personnel from the Maldives and Muizzu has threatened to do the same. Muizzu, in fact, has also announced that the presence of foreign troops even for civilian purposes will not be tolerated.

[1]<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/china-backed-candidate-elected-maldives-president-mohamed-muizzu/articleshow/104082176.cms>

[2]<https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/maldives-presidential-election-was-not-a-referendum-on-india-or-china/>

How Southeast Asian States Are Responding to the Growing Middle East Conflict

<https://www.cfr.org/blog/how-southeast-asian-states-are-responding-growing-middle-east-conflict>

Most Southeast Asian governments have issued muted statements regarding Israel's war with Hamas, except for Indonesia and Malaysia, the two largest Muslim-majority countries in the region. Southeast Asian nations typically adopted a cautious stance while dealing with problems in the Middle East, frequently issuing restrained statements. The responses to wars such as the one between Israel and Hamas, and their potential implications for India, may exhibit variations across different countries.

COMMENTS



Source: The Print

The ASEAN regional bloc places significant emphasis on the principles of neutrality, non-interference, and diplomacy in addressing international crises.

The typical approach is characterised by impartiality and emphasises the need of peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiation and dialogue.

Humanitarian concerns may be raised by ASEAN on the humanitarian implications of the conflict, particularly in the event of substantial civilian casualties. The situation may necessitate the provision of humanitarian assistance and the facilitation of access to places that have been impacted. The individual member states can be identified as distinct entities within a larger collective ASEAN. Few countries that may impact the larger ASEAN context are-

Indonesia. As the most populous nation with a Muslim-majority demographic, frequently adopts a proactive approach towards matters pertaining to the Muslim community globally. It has the potential to articulate more assertive declarations and advocate for global intervention, potentially involving the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Nevertheless, Indonesia adheres to a neutral foreign policy stance, but this time around Indonesia not only criticised Israel attack on Gaza strip but did not denounce Hamas unprecedented attack on Israel.

Malaysia. As a prominent nation with a Muslim-majority population in the region, may demonstrate apprehension and empathy for the Palestinian cause. This situation has the potential to elicit a global sense of unity and support for the Palestinian people. Similar to Indonesia, it generally refrains from aligning itself with any particular faction. But this time around there were demonstration on streets as well as statement's by various religious clerics to denounce the Israel attack on Gaza strip .

Southeast Asian states frequently espoused the utilisation of peaceful resolutions and diplomatic negotiations as means to de-escalate crises. The impartial position and readiness to facilitate discussions of the neutral party may offer an opportunity for conflicting factions in the Middle East to participate in constructive conversations. This phenomenon has the potential to indirectly facilitate conflict resolution and mitigate tensions within the region.

Humanitarian Assistance:- Several Southeast Asian nations have extended their support by providing humanitarian aid and assistance to nations impacted by the turmoil in the Middle East. This has the potential to offer vital assistance to populations that have been displaced and alleviate the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the region.

The trade and economic impact of Southeast Asia on Middle Eastern countries is significant. Disruptions in the Middle East, characterised by regional instability, have the potential to exert an influence on their economic stability and growth, primarily through energy supply issues.

The Global Influence. Multilateral Diplomacy: Southeast Asian nations frequently participate in multilateral diplomatic endeavours by means of regional organisations such as ASEAN. These individual nations possess the capacity to leverage their influence within these venues to foster collective international reactions and advance peace-building efforts in the Middle East. The potential for a substantial refugee crisis exists in the event of any escalation in the Middle East war. Southeast Asian countries may be called upon to aid in the relocation of refugees, which can have both humanitarian and economic ramifications. Energy security is a significant concern in Southeast Asia as the region heavily relies on oil and gas imports. Any disturbances in the Middle East have the potential to exert a substantial influence on global energy prices and disrupt supply networks on a global scale. Southeast Asian states may need to diversify energy sources or increase energy security measures in reaction to Middle East tensions.

The Impact on India

India, although not being a member of ASEAN, has substantial diplomatic and economic connections with the region. Consequently, India will keenly observe the responses of both ASEAN as a collective entity and its individual member nations. India is expected to value ASEAN's focus on peaceful resolution and diplomacy, as it is in line with India's foreign policy principles. In brief, it can be observed that the majority of ASEAN countries tend to express restrained viewpoints when it comes to crises in the Middle East. However, it is noteworthy that Indonesia and Malaysia, being the two largest nations in ASEAN with a Muslim-majority population, may adopt a more assertive position owing to their religious and cultural affinities with the Middle Eastern region.

Japan As A Diplomatic Asset To ASEAN

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1961331>

ASEAN members are navigating an increasingly challenging regional environment. Headwinds to global trade and finance threaten Southeast Asia's post-pandemic economic recovery, as do the rising costs of climate change. Waxing great power rivalry is leading to segmented supply chains and infrastructure, hampering intra- and extra-regional trade. Strains between ASEAN member states sow discord within the association, sapping its clout and potentially undermining regional security. China's surging influence raises concerns, as do US responses, which increase strategic tension and give short shrift to economics and regional prosperity. To address these risks, Japan can help by advocating for Southeast Asian interests in global forums.

Southeast Asian governments have long viewed Japan as a key trading partner and sponsor of regional economic development and integration. Japan has earned trust in ASEAN capitals by acting as a courteous power — one that listens carefully to regional perspectives, conveys respect and leads quietly in areas of common interest.

Importantly, Japan's approach to Southeast Asia is not simply a product of benevolence. Japan also needs ASEAN's diplomatic support to sustain regional initiatives that constrain other major powers — particularly China — and promote Japan's own security and economic wellbeing. This alignment of interests makes Japan arguably ASEAN's most reliable major-power partner.

COMMENTS

The issue elucidates number of the obstacles confronting ASEAN, their ramifications for the area, and Japan's position in them and its possible ramifications for the world. The following are several significant dimensions concerning the influence of Japan's relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)



Source: The Hindustan Times

Economic Development. Japan has emerged as a significant trading ally and a prominent contributor of foreign direct investment in the Southeast Asian region. The aforementioned economic association has played a significant role in fostering the economic expansion, industrial advancement, and infrastructure enhancement within the region. Japan's investments in Southeast Asia have frequently encompassed knowledge transfer and capacity building, hence facilitating the development of industrial and high-tech industries in ASEAN nations.

Regional integration. It refers to the process of countries within a specific geographic region coming together to form closer economic, political, and social ties. This can involve the establishment of common policies. Japan has provided assistance for the development of infrastructure in ASEAN nations, encompassing several sectors like transport networks, energy facilities, and digital infrastructure. This investment facilitates the establishment of regional connections and promotes economic integration. Japan has actively advocated for the advancement of regional economic integration in Southeast Asia. The framework of ASEAN+3, which includes China, Japan, and South Korea, is endorsed as it aids in the development of regional supply chains and trade. The **geopolitical implications.** This situation refer to the political and strategic consequences that arise from the interaction between different countries or regions. These implications can include shifts in power dynamics, changes Japan's presence and influence in the (ASEAN) can potentially act as a counterbalance to the increasing regional clout of China.

The investments and engagement of Japan. The region have the potential to offer ASEAN countries with alternative choices and strategic advantages in their diplomatic and economic interactions with China. Regional stability is enhanced by the involvement and support of Japan. Japan, being a pacifist nation, is commonly perceived as non-threatening in its involvement in Southeast Asia, actively advocating for the peaceful resolution of problems. One aspect that plays a crucial role in international relations is diplomatic support. The tight relationship between Japan and ASEAN provides the organisation with a diplomatic presence on the global platform. Japan frequently supports and champions the interests of the (ASEAN) at various international forums, therefore amplifying the region's concerns and goals.

Japan's diplomatic assistance. It has the potential to mitigate the influence exerted by other great countries, such as the United States and China, thereby promoting a more equitable balance of power. The dedication of Japan to maintaining international norms and a rules-based order is in accordance with the interests of the (ASEAN). Trust and mutual interests play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining relationships. Japan's diplomatic strategy towards ASEAN is distinguished by its gracious demeanour and recognition of regional viewpoints, resulting in the establishment of confidence and the cultivation of positive sentiments in ASEAN capitals.

In brief, the bilateral relations between Japan and (ASEAN) have a diverse and complex influence on the region. These relationships have a significant role in fostering economic growth, promoting regional integration, and enhancing diplomatic influence. Additionally, they contribute to the preservation of regional stability and provide ASEAN member states with alternate options when engaging with big global powers. The interaction between Japan and ASEAN is founded upon shared interests and a sense of trust, rendering it a highly useful collaboration for both parties involved. India perceives Japan's involvement in Southeast Asia as encompassing both collaborative and competitive aspects. Although Japan and India may share common interests and help counterbalance China's influence, India must also confront the obstacles that Japan's significant presence in the region presents. Effective collaboration between Japan and India regarding matters of shared interest and reciprocal regard for their respective positions in Southeast Asia will be essential to the accomplishment of their respective goals in the area.

Army Chief General Manoj Pande Visits Command And Staff College Duluti In Tanzania

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/army-chief-gen-pande-begins-4-day-visit-to-tanzania/articleshow/104107463.cms?from=md>

Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande began a four-day visit to Tanzania with a focus on building a stronger military partnership between the two countries. Gen Pande is scheduled to meet the top civil and military brass of the east African country including President Samia Suluhu Hassan and Defence Minister Stergomena Lawrence Tax, officials said. "This visit of the Chief of Army Staff further consolidates the high-level bilateral defence engagements and close defence ties shared between India and Tanzania," the Army said. "The visit promises to not just celebrate the existing collaborations but also pave the way for a stronger future partnership," Gen Pande's visit to Tanzania coincides with the second India-Tanzania mini DEF-EXPO being held at Dares Salaam which will showcase the growing prowess of India's indigenous defence industry.

Army Chief General Manoj Pande Visits Command And Staff College Duluti In Tanzania

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/army-chief-gen-pande-begins-4-day-visit-to-tanzania/articleshow/104107463.cms?from=md>

Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan on Sunday began a four-day visit to India with an aim to bolster bilateral relations. The presidential visit from Tanzania to India is taking place after a span of more than eight year "Giving a fresh impetus to India-Tanzania ties. President @Suluhu Samia of Tanzania arrives on a State Visit to India. This is her first visit to India since the assumption of the office of President," Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said on X.Ms. Hassan will also participate in a business and investment forum in Delhi on October 10. She will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhawan here on Monday morning and thereafter, she will hold a detailed bilateral dialogue with the Prime Minister.



Source: The Hindu

COMMENTS

Opportunities for India

- 1. Economic Cooperation.** As the centre of gravity is moving towards the Indo-Pacific region, which also encompasses the east coast of Africa, India and Tanzania's role will be critical in tackling the emerging non-traditional challenges, blue crimes, and for ensuring secure, free, and open shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean Region. The Tanzanian example serves as a perfect template which India should try to implement in other African countries along the Western Indian Ocean region like Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, among others. Blue Economy is another emerging focus area where potential for collaboration exists in areas like tourism, marine scientific research, seabed mining, and ocean conservation.
- 2. Joint Trg and Cooperation in the fields of Maritime Security, Piracy, Drug Trafficking, and Terrorism.** India can focus on its core competencies in areas like ICT, human resource development, healthcare, agriculture, capacity building, etc. Till now, the nature of India and Tanzania's defence and security cooperation have for the most part been training-centric. Given the challenges posed by China in the Indian Ocean, it is time for both India and Tanzania to re-orient their relations from focusing on training to a partnership that is more strategic in nature.
- 3. India is also looking to export its digital solutions to African countries, including Tanzania,** by encouraging more participation from the private sector. To increase Africa's digital connectivity, India's digital stack, including biometrics, Jan Dhan technology, and mobile connectivity can be leveraged. India has also set up a vocational training center in Pemba, Zanzibar and two ICT Centers at Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology and Nelson Mandela African Institute for Science & Technology (NMAIST) in Arusha. The most commendable development has been the opening of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras campus in Zanzibar, which is the first offshore IIT campus to be inaugurated in early November 2023.

[1] [IIT-M Zanzibar Campus Operations to Begin Early November: First 70 Students Finalised](#)", The Indian Express, 11 October 2023.

[2] Subhayan Chakraborty, ["India's JAM Trinity to Push Africa's Digital Reach: Sunil Bharti Mittal"](#), Business Standard, 6 June 2023

Japan Names 33 Airports, Ports to be Upgraded for Defense Use

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Defense/Japan-names-33-airports-ports-to-be-upgraded-for-defense-use>

Faced with growing security concerns in East Asia, and looking at potential military use of civilian infrastructure, the Japanese government has selected 33 airports and ports in 10 prefectures as candidates for expansion, Nikkei has learned. The government will shortly begin discussions with prefectures and municipalities that manage the facilities to extend runways and expand docks, enabling the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the Japan Coast Guard to evacuate citizens or deploy troops in an emergency.

COMMENTS

The Japanese government has identified 33 airports and ports across 10 prefectures for potential expansion considering the escalating security concerns in East Asia and potential military utilization of civilian infrastructure. These expansions will involve discussions with local authorities to extend runways and enlarge docks, facilitating emergency evacuation of citizens and troop deployment by the Self-Defense Forces and Japan Coast Guard. The National Security Strategy of Japan which was released on December 2023, outlined a plan to enhance these facilities for contingency purposes. To make it a reality, the government intends to designate specific facilities as critical bases and allocate the necessary budget for upgrades in its fiscal 2024 proposal.

According, to an unofficial document obtained by Nikkei, the government has chosen 14 airports and 19 ports for expansion, with a significant concentration of 16 facilities in the Ryukyu Islands, which include Okinawa in southern Japan, as well as Kyushu and Shikoku in the western part of the country. The primary focus is on areas in proximity to China, which is bolstering its military capabilities, and Taiwan. Notably, the selected airports comprise Yonaguni, New Ishigaki, Miyako, and Naha in Okinawa prefecture, along with Kagoshima and Miyazaki in Kyushu, and Kochi in Shikoku.

These locations are strategically positioned to function as bases for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), facilitating troop deployment and the provision of essential supplies such as fuel and food in the event of a contingency in Taiwan.

It's worth highlighting that Okinawa, where U.S. military bases were originally established during the Pacific War and subsequently expanded through the U.S. military's acquisition of land, remains highly significant. Even today, it continues to host a considerable majority, around 70%, of all the facilities exclusively utilized by the U.S. military across Japan.[1]

JAPAN

The, former chairman of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's foreign affairs division, Masahisa Sato, told Nikkei:

"It is also meant to allow the U.S. military to dispatch troops in the event of a contingency."

Yonaguni, New Ishigaki, and Miyako airports have relatively short 2,000-meter runways. This presents challenges for military transport aircraft like the C-2, which can accommodate over 100 passengers. To address this issue, the government is contemplating runway extensions and other enhancements to facilitate the evacuation of residents.

Apart from Okinawa, Hokkaido's strategic significance is underscored by its proximity to North Korea and Russia. In April 2023, the Japanese government urgently advised Hokkaido residents to seek shelter due to a North Korean missile launch, though local authorities later confirmed that the missile would not impact the northern region. The incident highlights Hokkaido's critical role in national defense and security of Japan. Therefore, the Government of Japan intends to list the island for improvements.

India and Japan intend to collaborate on multiple joint projects involving dual-use technologies, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), robotics, and intelligence systems. Considering the current geo-political turmoil, India is also emphasising on developing its dual-use infrastructure. General Anil Chauhan, the Chief of the Defence Staff, spoke at the Indian DefSpace Symposium 2023 and highlighted the importance of creating dual-use infrastructure. He stressed the integration of advanced technology to enhance India's military capabilities. India and Japan can certainly learn from each other's experience in development of military infrastructure.



Source: Nikkie Asia

South Korea, U.S., Japan Conduct First Trilateral Maritime Interdiction Drill In 7 Years

<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20231010002751315>

SEOUL, Oct. 10 (Yonhap) -- South Korea, the United States and Japan staged a trilateral maritime interdiction exercise in waters south of the Korean Peninsula this week for the first time in seven years, the South Korean Navy said Tuesday, amid efforts to strengthen security coordination against North Korean threats.

The two-day exercise, which began Monday in international waters southeast of the southern resort island of Jeju along with anti-piracy drills, came after the three countries' defense chiefs agreed to resume the trilateral exercises during their meeting in Singapore in June

COMMENTS

The maritime drill conducted by Seoul, Washington and Tokyo after 7 years can be viewed and applauded as a success of the Camp David Summit held in August 2023. The diminishing colonial antagonism between Japan and South Korea, driven by shared security challenges in the region, especially with North Korea and China, has prompted the US to fix the weak link in its Hub and Spokes model.

At Camp David, it was agreed that such joint drills among Japan's Self Defence Forces, the US and South Korean military will take place to enhance vigilance and readiness in view of the potential threat in and around the Korean peninsula.

The latest drill had mobilized South Korea's ROKS Yulgok Yi I Aegis-equipped destroyer, the USS Ronald Reagan Aircraft carrier and Japan's JS Hyuga helicopter destroyer among other warships. [1]

"The exercise enhanced the South Korea-U.S.-Japan capabilities in deterrence and response against North Korea's recently advancing nuclear and missile threats, and focused on improving trilateral maritime operational capabilities to respond to maritime security threats and establish a rules-based international order," the South Korean Navy said in a release. Earlier, South Korean President Yoon Seok Yeol had mentioned, ""In order to fundamentally block North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, the Republic of Korea, the United States and Japan must closely cooperate on reconnaissance assets and share North Korean nuclear weapon and missile data in real time." The North Korean threat has become apparent and hence it was agreed at Camp David that a system for sharing real-time information about missile launches will also be put to operation by the end of the year.

[1] Hwang Jang-jin, "(Lead) S. Korea, U.S., Japan Stage Trilateral Maritime Interdiction Drills for 1st Time in 7 Years," Yonhap News Agency, October 10, 2023, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20231010002751315>.



Source: The Hankyoreh

Other than North Korea, a belligerent China is an added risk that brings Washington-Tokyo-Seoul together. Apart from joint drills, it was also agreed that a creation of 'Indo-Pacific Dialogue' to counter growing Chinese incursions in the region has also been initiated. Seoul has remained apprehensive of provoking Beijing, given its reliance on the semiconductor supply chain, but the new trilateral cooperation can be expected to not only deter China in the region but also show concerted efforts to create alternative and resilient supply chains.

North Korea Provides Russia Artillery For The Ukraine War As U.S. Hands Kyiv Ammunition Seized From Iran

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-war-russia-north-korea-artillery-us-gives-kyiv-seized-iran-ammunition/>

Kyiv — North Korea has begun transferring artillery to Russia, bolstering Vladimir Putin's forces as they continue their 20-month invasion of Ukraine, a U.S. official tells CBS News. It was not immediately clear whether the transfer is part of a new, long-term supply chain or a more limited consignment, or what North Korea is getting in return for the weapons.

On the other side of the front lines, the U.S. has handed Ukrainian forces a cache of ammunition seized from Iran, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.



COMMENTS

The movement of North Korean artillery to Russia is yet to be ascertained. However, if such a movement between Pyongyang and Moscow is true it certainly indicates a revival of bilateral relations between the two countries. Last month North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un boarded his 'blue train' and travelled to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in what the media has termed as a 'rare meeting'. Pyongyang has committed to unwavering support for Moscow's special operations in Ukraine that has crossed over a 20 month mark.

North Korea has been ramping its defence architecture and it is extremely difficult to ascertain the level of ongoing production. The alleged artillery delivery from Pyongyang to Moscow is reminiscent of the Soviet era cold war polarity. North Korea offers significant weapons stockpiles and a possible base for future weapons production, but that would be limited by low North Korean plant efficiency and procurement capacity. Thus, North Korea's most immediate contributions to Russia will be from stockpiles of old artillery and rocket systems that remain functional and deadly but lack modern guidance systems. [2]

However, another significant factor that needs to be mentioned is how these deliveries from rogue countries like North Korea and Iran indicate about the condition of Russia's own capability to produce for its war. Certainly, Russia's inventory has reached a threshold and for the war to continue it would need additional supplies.

The bilateral meeting between Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin was stated to be successful, relating to transfer of space technology and deepening arms deals between the two countries. An additional challenge now pans out for NATO as to how these supplies to Moscow can be disrupted and halted. The movements between Russia-North Korea raises a security concern in and around North East Asia and further requires to be essentially observed and analysed.



Source: NBC News

[2] Snyder, Scott A. "The Perils of a Renewed North Korea-Russia Relationship." Council on Foreign Relations, September 7, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/perils-renewed-north-korea-russia-relationship>.

Iranian Navy Reiterates Plans for a Base in Antarctica

<https://maritime-executive.com/article/iranian-navy-reiterates-plans-for-a-base-in-antarctica#:~:text=In%20May%2C%20Irani%20had%20said,within%20us%2C%E2%80%9D%20commented%20Irani.>

Iran has reiterated its desire to have access to the Earth's South Pole. Speaking on Thursday during the commemoration of the Sacred Defense Week (observed in remembrance of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war), Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said that the country is planning to build a research base in the Antarctica.

This is the second time the top naval leader has spoken publicly on Iranian plans for Antarctica. In May, Irani had said the navy was planning an expedition to the region.

COMMENTS

Antarctica is unlike any other continent. It has no government and no indigenous population. The Antarctic Treaty of 1961 put aside any territorial claims, declared the entire continent as a scientific preserve and prohibits all military activities in this region. The treaty with its associated agreements was signed originally by 12 nations. [1] As of 2023, there are 56 nations party to the treaty. The 12 original signatory nations and 17 others [2] have voting status while another 21 nations [3] have observer status. In recent years, countries like Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, some of whom are not even signatories, have shown interest in the region. Iran in particular, commenced its research activities in the Antarctica by sending its scientists with other foreign state scientific institutions based on which it submitted an application for Associate Membership of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) in Feb 2014 to obtain its SCAR membership in Sep 2014. [4] Iran also claims ownership of Antarctica based on the 'principles of frontage' [5] to establish a permanent base for military and scientific activities in this region and ignores that the Antarctic Treaty prohibits all military activities (article 1) or any new territorial claims (article 4).

Why the Growing Interest

With a growing demand for natural resources that are otherwise depleting worldwide, countries are eyeing the strategic and commercial opportunities Antarctica offers. These include:

(a) Antarctic skies are extremely clear and free from radio interference. This makes Antarctic an ideal place for deep-space research and satellite tracking projects thus making them ideal for covert surveillance networks, remote control of offensive weapons systems and expanding global navigation abilities.

(b) Being an uninhabited continent, it boasts of vast unexplored and unexploited resources that include reserves of fresh water, abundant sea life such as krill and crustaceans, minerals such as iron ore, coal, chromium, and diamonds to name a few.

(c) Geologists estimate that Antarctica holds at least 36 to 200 billion barrels of oil and natural gas.

ANTARCTICA

Though the Antarctic Treaty disallows new territorial claims, it has not stopped rule-bending. The best way to gain access to the resources of this region is to get a toehold and act as if you own the place. With the Antarctic Treaty expected to come up for review in 2048, resource hungry nations are ramping up their efforts to be a part of Antarctica to stake claims for the natural resources of this continent.

Areas of Concern

Since 1961, a number of countries have shown an interest in establishing their scientific outposts in Antarctica as it provides an environment for research that cannot be otherwise conducted anywhere else. These include disciplines such as biology and medicine, atmospheric, earth and ocean sciences and aeronomy and astrophysics with an aim to understand the global environmental issues such as climate change, ozone depletion and sea level rise.

This has allowed 68 bases to be established by various countries. While these bases have originally been established for peaceful scientific research the ban on militarisation is widely flouted. For instance, the US, Chile and Argentina, are known to maintain a permanent army presence on the Antarctic mainland while some countries maintaining military deployment or using civilian security contractors for military activities do not report them. Furthermore, dual-use scientific research by China has been reported by the Australian government. [6] Such activities are a reason of concern especially for countries in close proximity to Antarctica such as Australia. Though there are provisions of inspecting the existing facilities by other nations for exchange of ideas and scientific advances and to ensure that militarisation does not happen, these inspections are not regular and when conducted are done with caution.



Source: *The Maritime Executive*

ANTARCTICA

Another area of concern is the likely relaxation of the existing embargo for resource extraction (article 7) during the 2048 review. While one may argue that even with such relaxation actual resource extraction may not be immediately feasible due to the existing temperatures and the thickness of ice on the continent, it would open doors for commercial activities that would impact the existing fragile ecosystem with the resulting impact unknown to humanity.

Yet another concern area is the reducing scientific interactions between countries due to the changing priorities and philosophies. It is essential that countries stationed in Antarctica encourage such exchanges for understanding the atmosphere and climate change impacts which are likely to seriously impact the very existence of humanity in the years to come.

Future of Antarctica

The Antarctic Treaty ensured that Antarctic is preserved for the benefit of humanity. However, a growing demand for resources and the greed and hunger of humanity may not allow the preserve to stay so for long. While scientific research in this region should be encouraged, exploitation of resources needs to be avoided. Since the present needs of humanity for minerals and food resources can easily be met through dedicated efforts towards Circular Economy and Sustainability, it is essential that the growing intentions of nations to exploit the Antarctic for natural resources is disallowed. As nations across the world are divided over the principles of exploitation of natural resources, it is essential that consensus is built to ensure that Antarctic is retained as a preserve and resource exploitation and militarisation is disallowed as envisaged by the original treaty.

[1] Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States and USSR (12 nations)

[2] Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, and Uruguay (17 nations)

[3] Austria, Belarus, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Costa Rica, Columbia, Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Iceland, Malaysia, Mongolia, Monaco, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Turkey, and Venezuela (27 nations)

[4] Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Application for scar associate membership, www.scar.org/scar_media/documents/meetings/33scar2014/33_WP05b_IR_Iran_Application.pdf

[5] Jacobs, Frank, (2010, Jul 23), How Iran could claim a slice of Antarctica, Big Think, <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/207-antarctica-but-sliced-differently/>

[6] Feiger, L. and Wilson, M., (2020, May 15), The Countries Taking Advantage of Antarctica During the Pandemic, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/05/antarctica-great-power-competition-australia-united-states-britain-russia-china-arctic/611674/>