



CENTRE FOR
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STUDIES
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GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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**2+2 Dialogue:
India & US To
Deepen
Defence
Cooperation.
MQ9B Drones,
Stryker
Discussed**

***Biden Hails
'New Era' Of
Ties Between
US And
Indonesia***

**India's Kaladan
Project at Risk as
Rebels Overrun
40 Myanmar
Army Positions in
Rakhine State**

**IDF Stepping Up
Netanyahu Plans Security
Control Over Gaza For
'Indefinite' Time**

**China, Australia
Can Become
'Trusting' Partners,
Xi Says**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FLASH POINTS/ MAJOR POWERS

Israel-Palestine Conflict	1
<i>Ms Anamitra Banerjee, Research Assistant</i>	
Russia-Ukraine Conflict	8
<i>Gp Capt Amitabh Mathur (Retd), Senior Fellow</i>	
USA	11
<i>AVM Sanjay Bhatnagar, VM, VSM (Retd), Senior Fellow</i>	

NEIGHBOURHOOD SPOTLIGHT

China	14
<i>Col Tushar Mittal, Senior Fellow</i>	
Nepal/Bangladesh/Myanmar	18
<i>Col VN Shukla, VSM, Senior Fellow</i>	
Pakistan	24
<i>Wg Cdr Vishal Jain, Senior Fellow</i>	
Indian Ocean Region	27
<i>Col Ajay Thakur, VSM, Senior Fellow</i>	

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Africa	28
<i>Col Jagat Singh, Senior Fellow</i>	
ASEAN	31
<i>Col Sudhir Tokas, Senior Fellow</i>	
Indo-Pacific	35
<i>Dr Ulupi Borah, Senior Fellow</i>	
Australia	34
<i>Ms Arijita Sinha Roy, Research Assistant & Publications Manager</i>	
Europe	40
<i>Capt (IN) (Dr) Nitin Agarwala, Senior Fellow</i>	

IDF Stepping Up Netanyahu Plans Security Control Over Gaza For 'Indefinite' Time

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-11-07/netanyahu-plans-security-control-over-gaza-for-indefinite-time>

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he sees his country having security control over Gaza for an indefinite period, suggesting it will maintain that role even after fighting in the besieged territory ends.

COMMENTS

Key Developments So Far

Following the events of October 7, the declaration of "War" effectively authorized Israel's increased offensive towards Hamas, launching airstrikes on Gaza, declaring a "complete siege" in the region, cutting off the supplies of fresh food, water, and fuel. The Ground operations by Israel in Northern Gaza since 27th October have left thousands dead, besides Israeli claims of several Hamas leaders being killed. There appears to be no deal for release of hostages thus far, even as the worrisome humanitarian crisis in Gaza grows unabated. . Concerns over the possibility of the conflict spreading across the region have triggered a flurry of diplomatic parleys and UN resolutions. ,However, in the cold calculations of Hamas' leaders, the loss of civilian lives is the inevitable cost of a tremendous victory — breaking the existing status quo and the beginning of amore violent episode in their battle with Israel.

Military Operations

In the past few days, combined aerial, naval, and ground IDF forces have executed coordinated intelligence led operations, striking multiple terror targets in Gaza, West Bank & Lebanon, including operational command centers, terror network and rocket infrastructure, weapons and logistics depots, launch posts, terror tunnels and numerous Hamas terrorists.

Gaza: The IDF declared on 15th November 2023, that they had entered the premises of Gaza's flagship healthcare facility, al-Shifa. The White House spokesperson acknowledged shortly thereafter that US intelligence agencies supported Israel's assertions that Hamas was running operations within the medical facility.[1] The move to push soldiers into al-Shifa hospital raised concerns demanding a cease-fire. Israel's former deputy prime minister. Gideon Sa'ar stated that Israel could potentially consent to a brief truce in Gaza to allow the return of hostages held by Hamas [2].

[1] Sinmaz, E., & Burke, J. (2023, November 16). Israeli soldiers raid al-Shifa hospital in escalation of Gaza offensive. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/15/idf-entered-gaza-al-shifa-hospital-raid-targeted-operation-hamas>

[2] EXCLUSIVE: Israeli minister says 'temporary ceasefire' will happen if hostages are freed - Jewish News. (2023, November 15). Jewish News. <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/exclusive-israeli-minister-says-temporary-ceasefire-in-return-for-hostages-will-happen/>

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

According to the IDF report on 14th November 2023,' the troops launched a ground offensive into Al-Shifa Hospital, to have purportedly discovered evidence – especially ammunition – indicating Hamas is operating from the hospital. Both Hamas and medical personnel have challenged these claims. Throughout the outbreak of the conflict, the IDF has targeted more than fifteen thousand Hamas positions in Gaza and discovered 6000 munitions, including anti-tank missile launchers, anti-aircraft missiles, rockets and mortars, explosives, ammunition, and other weapons. Troops have also eliminated terrorists with the swift and effective information from multiple sources with the help of dozens of ADANIM (Division & Brigade level Intelligence Integration centres). Israeli Navy's Unit for Underwater Missions ("Yaltam") have discovered hundreds of military gear and weapons in the Gazan coastal zone indicating a substantial quantity of munitions are being used by Hamas.

West Bank: The IDF reported the strikes aimed at armed militias in the latest rise of hostilities on the West Bank. More than 178 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the 7 October attack against Israel. [3] With Israel enforcing broad and often severe restrictions on Palestinian communities, in addition to assaults by radical Israelis, violent skirmishes have occurred between the IDF and Palestinians in the West Bank.

Source: The Times of Israel



The IDF has stated that it attacked Jenin midnight on 8th November, discovering and eliminating an assortment of homemade explosives. As the attack proceeded until daylight, groups opened fire on IDF troops, prompting the launch of an IDF airstrike. [4]

Lebanon, Yemen and Resistance Elements: In reaction to the recent assaults, IDF fighter jets attacked a number of Hezbollah terror sites and installations in Lebanon. Hezbollah reportedly launched multiple missiles from Lebanon on the Mount Dov region of northern Israel. In retaliation, Israeli fighter jets attacked the terrorist cell and launch pads in Lebanon. The new Israeli airstrikes came amid increasing hostility across the Lebanon-Israel frontier where rocket assaults have been continuing since October 8 between the IDF and Hezbollah and other proxies. While no fatalities were reported in the strike on Kiryat Shmona, few Israeli citizens were killed by Hezbollah missile strikes on Kibbutz Yiftah in Israel's northern region. Hassan Nasrallah, the supreme leader of Hezbollah, stated in a televised statement on 3rd Nov 2023 that Israeli assaults on Lebanese civilians will be answered with retaliatory assaults on Israeli civilians. [5]

[3] Beaumont, P., & Kierszenbaum, Q. (2023, November 10). Israeli forces kill 18 Palestinians in daytime raid in West Bank. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/10/israeli-forces-kill-palestinians-in-daytime-raid-in-west-bank>

[4] 14 killed in West Bank city of Jenin after Israeli incursion, Palestinian health ministry says. (2023, November 15). CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/11/10/middleeast/palestinians-killed-west-bank-jenin-israel-incursion-hnk-intl/index.html>

The Houthis movement announced that it has deployed a "large batch" of cruise and ballistic missiles, in addition to drones, to target Israeli sites in southern Israel. According to the IDF, its aerial defence systems destroyed a surface-to-surface missile launched towards Israel near the Red Sea. It additionally claimed to have detected several "aerial threats" within its vicinity, all of which were intercepted. The shooting of a MQ9 Reaper drone, an important component of the American military's ISR aircraft, marked the latest in a series of clashes involving Americans and Iran-backed proxy groups operating in Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

Special forces soldiers from the United States are deployed in Israel and proactively assisting the Israelis in a variety of domains, potentially with an aim to "track down hostages, including American detainees." The Biden administration back home, has faced criticism in Congress for not disclosing information regarding American ammunition transfers to Israel during the war, an effort to bypass congressional notification demands, which would permit legislators to voice objections.

Hostage Release Negotiations

As per unconfirmed reports, Hamas holds approximately 180 hostages, Palestinian Islamic Jihad holds about forty hostages, and 20 odd are held by unaffiliated individuals, exacerbating the bargains considerably, as the Qatari intermediaries' connections are primarily with Hamas's political figures internationally, who were primarily excluded by the Hamas military commanders in Gaza. Israeli air strikes have reportedly claimed the lives of 20 captives, but no additional information has been provided by Hamas leadership. [6]

Hamas and Israel have started engaging in preliminary discussions to reach a deal on hostage release. [7] As per Qatari mediators participating in the negotiations, the proposed solution concentrates largely on facilitating the release of around 50 women and children out of the 240 hostages being held in Gaza. Hamas is seeking a three-to-five-day pause, increased aid delivery for Gaza, and exchange of some 50 women and children detainees from Israeli security prisons. Reports allude to a brief meeting taking place on 9th November 2023 among the CIA and Mossad leadership alongside Qatar's premier in Doha [1] to negotiate the terms for a compromise for hostage release and a halt in Hamas-Israel hostilities in Gaza. Turkey is additionally in negotiations with Hamas to ensure the safe return of foreigners, individuals, and children as the United States and Europe had sought Ankara's assistance in obtaining their release.

[5] Bachega, B. H. (2023, November 3). Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah makes first speech on Israel-Gaza war. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67304185>

[6] Ibid

[7] Ani. (2023, November 16). Hamas and Israel nearing agreement on hostage release, pending Israeli approval. The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/hamas-and-israel-nearing-agreement-on-hostage-release-pending-israeli-approval/articleshow/105274865.cms>

[8] Reuters. (2023d, November 9). Mossad, CIA chiefs meet Qatar PM in Doha on Gaza hostage deal -source. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/mossad-cia-chiefs-meet-with-qatar-pm-doha-over-hostage-deal-source-2023-11-09/>

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

The United Kingdom is also in talks with regional allies in order to guarantee the release of hostages. Argentina is in contact with Israeli intelligence personnel in order to find Argentine captives. The Germans began an inquiry into Hamas militants for alleged killing, rape, and capture of hostages [9]

These conversations have drawn a lot of interest from US authorities [10] and the White House staff, highlighting their direct involvement in the parleys. The US has stressed that its initiatives are focused on assisting hostage release and establishing a significant pause in warfighting.

Some reports have also circulated about a settlement negotiated by Doha for the immediate release of 10-15 hostages as a condition for temporary pauses in the conflict. However, Israelis have reportedly persistently rejected them. PM Netanyahu dismissed the accusations as "passive speculations" stating "no compromise until the return of the detainees." [11] His remarks were open ended with the prospect of temporary humanitarian pauses and a possible agreement for a specific number of hostages.



Source: Human Rights Watch

Humanitarian Issues

As reported by medical authority in Gaza, the Israeli operations have caused the death toll to shoot over 11000 [12]. Hamas missiles directed towards Israel have elicited outburst

[9] Reuters. (2023e, October 20). Hamas hostages: what we know so far. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/what-do-we-now-about-hamas-hostages-2023-10-19/>

[10] Jazeera, A. (2023c, November 16). Are Israel and Hamas nearing a 'hostage' deal? What to know. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/16/are-israel-and-hamas-nearing-a-hostage-deal-what-to-know>

[11] Heads of Mossad, CIA talk hostages in Qatar; terror group issues clips of 2 captives. (2023, November 9). The Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/heads-of-mossad-cia-talk-hostages-in-qatar-terror-group-issues-clips-of-2-captives/>

[12] Stepansky, J. (2023, November 7). Israel-Hamas war live updates: Gaza hospital on brink of shutting down. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2023/11/6/israel-hamas-live-news-communications-blackout-across-gaza>

of rage from UN shelters inside Gaza City in the last few weeks. [13]

With the Israel-Hamas conflict in its second month, stranded residents are battling to live in the absence of electricity and running water. Palestinians who escaped Israel's ground offensive, are experiencing an acute shortage of medical supplies and food. The number of casualties cannot be independently confirmed and is thought to include individuals from terrorist organisations as well as civilians killed by inaccurate Palestinian missiles. Israel has consistently charged Hamas of employing people as human shields. Over 500,000 refugees are crammed into clinics and UN classrooms, packed with litter, and infested with insects, these makeshift schools have grown into an ideal environment for serious illnesses in the Gaza's south. The IDF declared that it had set up evacuation pathways for people and issued Hamas-run Gaza administration twelve hours' warning that all armed activity within the hospital must cease. [14] Further IDF reports allude to having sent essential medical supplies and incubators for the patients trapped inside. Emergencies and dormitories are overcrowded, forcing physicians and nurses to attend to injured and sick individuals in hallways, on the ground, and outside the hospitals. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has documented even larger numbers of homeless Palestinians, claiming that 1,149 persons from 15 shepherd groups were forced to flee due to Israeli operations [15]

The chief of the UNWRA issued a warning of a " effort to choke " its activities in Gaza, claiming that a scarcity of energy threatens to effectively shut down any humanitarian activity. [16] Israelis have refused to permit energy supplies to the beleaguered area, claiming that they might be used for arming Hamas. UNRWA reportedly received 23,000 litres with Israel having restricted the supplies through Rafah only. Humanitarian situations have apparently worsened significantly, with 70% of those living in southern Gaza being without a reliable supply of drinking water, and untreated waste has begun to pour into public spaces. Palestinian telecommunications firms had to shut down their services due to "all the energy supplies running out, dragging the Gaza Strip in a communications blackout and severely impeding the operations of rescue personnels and medical professionals.

Diplomatic- Regional and Global Efforts

Regional: The Arabs are eager to push for measures to stop the war, yet the efforts seem inadequate. With the recent meeting between 22-member Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on November 11th in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the plight of Palestinians has engaged the Arab nations in a manner that the misery of Sudanese, Yemenis,

[13] In Gaza, growing signs of anger at Hamas as residents fight for food, battle diseases. (2021, November 12). The Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-gaza-growing-signs-of-anger-at-hamas-as-residents-fight-for-food-battle-diseases/>

[14] IDF says Hamas blocked fuel delivery to Shifa Hospital as troops advance in Gaza. (2023, November 12). The Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/troops-advance-in-north-gaza-as-battles-continue-near-shifa-hospital>

[15] Facing violence and harassment, hundreds of Palestinians flee West Bank villages. (2023, November 16). The Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/facing-violence-and-harassment-hundreds-of-palestinians-flee-west-bank-villages/>

[16] Gritten, B. D. (2023, November 16). Gaza faces communications blackout due to lack of fuel. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67441025>

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Yemen's Houthi Movement leadership was critical of the Arab and Muslim countries for allegedly failing to avert Israel's attacks in Gaza, further condemning Arabs of acting oblivious to Israeli operations in Palestine and of silently collaborating with American interests. Egypt's stance has attracted greater interest compared to other Arab nations due to its geopolitical influence and since it happens to be the sole Arab state linked to the Gaza Strip. The Israeli offensive in Gaza and death of thousands of civilians, Egypt's unofficial posture has shifted, mobilising the press and the streets against Israeli invasion.



Source: The Strait Times

Simultaneously, some Arab governments opposed the resolution to react to the conflict by attempting to cut off energy supplies to Israel and its partners, and by terminating trade and diplomatic connections with Israelis that many Arab League countries have. Reports allude, more hardline recommendations might have stopped the shipment of American weapons to Israel via bases in Arab nations; prohibited air travel to Israel using Arab countries' airspace; and established an alliance to compel western nations in signing a truce. [17]

Global. The joint meeting between Xi and Biden on 15th Nov 2023, saw the Middle Eastern crisis as one of the top agenda, with Biden asking Xi to use influence to ensure that Iranians stay to stay clear of the conflict, to obviate further escalation. With Biden's constant backing for Israel, particularly the recent bid for over fourteen billion dollars in extra funding - the war in the Middle East, and its global and local ramifications are extremely important, given that American presidential elections are round the corner.

Implications for India: New Delhi's position is apparent from the last two UN votes - the administration maintains its consistent backing for the Palestinian cause and a two-state solution. Whereas India abstained from a proposal requesting for a cessation to conflict two weeks prior since it failed to address Hamas's campaign of terror, it voted for the adoption of five of six annual draft resolutions at UNGA' condemning Israeli settlements in Palestinian West Bank, and endorsed the UNRWA functioning in Gaza. Infact, one of the key takeaways during the fifth edition of the "2+2 India-US Ministerial Dialogue" held at New Delhi between 11th-13th Nov 2023, was the growing alignment of Indian and American interests in West Asia.

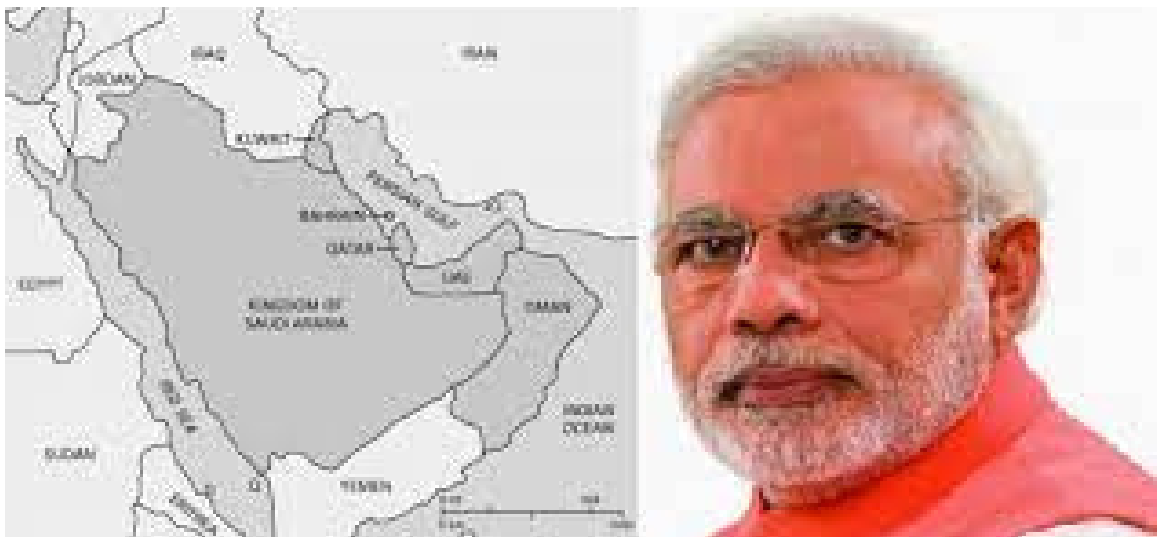
[17] Muslim leaders blast Israeli 'crimes'; Iran: Solution is Palestine from river to sea. (2023, November 11). The Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/muslim-leaders-blast-israeli-crimes-iran-solution-is-palestine-from-river-to-sea/>

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Both the countries were unequivocal in opposing Hamas terror, highlighting Israel's legitimacy in defending the nation, while adhering to the global norms, advocating for pauses in IDF's offensives, advocating the release of hostages, declaring additional supplies to the Gaza Strip, and pushing for long term peace in the region.

With West Asia being mired in Israel-Hamas conflict, India's **Middle East Policy** is caught between a 'friend Israel', a 'friendly Middle Eastern neighbourhood' and the 'Palestinian friendship'. The defence partnership between Israel and India is a major pillar of the bilateral relationship. Indian foreign policy needs to very adroitly navigate the global system being split between US-aligned governments and an axis" emerging between China, Iran and Russia; besides preserving its deepening relations with West Asian countries, regardless of their divides. The Voice of Global South Summit reinforced the voices for halting the hostilities, rescuing Israeli hostages, and post-conflict alternatives for Gaza and Palestinians. India's voice, which has been widely recognised for being robust and fair on these topics, could serve as a mediator, while reaffirming India's unwavering dedication to nations in need. The region's ongoing crisis, if prolonged and frozen, could turn into a regional war that will only exacerbate the global tensions - and the prospect of an all-out war.

Further analysis of the war will be continued in the upcoming scan.



Source: Middle East Institute

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

1. *Reuters* https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukrainian-troops-battle-exhaustion-war-drags-into-second-winter-2023-11-03/?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-formally-withdraws-key-post-cold-war-european-armed-forces-treaty-2023-11-03/> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-says-russians-intensify-bombardment-avdiivka-2023-11-03/>
2. *The Economist*: <https://www.economist.com/the-world-in-brief>
3. *The Indian Express*: <https://theprint.in/world/whats-the-nuclear-test-ban-treaty-what-happens-now-that-russias-revoked-its-ratification/1831139/>
4. *TIME*: <https://time.com/6330445/demining-ukraine/>
5. *Deccan Herald*: <https://www.deccanherald.com/world/russias-putin-meets-military-top-brass-to-discuss-ukraine-war-2765732>
6. *Eurasian Times*: <https://www.eurasantimes.com/after-s-400-losses-in-luhansk-crimea-russia-may-relocate/>
7. *Toi*: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/105090199.cms?from=mdr&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst
8. *Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, came under air attack on Saturday, and big explosions were heard*
9. *Deccan Herald at*: <https://www.deccanherald.com/world/ukraines-capital-kyiv-under-air-attack-blasts-heard-2766972>

UKRAINIAN OFFENSIVE

Ukrainians are using drones and AI, which combines thermal, hyperspectral, and magnetometer sensors to detect mines from a low altitude and transmit that information back to sappers operating from a secure location to clear Russian landmines. In recent weeks, Ukrainian forces have specifically singled out Russia's advanced and expensive air defence systems. For instance, towards the end of October, reports claimed Ukraine destroyed four S-400 systems, probably using its new weapons: the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) acquired from the United States.

Sharing his first comprehensive assessment of the campaign with *The Economist* in an interview this week, Ukraine's commander-in-chief, General Valery Zaluzhny, said that the battlefield reminds him of the great conflict of a century ago. "Just like in the First World War, we have reached the level of technology that puts us into a stalemate," he says. The General concludes that breaking the deadlock would take a massive technological leap to break the deadlock. It has also undercut General Zaluzhny's assumption that he could stop Russia by bleeding its troops. "That was my mistake. Russia has lost at least 150,000 dead. In any other country, such casualties would have stopped the war." Instead, he has watched his troops get stuck in minefields on the approaches to Bakhmut in the east, his Western-supplied equipment getting pummelled by Russian artillery and drones.

On Nov 09, 2023, President Zelensky emphasised that Ukraine will not make any concessions to Russia to obtain a ceasefire. This followed an interview that the commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, gave *The Economist*, in which he said that the war was at a "stalemate." Zelensky has since rejected the General's view and denied reports that Ukraine is under pressure regarding negotiations over the war. According to the country's energy minister, Ukraine has enough energy resources to survive the winter.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT



Source: [The Economist, 1a-year-after-its-liberation-Kherson-still-knows-fear-and-defiance. html](https://www.economist.com/ukraine/2023/11/08/a-year-after-its-liberation-kherson-still-knows-fear-and-defiance)

RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, came under air attack on Nov 11, 2023, and big explosions were heard. Nov 11, 2023, marks one year since Ukraine's troops liberated Kherson, a city on the shores of the Dnieper, from Russian forces. But the Ukraine's counteroffensive has failed to dislodge Russians from the Dnieper's left bank. From across the river, Russians are firing shells on Kherson and its outskirts at an increasing pace. Russia has bulked up its forces around the devastated city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine and has switched its troops from defence to offence.

Fighting gripped the area around the shattered eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka, Ukraine's military said on Nov 14, 2023, with Moscow's forces intensifying air bombardments and trying to move forward with ground forces. On Nov 08, 2023, Russia deployed 3 Kalibr missile-carrying vessels in the Black Sea. Kalibr cruise missiles are generally fired on high-value targets like Ukraine's port cities from Russian warships and submarines. . On Nov 07, 2023, Russia formally withdrew from a landmark security treaty that limited critical categories of conventional armed forces, blaming the United States for undermining post-Cold War security by enlarging the NATO military alliance. The 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), signed a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, placed verifiable limits on categories of conventional military equipment that NATO and the then-Warsaw Pact could deploy. Russian cyber spies, the hacking group ~ "Sandworm", were responsible for a recent attack on the Ukrainian Power Grid. Sandworm, a Russian GRU military Intelligence agency cyberattack unit, has been previously linked to similar attacks on Ukraine's power network.

COMMENTS

A staggering one-third of Ukrainian territory is thought to be littered with millions of unexploded mines and cluster bombs, as well as trop widebody traps and shell fragments. Ukrainians are using drones, which use a combination of thermal, hyperspectral, and magnetometer sensors to detect mines from a low altitude and transmit that information back to sappers operating from a secure location.

Russia suspended participation in the CFE treaty in 2007 and halted active involvement in 2015. More than a year after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin in May signed a decree denouncing the Pact. Russia said the U.S. push for enlargement of NATO had led to alliance countries "openly circumventing" the treaty's group restrictions. It added that the admission of Finland into NATO and Sweden's application meant the treaty was dead.

The Ukrainian summer counteroffensive did have some success, especially in the Black Sea, where a combination of drones and missiles badly weakened Russia's navy and forced some of its ships to leave the Crimean port of Sebastopol. But the progress on land was slow. The conflict is slowly approaching a stalemate, and combining new technologies can help achieve success. The Ukraine conflict has shown that the ability of a nation to exploit time is one of the most critical considerations in the planning and execution of military and other national security activities. One trend is shared in the conflict between Ukraine and Israel: states in the international system typically unite to oppose overt acts of aggression, but no country wants the conflict to expand to other parts despite all the noises being made in the media.



Source: Bloomberg

2+2 Dialogue: India & US To Deepen Defence Cooperation. MQ9B Drones, Stryker Discussed

<https://theprint.in/diplomacy/22-dialogue-india-us-to-deepen-defence-cooperation-mq9b-drones-stryker-discussed/1840641/>

Defence Secretary says India-US want to co-develop, co-produce equipment required by the 2 nations, adding that production plan will be drawn up once army's military's needs are finalised.

COMMENTS



Source: The Hindu

The 2+2 Ministerial meetings have been held annually with the US leaders since 2018. Indo US relations have grown from strength to strength over the last decade, with significant personal drive and commitment from the top leadership of both the nations. On November 10, 2023, the two nations held their fifth 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi. The Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met their counterparts from the US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

This dialogue was held under unprecedented urgent global challenges of violent Hamas-Israel conflict in the Middle East, ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and situation in the Indo-Pacific in view of China's assertive behavior in recent maritime incidents in the South China Seas (SCS) with Philippines and Taiwan. This dialogue thus assumed utmost significance, coming up especially a few days prior to the forthcoming Biden Xi meeting at APEC. Dialogue brought out that the Indo-Pacific remains a priority is very evident from the statements post the dialogue. During a media briefing, Austin highlighted that both parties engaged in discussions regarding the escalating security challenges presented by China. He emphasised that India and the US share a mutual objective of promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific. Both the US Ministers underlined their strong commitment to safeguarding a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific through mechanisms like the Quad.

Dangers of terrorism and its fallout was discussed. The ministers deliberated on events unfolding in various regions, reiterated that India and the US stand with Israel against terrorism and called for adherence to international humanitarian law, including with regard to the protection of civilians. They called for the immediate release of all remaining hostages. They also expressed support for humanitarian pauses and committed to continue close diplomatic coordination, including with key partners in the region, to prevent the conflict from spreading to meet the urgent needs of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

The Ministers unequivocally condemned terrorism and violent extremism and the use of terrorist proxies and logistical, financial or military support to terrorist organizations, which could be used to launch or plan terrorist attacks, including international attacks. Both reiterated their condemnation of the 26/11 Mumbai attack and the Pathankot attack and called for bringing the perpetrators of these attacks to justice.

India and the US also urged the Taliban to respect the human rights of all Afghans, including women, children, and members of minority groups and uphold freedom of travel. As part of the military cooperation futuristic roadmap, India has been purchasing various military equipment. However, in the last few years, India is looking forward to co-develop and coproduce weapons and military hardware.

"Today, we agreed to move forward with the co-production of armoured infantry vehicles. We also discussed steps that we can take to strengthen our supply chain security and integrate the provision of goods and services from US and Indian firms," he said.

US Defence Secretary had said that India and the US would coproduce infantry combat vehicles as part of the defence industrial cooperation, Stryker infantry combat vehicle, manufactured by General Dynamics Land Systems is under consideration. The Stryker is an eight-wheeled armoured vehicles that can transport infantry and use different weapons, engineering and electronic systems. He also brought out that various steps to strengthen mutual supply chain security and integrate the provision of goods and services from US and Indian firms have been discussed. During the PM Modi's state visit to the US in June, India had announced acquisition of 31 MQ-9B High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) drones. Now, India has extended a Letter of Request (LoR) and is awaiting a response from the US. This purchase is estimated to be USD 3 Bn under the Foreign Military Sales agreement from the US based General Atomics Aeronautical System.

The US agreed to supply GE-F414 aero engines for the LCA Tejas Mk-2 aircraft under production by the India aerospace major company the HAL. Commercial agreements and legal provisions are being negotiated. Both sides recommitted to accelerating investment in India's growing maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) sector, for civil aircraft maintenance, repairs of unmanned aerial vehicles and mid-voyage repair of US naval vessels. They welcomed commitments from the US industry to further increase India's capabilities in these fields.



Source: *The Indian Express*

In order to further enhance technological partnership, building on PM Modi's state visit in June this year, discussions were held to finalise Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA), which will further integrate the defence industrial ecosystems of both countries while strengthening supply chain resilience. Both sides commended the partnership under the US-India Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) since its launch in June 2023. Both sides were optimistic that INDUS-X joint challenges initiative will soon unleash the talent and innovative drive of commercial sectors in both countries and strengthen the respective defence industry ecosystems.

Taking advances in interoperability to facilitate seamless communication and cooperation between the armed forces, leading to India's full membership of the multinational Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), located in Bahrain, in a significant development, both countries formalised the decision to assign an IN officer of the rank of Commander as a liaison officer at Bahrain facility.

Overall, the 2+2 Ministerial Level dialogue offered an opportunity for India to leverage and build on its capabilities as an equal partner, with an effort to consolidate its place in the emerging world order. The dialogue also offered an opportunity to coordinate the forthcoming visit of President Biden to India for a Quad Summit and Republic Day celebrations.

What Did Biden And Xi's 'Candid' Meeting Accomplish?

https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react-what-did-biden-and-xis-candid-meeting-accomplish/?mkt_tok=NjU5LVdaWC0wNzUAAAGPeZtHBo7bVej0FxUE-LbxU48GtLY8QIWUpZ8_wNMb3WWT4LAFP83y_fNLTZM1Nwi84KFBl6160-LH7ghEPVkeIj16Fqd6z3zejZiT-h8tqD3A9g

Chinese leader Xi Jinping met US President Joe Biden at an estate outside of San Francisco, during the ongoing Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit. In his opening remarks, Biden said that while the two leaders often disagreed, he appreciated that conversations with Xi were often "candid, straightforward, and useful." There was certainly a lot to talk about, from the Israel-Hamas conflict and Russia's war in Ukraine to North Korea's nuclear arsenal, and from artificial intelligence (AI) risks to a raft of trade disputes. But specific outcomes (at least those shared publicly) were mostly limited to a reopened military-to-military hotline and new coordination to curb fentanyl trafficking from China.

COMMENTS

At least for the time being, Biden seemed to have made the most of his meeting with Xi, which met the admittedly low standard for success. Xi was able to get the necessary optics from the meeting, such as Biden's kind welcome and handshake upon Xi's arrival, which encouraged him to have more open conversations. The gathering provided Xi with an abundance of images to utilise in an effort to attract foreign investors back to the Chinese market, which is one of Xi's top priorities as he works to strengthen the Chinese economy.



Source: Nikkei Asia

Despite low expectations from the summit, the summit has produced positive results in the field of military contacts, AI and on cooperation on climate change. The meeting provided an opportunity for both parties to underline their differences and areas where they could not come to an agreement, which observers say will continue to define their acrimonious relationship even though it helped to enhance conversation and cooperation. Furthermore, there is still loose ground even in the areas where the two sides have managed to reach a consensus. The Biden administration had long advocated for the restoration of military communications, and China finally announced that they would restart "on the basis of equality and respect." Wen-Ti Sung, a military expert, explained that this meant that in the future, China

might declare that it was ending military-to-military talks once more and blame the US for no longer making China feel "respected."

Dozens Of Chinese Ships Chase Philippine Vessels As US Renews Warning It Will Defend Its Treaty Ally

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/dozens-of-chinese-ships-chase-philippine-vessels-as-us-renews-warning-it-will-defend-its-treaty-ally/articleshow/105152833.cms>

As a US Navy surveillance plane flew in circles, keeping a close watch, dozens of Chinese coast guard and accompanying ships chased and encircled Philippine vessels in the latest confrontation in one of the most dangerous flash points in the South China Sea. At the height of Friday's four-hour faceoff in the high seas, a Chinese coast guard ship blasted a water cannon toward a Philippine motorboat delivering food and other supplies to Filipino forces at a marooned, rusting warship that serves as the country's fragile territorial outpost at Second Thomas Shoal. At least 38 Chinese ships were spotted in Second Thomas Shoal's vicinity including a Chinese navy fast assault craft and a hospital ship, the Philippine coast guard. One of the Philippine coast guard ships, the BRP Cabra, was surrounded five times by the Chinese Coast Guard and other ships, but managed each time to move away until it was hemmed in near the Shoal.

Despite the Chinese blockades and coercive maneuvers, the Philippine contingent managed to deliver supplies to the handful of Filipino marines aboard the BRP Sierra Madre and left without incident. The slightly listing Philippine warship, donated by the U.S., has been crumbling with age but is still actively commissioned, meaning an armed attack would be considered by Manila as an act of war. Two Associated Press journalists and several other members of the media who were invited on board three Philippine coast guard ships securing two supply boats witnessed the dangerous cat-and-mouse maneuvers in rough waves. It's part of a shame campaign Philippine officials said they would press on to expose China's growing aggression in one of the world's most important trade routes.

COMMENTS

Based on historical documents going back about 4,000 years, to the Xia dynasty, China asserts sovereignty over almost the whole South China Sea, including the Second Thomas Shoal. China has resolutely maintained its claim to almost the whole critical waterway, provoking conflict with its smaller neighbours and attracting the US, which is China's principal opponent in the Asia-Pacific area as well as Manila's treaty partner. Analysts believe that an armed conflict will be further sparked by these ongoing conflicts at Second Thomas Shoal. According to the Philippines, it is evident that they will never initiate a major battle. However, they will not back down from upholding the nation's sovereign rights in the South China Sea. It seems that the campaign to expose China's aggression at sea would continue. It seems that effort in transparency initiative of Philippines have been very successful in rallying support from the international community to condemn the illegal actions of China. USA reacted to Friday's

confrontation by repeating that it stands with its oldest ally in Asia "in the face of the People's Republic of China's repeated harassment in the South China Sea."

The U.S. State Department renewed a warning that Washington is obligated to defend the Philippines under a 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty if Filipino forces, public vessels or aircraft, including those of its coast guard "face an armed attack. The PRC's actions are inconsistent with international law and follow a pattern of dangerous operational behavior in the South China Sea, as per US in a statement. It cited a 2016 international arbitration decision that invalidated China's expansive claims to the waterway on historic grounds, including Second Thomas Shoal. China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a 10-nation bloc that includes the Philippines, have stepped up efforts to hasten negotiations for a nonaggression pact called a code of conduct that aims to prevent war from breaking out in the South China Sea. But the skirmishes at Second Thomas Shoal would likely continue on a regular basis with Chinese ships, including its navy, surrounding the shoal and the Philippines vowing to defend it at all cost and keep its forces there.

Philippines Jumps Off The Belt And Road Bandwagon: Is Xi Jinping's BRI Exploitative?

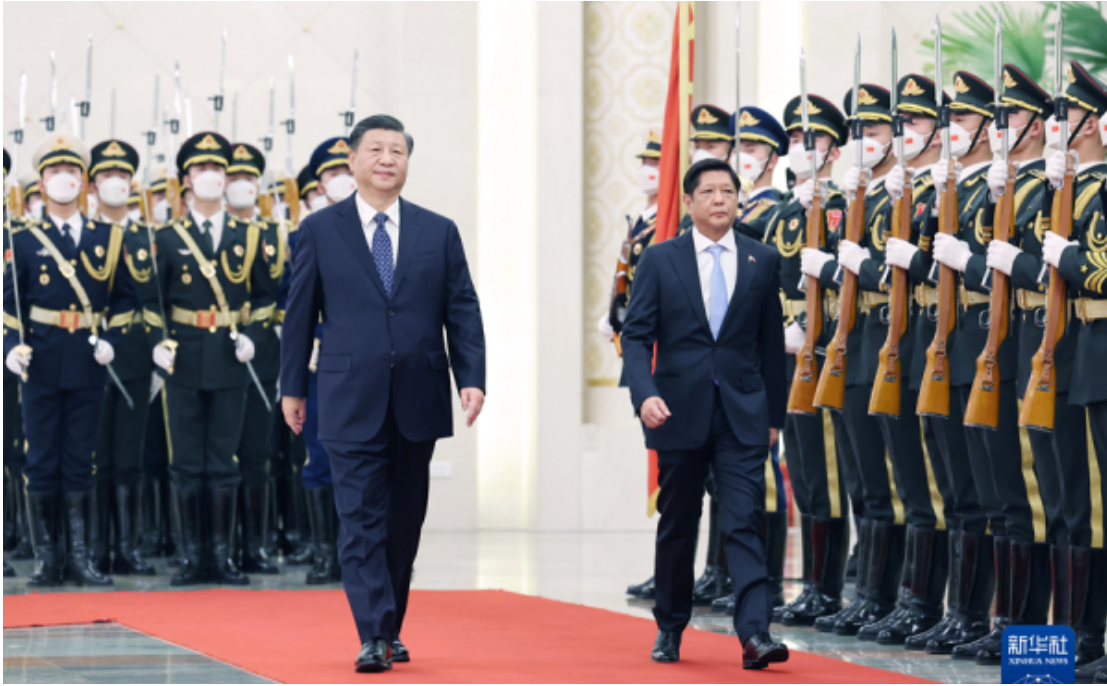
<https://www.wionews.com/world/first-italy-now-philippines-jumps-off-the-belt-and-road-bandwagon-is-xi-jinpings-bri-exploitative-655395>

The Philippines has delivered a significant blow to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by opting to exit the trillion-dollar infrastructure project of President Xi Jinping. The announcement followed a recent collision between a Philippines boat and a Chinese coastguard vessel in the South China Sea. Furthermore, China's military alleged that a Philippines military ship entered waters near Scarborough Shoal without permission. The Philippines' decision comes on the heels of the grand Belt and Road Initiative Summit in Beijing where President Xi welcomed leaders and delegates from over 140 nations to commemorate the project's decade-long journey.

COMMENTS

The "full termination" of multiple significant infrastructure projects that were previously partnered with China was declared by the Department of Transportation in the Philippines. Rather, the Philippines is looking to its Western counterparts, including the Japanese, indicating that many of China's major investment projects will have a difficult time succeeding in the nation due to a variety of political and economic issues.

The ongoing tensions between China and the Philippines over their territorial claims in the South China Sea are further highlighted by this decision. China has been trying to bully over the Philippines and forcing it to accept the Chinese power in the South China Sea.



Source: FMPRC

In light of the situation, Manila made its own clear and definitive move, one that is intended to expose China's foreign policy in general as well as its pet project, the Belt and Road Initiative. The Chinese government will no longer provide funding for three projects. China's investments in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have fallen significantly short of the country's 10-year average of \$94 billion since the start of 2020, according to the most recent statistics available from the China Global Investment Tracker. Just a few weeks ago, Italy—the only G7 country involved in the BRI—announced that it will be pulling out by year's end due to project expectations not being met. A Bloomberg story claims that the BRI's total activity has dramatically dropped by 40 percent.

UN Chief Guterres meets Nepal PM Prachanda, Deputy PM Khadka

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/un-chief-guterres-meets-nepal-pm-prachanda-dpm-khadka/article67473949.ece>

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Sunday called on Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' after arriving here on official visit. Mr Guterres said that the transitional justice process in Nepal that the government is trying to conclude must help bring peace to victims, families and communities. Addressing the media after meeting Prime Minister Prachanda, the UN chief pledged the world body's support to Nepal to develop a process that meets international standards, the Supreme Court's rulings and the needs of victims - and to put it into practice. In a joint press briefing with Prime Minister Prachanda, the UN chief urged developed countries to increase support to countries like Nepal that are hard-hit by the impacts of climate change. "Nepal is also caught in a blizzard of global crises not of its making: the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation and the enormous threat posed by climate chaos," he said. He also said that much more international action is needed and the developed countries must step up to support sustainable development and help developing economies, including Nepal, to tackle the climate crisis.

COMMENTS

This four day visit of Mr Guterres to Nepal from 29 October to 01 November 2023 is his first visit to Nepal after assuming the post of UN Secretary General in 2017. The visit may be significant and may help in execution of numerous UN supported programmes in Nepal and is likely to speed up the similar support of developed countries to Nepal.

India, Bangladesh Launch Three Major Connectivity, Energy Projects

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-bangladesh-launch-three-major-connectivity-energy-projects-101698824665267.html>

India and Bangladesh on Wednesday inaugurated three major connectivity and energy projects built with Indian assistance. The projects - the Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link, the Khulna-Mongla port rail line and unit II of the Maitree super thermal power plant were jointly launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina at a virtual ceremony. Under the Modi government, India has emerged as Bangladesh's largest development partner, with a portfolio of almost \$10 billion in the form of grants and concessional loans. Addressing the ceremony, Modi emphasised the focus placed by the two countries on developing infrastructure and connectivity to meet the aspirations of their people and said that over the past nine years, both sides had launched three new bus services and as many rail services. They had also opened four new immigration check posts and launched container and parcel trains in 2022, he said. "Our collaboration in the power sector and connectivity stands out as a shining example of our win-win cooperation," Hasina said. She also highlighted her government's vision of creating an advanced, prosperous and smart Bangladesh by 2041.

“India will continue providing complete cooperation to advance your smart Bangladesh,” Modi said, noting that 12 IT parks are being built with Indian aid while the two sides had also agreed to link their payment gateways.

COMMENTS

The Akhaura - Agartala rail link is the sixth cross-border rail link, which will connect North East India to Bangladesh by rail for the first time. The Khulna-Mongla Port railway line connects Bangladesh’s second-largest port to the country’s rail network for the first time and is also connected to India via the Petrapole cross-border rail link. It will also link Mongla Port to trade centres in Dhaka and Kolkata. The Maitree super thermal power project, built under an Indian concessional financing scheme loan of \$1.6 billion, is a 1,320 MW plant located in the Khulna division of Bangladesh, meant to meet the growing energy needs of the people and businesses in Southern Bangladesh. Bangladesh finds a central place in India’s “Neighbourhood First” Policy. This bilateral cooperation has strengthened Bangladesh’s energy security and helped it move towards self-reliance. The boost in connectivity and trade between Bangladesh and India’s North Eastern states is likely to benefit both India and Bangladesh.



Source: Civils Daily

India-Japan Parries Chinese Influence with Matarbari Deep-Sea Port

<https://en.somoynews.tv/news/2023-11-12/india-japan-parries-chinese-influence-with-matarbari-deep-sea-port>

New Delhi's influence in Dhaka has helped thwart Chinese plans for a similar foothold, the Japanese media noted. India and Japan have jointly developed infrastructure projects across Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Africa as an alternative to China's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative in order to stem the spread of Beijing's influence. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opened the Matarbari deep-sea port channel and laid the foundation stone for the construction of its first terminal on Nov 11.

Some analysts are calling the port a “strategic victory” for India in a South Asian game between big powers - and as India's partner, Japan is also considered a winner here. The geopolitical importance of Matarbari was evident during Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's India visit in March as it emerged as one of the key areas for his free and open Indo-Pacific agenda. The same month, JICA agreed to extend a fresh \$1.2 billion in infrastructure construction loans to Bangladesh. Anu Anwar, a research associate at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University, argued that the “Sonadia Port deal with China did not succeed because of India's opposition. But India lacked the resources to offer an alternative to China and welcomed Japan to build the Matarbari Port, which seems to serve India's interest no less than Bangladesh's,” he said.

COMMENTS

Matarbari Port is planned to be equivalent to the Port of Colombo in Sri Lanka or the Port of Singapore in terms of water depths. Once operational by 2027, it is expected to cut down the load from Chattogram Port and function as the major port for North Eastern Indian states and could be key to building an industrial hub connecting Dhaka to North East India. In the case of its first deep-sea port, Bangladesh, on India's insistence has preferred Japanese investment over China's, possibly to prevent Chinese geopolitical monopoly on such ports.

US Targets Myanmar's State Oil and Gas Enterprise with Form of Sanctions

https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3239884/us-targets-myanmars-state-oil-and-gas-enterprise-form-sanctions?module=more_top_stories_int&pgtype=homepage

The US on Tuesday imposed a form of sanctions on Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), but stopped short of imposing full blocking sanctions on the ruling junta's main source of foreign revenue. The action prohibits certain financial services by Americans to the state oil and gas enterprise starting on 15 December, the Treasury said in a statement, in the first direct action against the state-owned enterprise. Washington has previously targeted its leadership. Washington held back from adding the enterprise to the Specially Designated Nationals list, which would effectively kick it out of the US banking system, ban its trade with Americans and freeze its American assets. Washington also slapped sanctions on three entities and five people, whom the US Treasury Department said were connected to Myanmar's military, in action coordinated with [Britain](#) and [Canada](#). Myanmar military officials have played down the impact of sanctions.



Source: Reuters

COMMENTS

The UN human rights experts for Myanmar have repeatedly been calling for US sanctions on Myanmar to include the state oil and gas enterprise, including MOGE, however, US had not done this so far, possibly as US oil major Chevron has stakes in MOGE, which it had agreed to sell in February this year, which apparently have not been sold. The Financial Services as per US Treasury Guidance include loans, accounts, insurance, investments and other services. Any proactive steps by US oil major Chevron to sell its stakes in MOGE before 15 December (the date earmarked for these sanctions), may give the genuine indicators for the implementation of these US sanctions. These sanctions, once effected may affect Myanmar Junta's financial sources, the intensity and quantum of which may be visible in next few months.

Myanmar Military Says Lost Control of Strategic Border Town

<https://newindianexpress.com/world/2023/nov/02/myanmar-military-says-lost-control-of-strategic-border-town-2629412.html>

- Myanmar's military has lost control of a strategic town on the Chinese border following days of clashes with ethnic armed groups. Fighting has raged since Friday across Northern Shan state, with an alliance of ethnic groups claiming to have seized four towns, blocked trade routes to China and captured dozens of military outposts. The remoteness of the rugged, jungle-clad region - home to pipelines that supply oil and gas to China - and patchy communications make it difficult to verify casualty numbers in the fighting, which the United Nations fears have displaced thousands. Government, administrative organisations and security forces were "no longer present" in the trade hub of Chinshwehaw, which borders China's Yunnan province. More than a quarter of Myanmar's \$1.8 billion border trade with China passed through Chinshwehaw between April and September, junta-controlled media reported in September, citing the commerce ministry.
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- The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA) said on Thursday they also had control over the towns of Hpaung Seng, Hsenwi, and Kyukok. Clashes were ongoing in Kunlong and Hsenwi.
- China called on Thursday for an "immediate" ceasefire in Northern Shan state - home to a planned billion-dollar rail link in its Belt and Road infrastructure project. On Tuesday, China's Minister for Public Security met junta chief Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyidaw, for a second day of talks with top junta officials about the clashes. China is a top ally and major arms supplier of the junta and has refused to label its 2021 power grab a coup. Beijing maintains ties with some ethnic armed groups along its border with Myanmar, home to ethnic Chinese communities who use Chinese SIM cards and currency. It has previously denied reports it has supplied the armed groups with weapons.

COMMENTS

Myanmar's border areas are home to more than a dozen ethnic armed groups, some of which have fought the military for decades over autonomy and control of lucrative resources and some of these have trained and equipped newer "People's Defence Forces" that have sprung up since the 2021 coup. The Myanmar military has possibly not faced this level of offensive since the coup, which may also be attributed to their intelligence failure and over stretching. This development has created some strategic discomfort for China in the region. There are reports of PLA units having assumed control of border crossings in the areas to handle clashes between MNDAA and the local militia. [1] China has so far not taken sides in this conflict. This may partly be because of what China calls its policy of non-interference in the affairs of other countries and/or because it has had a cosy relationship with both sides in the conflict. Myanmar is a key part of China's massive infrastructure push, the Belt and Road Initiative and China has been actively investing in the country despite international sanctions on the junta. Chinese investment accounts for 23.5 per cent of total foreign investment in Myanmar, most of which is in the power sector. China is also hoping to build the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, which would give it strategic access to the Indian Ocean. At the same time, China has a long relationship with myriad ethnic resistance groups, including the MNDAA, a mainly ethnic Chinese group that was part of the now defunct Communist Party of Burma. [2] Therefore, the resolution/outcome of the conflict in the area is likely to indicate the Chinese influence and control in the area and its ability to navigate its interest amidst this severe internal conflict environment in Myanmar.

India's Kaladan Project at Risk as Rebels Overrun 40 Myanmar Army Positions in Rakhine State

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/nov/14/indias-kaladan-project-at-risk-as-rebels-overrun-40-myanmar-army-positions-in-rakhine-state-2632853.html>

India's interests could be hit as violence rages in Myanmar, with the junta's troops and police in Rakhine state having reportedly abandoned nearly 40 positions after they were attacked by the Arakan Army (AA) as part of Operation 1027. These clashes are going to have an impact on India's Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project as it's located in the Rakhine State. With over Rs 3200 crore spent on it, this project which began in 2008 isn't completed yet. The objective of this 109 km project is to link India and Myanmar via the Bay of Bengal. It has been a few weeks since the rebels began to make advances against the Myanmar junta which seems to be losing its strongholds. "Many members of the junta have left Myanmar. Some have relocated to Thailand as they want stability. India will have to say something soon as it has a 1643 km long border with Myanmar and can't ignore the instability as it will have a spillover in India too," a source said. India has not yet issued any statement on the civil war-like situation in Myanmar, nor made any comments.

[1] https://twitter.com/zhao_dashuai/status/1719751326698279187?t=9v5hKEJF2MjkKg3AqKMIDA&s=08

[2] [file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/TIEX-INFO-2023-02927%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/TIEX-INFO-2023-02927%20(3).pdf).

On Tuesday, the AA reportedly breached an informal ceasefire that it had agreed with the junta last November in Rakhine State. Meanwhile, resistance forces in Chin State have taken control of the Indian border town of Reh Khaw Da in Falam township after seizing two junta bases, according to claims made by the Chin National Front (CNF). Myanmar's junta has lost control of many sections of its border along China too. According to reports, Operation 1027 has managed to overrun more than 100 military outposts on the Chinese border along the China Myanmar Economic Corridor.

COMMENTS

The clashes between the Myanmar junta and the rebels may be a decisive turning point in struggle against military rule, as rebels have managed to overrun the military bases of junta not only along the Myanmar - India border, but along the Myanmar - China border as well. This development has the potential to pose some serious security challenges for India, including India's Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project, especially when Indian Transport Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari had on 31 October 2023 announced that a crucial road connecting Mizoram's Lawngtlai with Myanmar's Sittwe port in this project will be completed by next month[3].



Source:

<https://twitter.com/IndianTechGuide/status/1719378016969895941?s=20>

[3] <https://twitter.com/IndianTechGuide/status/1719378016969895941?s=20>

China, Pakistan Navies To Hold First Joint Maritime Patrol

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-and-pakistan-navies-hold-drills-in-arabian-sea-to-conduct-first-maritime-patrols/article67528374.ece>

China and Pakistan are conducting the 3rd edition of the Sea Guardian-3 bilateral Naval exercise in the Northern Arabian Sea with Chinese official media reporting that the two sides will also hold their maiden joint maritime patrol. The exercise is scheduled from November 11 to 17.

COMMENTS

China and Pakistan are conducting their joint naval exercise "Sea Guardian-3" in the Northern Arabian Sea from November 11th to 17th. The theme of the joint exercise that has been launched at the naval base in Karachi is "Joint Response to Maritime Security Threats". They are also going to conduct their first joint maritime patrol during the exercise. The exercise is also going to see aerial missions in the airspace of the exercise area. Rear Admiral Liang Yang, the general director of the exercise, said at the opening ceremony that, "the exercise is dedicated to enhancing the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, boosting defence cooperation and deepening professional cooperation".[1] The Chief of the Naval Staff of the Pakistan Navy, Admiral M Amjad Khan Niazi, had said in an interview earlier that the Sea Guardian series of exercise are meant to "foster interoperability and share professional experiences to deal with contemporary traditional and non-traditional security threats" between the two navies.[2] The first edition of the "Sea Guardian" exercises was held in the northern Arabian Sea in the year 2020 and the second was held in waters off Shanghai coast in the year 2022. The exercise has been planned in two phases which include 'shore-based exchanges' and 'maritime joint operations'. The training courses planned during the exercise include those on VBSS (visit, board, search and seizure), formation manoeuvring, joint search and rescue, helicopter cross-deck landing, and joint anti-submarine drills.

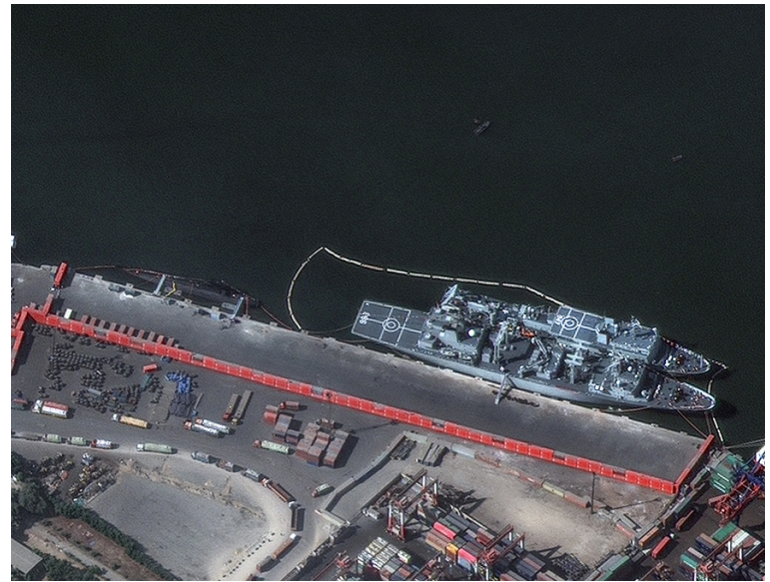
As per official reports, there are six vessels of the Chinese PLA Navy participating in the exercise consisting of the Type 052D guided-missile destroyer Zibo, Type 054A guided-missile frigates Jingzhou and Linyi, and the Type 903 Replenishment Oiler, and two shipborne helicopters and Marines. Participating forces of the Pak Navy include nine vessels and comprise the PNS Saif and Shahjahan, four fighter jets, three shipborne helicopters, one fixed-wing anti-submarine patrol aircraft, and Marines.

However, as per a NDTV report, high resolution satellite imagery from Maxar indicates a Chinese Type 039 diesel-electric submarine and a Type 926 submarine tender (meant for replenishing submarines and rescuing submarines in distress) docked at Karachi port.[3]

[1] PTI. "China, Pakistan navies to conduct first joint maritime patrols in Arabian Sea". Hindustan Times, November 13, 2023. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-pakistan-navies-to-conduct-first-joint-maritime-patrols-in-arabian-sea-101699880934631.html>

[2] Ibid.

[3] Som, Vishnu. "Exclusive: Chinese Submarine, Warships in Karachi - What it Means for India". NDTV, November 13, 2023. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/exclusive-chinese-submarine-warships-in-karachi-what-it-means-for-india-1697284>



Source: NDTV

The joint exercises of the Pakistani and the PLA Navies in the waters of the Arabian Sea are, indeed, a cause of concern for Indian security. It also adds to the markers of the growing footprint of the Chinese in the IOR. The sea lanes of the Indian Ocean account for 80% of China's energy imports and are essential for China's trade activities, making the IOR strategically and economically significant to it. There are a number of ports in the Indian Ocean, like the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka, the Gwadar port in Pakistan, the Doraleh port in Djibouti, the Sudan port, the CSP Terminal at the Khalifa port in UAE, etc, that have been and are being built by Chinese construction companies and have varying degrees of direct Chinese financial involvement. [4] This gives China a significant influence in the IOR and gives it the capability to monitor Indian activities. The controversial visit of the Chinese research ship, Shi Yan 6, is the latest example in this context.



It also points towards the growing Chinese possibility and capability of future submarine and carrier group operations in the waters of the Indian Ocean. In fact, it is believed that the presence of the Chinese submarine at Karachi is the eighth instance of PLAN submarine deployment in the region since 2013 [5] and there have even been reports of deployment of Chinese nuclear-powered fast attack submarines in the Indian Ocean. India, therefore, needs to continue to cautiously watch the Chinese activities in the IOR and the Indian Navy needs to tread firmly and timely on its drive to strengthen itself.

[4] Faridi, Saeeuddin (2021). "China's ports in the Indian Ocean", Gateway House. Accessed 15 November 2023, URL: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/chinas-ports-in-the-indian-ocean-region/>

[5] Ghosh, Sanchari. "China, Pakistan conduct joint maritime exercises in Arabian Sea. Should India be concerned?". Mint, November 13, 2023. <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/china-pakistan-conduct-joint-maritime-exercises-in-arabian-sea-should-india-be-concerned-11699874193233.html>

Pakistan Air Force Base In Punjab Province Attacked, Nine Terrorists Gunned Down

https://www.cnbctv18.com/world/pakistan-air-force-base-in-punjab-province-attacked-3-grounded-aircraft-damaged-18241001.htm/amp?utm_campaign=fullarticle&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=inshorts

The Pakistan Army said that the Mianwali Training Air Base of Pakistan Air Force was attacked by terrorists but soldiers foiled it by killing all the nine attackers.

COMMENTS

During the wee hours on 4th November, 2023, a group of nine terrorists attacked the Mianwali air base of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) located in Northern Pakistan's Punjab province. It was reported that the heavily armed terrorists made use of a ladder to climb across the walls and infiltrate the airbase. Exchange of heavy gunfire ensued between the terrorists and the security personnel. ISPR reported that all the nine infiltrators were eliminated eventually and that no functional or operational assets were damaged during the attack. PAF reported damage to three grounded aircraft and a fuel bowser. However, as per an Indian satellite image analyst, at least ten aircraft have been damaged and were likely operational aircraft as Mianwali is an operational airbase. As per another expert, there appears to be damage to some aircraft sheds and personnel casualties too and the damaged aircraft could include F-7PG fighter and K-8 trainer aircraft.[1] A Pakistan-based terrorist group Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP), which is an affiliate of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and declared itself in February 2023, has claimed responsibility for the attack. The attack at Mianwali came after a series of attacks on the same day and the previous day. Earlier on 03 November 2023, a remote-controlled bomb blast in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan resulted in loss of lives of five people and injury to 24 others. The blast was reported to have been targeted at police forces. This was followed by an ambush attack by terrorists on two vehicles of security forces in Gwadar district that were going from Pasni to Ormara and claimed the lives of 14 soldiers. The Balochistan Liberation Front claimed responsibility for the attack in Gwadar, however, no one claimed responsibility for the attack in Dera Ismail Khan.

There has been a sharp rise in terrorist attacks in Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in the months gone by. As per a report by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), there have been 99 attacks in August 2023 across Pakistan, the highest number in a single month, since November 2014.[2] The Pakistan Government has made repeated requests to the Afghan Taliban Government to take action to prevent TTP operating from Afghan soil but the Taliban government has refuted the Pakistani claims of TTP operating from Afghanistan. The terrorist activities have likely stretched the Pak military thin, countering terrorist activities in Balochistan and Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa provinces and at the same time tackling its role in the political and now, even the economic, landscapes of the country.

[6] Sharma, Ritu. "10 Aircraft, Including Chinese Chengdu J-7 & K-8 Destroyed In Terror Attack On Pakistan Mianwali Airbase - Indian Expert". The Eurasian Times, November 5, 2023. <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/destroyed-in-terror-attack-on-pakistan-mianwali-airbase-indian-expert/>

[7] Shirazi, Iftikhar. "14 soldiers martyred as militants ambush security forces' vehicles in Gwadar: ISPR". Dawn, November 3, 2023. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1786153/14-soldiers-martyred-as-militants-ambush-security-forces-vehicles-in-gwadar-ispr>

Russian Navy Wades Into US-China-India Turf War

<https://www.newsweek.com/russian-navy-wades-us-china-india-turf-war-indian-ocean-bangladesh-myanmar-1843571>

Russian warships are in the Indian Ocean this week as Moscow looks to bolster its relations with Bangladesh and Myanmar, two nations in the throes of anti-democratic shifts where the Kremlin is eyeing new economic and political opportunities. Anti-submarine warfare ships *Admiral Tributs* and *Admiral Panteleyev*—both of the Russian Pacific Fleet—and the tanker *Pechenga* docked at the Bangladeshi port of Chittagong in the Bay of Bengal this weekend, days after joint Russia-Myanmar naval drills concluded in the nearby Andaman Sea

COMMENTS

The above move is seen as a Russian plunge towards the great power games between India, China and the US in the IOR. The arrival of Russian ships at Chittagong port is reflective of the growing ties between the two nations as a counter to US & West meddling with democratic process in Bangladesh. Russia has also funded and provided nuclear fuel for the first Nuclear Reactor of Bangladesh. The Myanmar Military Junta is a prime customer of Russian military equipment despite US opposition and sees Russia as a counter to China.



Source: Newsweek

Russia is seeking new consumer markets for its products in the "Global South", Gulf countries & Turkey particularly non-democratic countries after the sanctions were imposed on it by European countries following the Ukraine War. Despite above moves and forays, Russia is far from making any significant presence and mark in its contest with India, China and US in the IOR since it does not have any Military Bases in the region, besides being embroiled in the war in Ukraine, which could be long drawn .

Implications for India

India needs to carefully calibrate and temper its foreign policy and military diplomacy initiatives with Russia and neighbouring countries towards safeguarding its national and security interests in the region. Ongoing investments in energy, infrastructural development, road/rail connectivity, education, health care projects and revitalising the historical ties through cultural exchanges needs to be accelerated and enhanced. Sustained efforts towards active participation in QUAD, Malabar and other multilateral Naval exercises within neighbourhood, IOR littorals and US, France, Japan and ASEAN countries need to be pursued vigorously.

Second Round Of Talks Between Ethiopian Government And Oromo Rebels

<https://www.africanews.com/2023/11/09/second-round-of-talks-between-ethiopian-government-and-oromo-rebels/>

The Ethiopian government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) are holding new talks in Tanzania to try and put an end to five years of insurrection in Oromia, Ethiopia's largest and most populous region. Classified as a "terrorist organization" by Addis Ababa, the OLA has been fighting the Ethiopian authorities since it split with the historic Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 2018, when the latter renounced armed struggle that year when current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power. Talks have been underway for ten days in Tanzania, the diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity. A first round of talks, between late April and early May, had ended in persistent disagreement. Despite the declared willingness of the parties to continue talks, ten days later the OLA accused the Ethiopian government of having launched an offensive contrary to the "hoped-for de-escalation".

COMMENTS

It's positive to see ongoing dialogue between the Ethiopian government and Oromo rebels. Continued negotiations are essential for finding a peaceful resolution and addressing the complex issues at hand. India could offer diplomatic support and facilitate dialogue by encouraging peaceful negotiations. Additionally, sharing insights from its own experiences with diverse populations and federal structures may provide valuable perspectives for conflict resolution.



Source: AfricaNews

China's Slowing Economy Will Hit Sub-Saharan Africa's Growth

<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/11/09/cf-chinas-slowng-economy-will-hit-sub-saharan-africas-growth>

The country's economic engagement with the region is evolving, with implications for growth, trade, and investment. China has forged deep economic ties with countries in sub-Saharan Africa over the past 20 years, making it the region's largest single country trading partner. China buys one-fifth of the region's exports—metals, minerals, and fuel—and provides most of the manufactured goods and machinery imported by African countries. However, China's recovery from the pandemic has slowed recently due to a property downturn and flagging demand for its manufactured goods as global growth has also slowed.

AFRICA

A one percentage point decline in China's growth rate could reduce average growth in the region by about 0.25 percentage points within a year, according to the latest [Regional Economic Outlook](#). The ripple effects of China's slowing economy extend to sovereign lending to sub-Saharan Africa, which fell below \$1 billion last year—the lowest level in nearly two decades. The cutback marks a shift away from big ticket infrastructure financing, as several African countries struggle with [escalating public debt](#). Chinese loans to the region rose rapidly in the 2000s, with the country's share of total sub-Saharan African external public debt jumping from less than 2 percent before 2005 to 17 percent by 2021.

COMMENTS

Trade Impact. Reduced Chinese demand for commodities may affect India's exports, particularly if it relies on similar export markets which in turn will affect the Global Market affecting India's competitiveness and trade relationships.

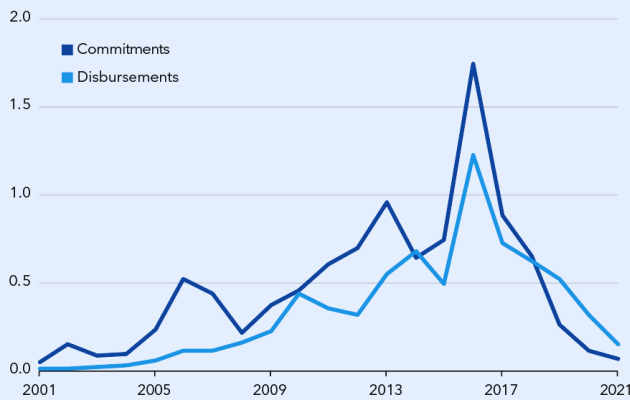
Currency and Exchange Rates. Fluctuations in China's economy may influence currency values, affecting India's export competitiveness and foreign exchange rates.

Policy Adjustments. India may need to adapt economic policies to navigate the changing global economic scenario and mitigate potential negative impacts.

Diversification Opportunities. India could explore diversifying its trade partners and markets to reduce dependency on any single economy, thereby minimizing risks associated with a slowdown in a specific region.

Chinese loans plummet

Chinese official loan commitments and disbursements to sub-Saharan Africa have fallen to a near two-decade low after hitting a peak in 2016 of 1.7 percent of the region's GDP. (percent of GDP)

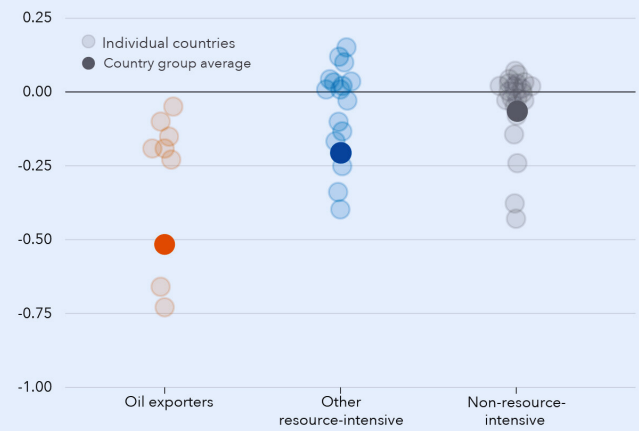


Source: Boston University, Chinese Loans to Africa database; World Bank, International Debt Statistics database; and IMF, World Economic Outlook database.
Note: Aggregate GDP for sub-Saharan Africa excludes South Sudan.

IMF

Impact of China slowdown

A one-percentage point decline in China's growth rate could reduce growth in sub-Saharan Africa by 0.25 percentage points. (real GDP growth, percentage points)



Source: Abdel-Latif and El-Gamal, forthcoming.
Note: Lighter shade dots denote individual countries. Darker shades represent group GDP-weighted averages. Country groupings are detailed in the appendix of the October 2023 Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa.

IMF

Africa's Top Economies Are Being Forced to Go Solar

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2023-11-10/nigeria-south-african-residents-shift-to-solar-as-energy-grids-fail>

Citizens in sub-Saharan Africa's biggest economies are going green and it's not by choice. The removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria in May almost tripled prices overnight, making the diesel and gasoline-fired generators that light up most homes and businesses unaffordable for many in a country of more than 200 million people with little grid power to speak of. South Africa has been suffering electricity outages since 2008, and for the past year, they've often been for more than 10 hours a day. That's driving a boom in solar energy. In Nigeria, solar-power installers are gearing up to sell to the mass market, after years of only being affordable to the wealthy. South African imports of photovoltaic panels, lithium-ion batteries and inverters totaled \$2.5 billion in the first half of this year compared with \$1.7 billion for the whole of 2022. Rising global interest rates and higher commodity prices have exposed many developing countries with fixed exchange rates to risks of external imbalances and capital flight. The historic transition from the century-long era of the internal combustion engine to the electric-vehicle age is adding to global geopolitical rivalries. China is the standout leader in the EV race with a more than 80% share of the world's lithium-ion battery capacity and huge leads in most other critical components, prompting the US to spend billions of dollars to lure producers to challenge Beijing. The Democratic Republic of Congo is the world's biggest producer of cobalt and South Africa the main source of platinum and a major supplier of palladium, all minerals used to make transportation cleaner.

COMMENTS

If African top economies shift to solar energy, it could impact India in several ways. India, a significant player in the global solar industry, might experience increased demand for solar technology and expertise. Additionally, if African nations reduce reliance on traditional energy sources, it could influence global energy markets, potentially affecting India's energy trade and prices. Moreover, India might find new opportunities for collaboration and investment in the emerging solar markets in Africa in consonance with the solar alliance

Should African leading economies transition to solar energy, India, a major participant in the worldwide solar industry, may witness a rise in demand for solar technology and expertise. As African nations decrease dependence on conventional energy sources, this shift could sway global energy markets, potentially impacting India's energy trade and prices. Furthermore, India could explore fresh prospects for collaboration and investment in the burgeoning solar markets of Africa.

Japan And ASEAN Should Push Forward With Security Cooperation

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/The-Nikkei-View/Japan-and-ASEAN-should-push-forward-with-security-cooperation>

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida recently wrapped up a visit to the Philippines and Malaysia, where he agreed to deepen security cooperation to check China's increasingly aggressive moves in the East and South China seas.

Japan's diplomacy with ASEAN has thus far focused on economic cooperation, out of regret over its actions in World War II. But the ongoing confrontation between the U.S. and China has raised expectations for Tokyo to also provide security support for the region. Japan should continue making steady efforts to promote cooperation while using caution not to exacerbate regional tensions.

In the Philippines, Kishida met with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and agreed to provide coastal surveillance radar systems to strengthen the Southeast Asian country's maritime security. This move marks the first use of Japan's newly established Official Security Assistance program. Designed to supplement official development assistance -- which is limited to non-military fields -- the OSA scheme allows Japan to provide military-use equipment to friendly countries.

Kishida also agreed with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to provide defence equipment in an expedited application of the OSA scheme.

The Japanese and Philippine leaders decided to start negotiations on a reciprocal troop access deal that would simplify procedures for visits between the Japanese Self-Defence Forces and the Philippine armed forces. If concluded, the agreement would follow similar accords with "quasi-allies" Australia and the U.K., and make it easier to conduct multilateral joint military exercises including the U.S.

COMMENTS

Japan's increasing security collaboration with the Philippines and Malaysia could have various consequences for India. Japan's alignment with these countries aims to counterbalance China's influence in the region, which aligns with India's objective of maintaining a stable regional structure. The establishment of personnel access agreements and military coordination among Japan, the Philippines, and Malaysia could create opportunities for India to engage in multilateral security initiatives in the Indo-Pacific. This could enhance India's diplomatic and security relations and potentially lead to trilateral alliances involving Japan, India, and other countries. Japan's provision of military-use equipment through security assistance programs could incentivize India to expand its own security assistance programs. Overall, the collaboration between Japan and India in the Indo-Pacific region presents opportunities for strategic alliances, stability, and addressing shared security concerns. However, caution and a measured approach are necessary due to the complex geopolitical dynamics in the area.

Biden Hails 'New Era' Of Ties Between US And Indonesia

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/105196398.cms?from=mdr&utm_source=timesofindia WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden celebrated a "new era"

President Joe Biden and Indonesian President Joko Widodo have formalized closer ties between their countries at the White House. Biden described it as a "new era" in the relationship. Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy and a heavyweight player in Southeast Asia. The United States has been jockeying with China for influence in the region. Biden's meeting Monday with Widodo comes days before Biden is scheduled to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a summit of Asian leaders in San Francisco. During the meeting, Widodo also said the U.S. should push for a ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas.

COMMENTS



Source: Times of India

President Biden calls this as a "new era" in US-Indonesia relations, emphasising formalisation. This cooperation is essential because Indonesia is the world's third-largest democracy and has a major role in Southeast Asia. With ref to the US and China competing for influence in the region refers to the South China Sea geopolitics. China's territorial claims in the South China Sea have raised tensions with the US and other neighbours.

President Biden and Indonesian President Widodo met before meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, a significant diplomatic move to preserve balance in the US-China tussle for supremacy. The Asian leaders' conference in San Francisco allows senior-level discussions on regional issues, including the South China Sea. President Widodo's plea for US help in pressing for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas adds an international aspect to the discussions. Indonesia's global position and diplomatic influence in the east Asian region is here to stay and the US has taken the note of it. The research suggests that the US and Indonesia are improving their bilateral relations due to regional geopolitical tensions, particularly in the South China Sea.

Implications For India. India has been conscientiously monitoring the situation in the South China Sea, fully aware of the immense repercussions that ensue in terms of maritime commerce and regional stability. India has made significant endeavours to enhance its relations with countries in Southeast Asia with the intention of offsetting the sway of China. The enduring competition between the United States and China in the South China Sea has a substantial influence on regional dynamics when viewed from a more comprehensive standpoint. The potential consequence of these events is a potential alteration in ASEAN's strategic discourse which India should take note of.

Chinese Navy's Suspected New Overseas Base In Cambodia Now Even Larger

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/11/chinese-navys-suspected-new-overseas-base-cambodia-now-even-larger>

There have been persistent reports of China attempting to expand the global reach of its Navy with a network of overseas bases. Ream in Cambodia has long been on that list. New evidence shows that a large dry dock is now under construction there. As the war in Ukraine shows, these facilities are strategically important.

China's new naval base at Ream in Cambodia is well documented. It will provide the Chinese Navy (PLAN) with a base at the southern end of the highly contested South China Sea. The base is still east of the Malacca Strait which separates the South China Sea from the Indian Ocean, yet is still strategically important. And a key part of China's construction of overseas bases.

However the base now appears even more expensive and capable than previous reports suggested. There is clear evidence of a new dry dock being constructed.

It is important to acknowledge that Cambodia has claimed that the rebuilding of the base at Ream, with Chinese Aid, is for their own navy. So it is possible that the dry dock is for the Royal Cambodian Navy, or even civilian use. However its size and construction make this a less likely explanation and few analysts are likely to accept it. Cambodia's small navy barely has any naval vessels over 50 meters (164 feet) in length.

COMMENTS



The construction of a new dry dock at the Chinese naval base in Ream, Cambodia, has major implications for the South China Sea and the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) alliance of Australia, Japan, the US, and India.

- **Strategic Positioning:** The Chinese Navy's Ream base puts it at the southernmost tip of the South China Sea. This allows China to grow its influence and territorial claims in a geopolitical conflict zone.
- **Military Presence:** A new dry port increases navy vessel maintenance and restoration capacity. In the South China Sea, long-term military presence and power projection are crucial.
- **QUAD's Reaction:** Quad members worry about China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific, which is worsened by Cambodia's new naval station. The issue raises questions about power balance and South China Sea military expansion.
- **Strategic Response:** Given this development, the Quad states may consider strengthening their strategic relationships and military cooperation nearby. They may increase maritime security cooperation and military exercises to counter China's ascent.
- **The Worldwide Impact:** Naval Expansion Beyond the South China Sea: China is building facilities like Ream to expand its naval presence worldwide. This situation could affect regional stability and global maritime trade routes beyond the South China Sea.
- **Competition for Influence:** China's naval growth is seen as part of a larger strategy to challenge the maritime order and compete with other major powers for influence. This may increase competition and cause conflict.
- **Cambodia's Role:** Cambodia's claim about its navy's Chinese-supported facility may raise concerns about Chinese military and economic influence in the region. This shows how difficult it is for smaller nations to maintain balance with larger powers.

In conclusion, the construction of a new dry dock at the Chinese naval port in Ream, Cambodia, has major geopolitical implications for the Quad and regional security, notably in the South China Sea. This underlines the Indo-Pacific power struggle and the need for strategic responses from major parties to maintain stability.

How US Army Pacific Is Preparing For War With China

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2023/11/how-us-army-pacific-preparing-war-china/391919/>

<https://www.shephardmedia.com/news/training-simulation/philippines-joins-annualex-indo-pacific-naval-exercise-as-observer-while-tensions-rise-in-the-region/>

Capt. Sam Soliday is standing in front of a Black Hawk on a gravel airstrip across the street from Oahu's picturesque northwest coast, a "jungle" patch velcroed to the sleeve of his combat shirt. He's one of more than 5,000 U.S., Indonesian, Thai, British, and New Zealander troops spread out on islands from Hawaii to Palau in the western Pacific for an enormous training exercise that simulates "large-scale conflict against a peer adversary in jungle and archipelagic conditions."

COMMENTS

The US Army has initiated a large training exercise in the Pacific. Prior to this, US has done big training exercises in California and Louisiana too. However, this one is the first since the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center was approved by the Pentagon in June 2023. The exercise involves over 5,000 troops from the U.S., Indonesia, Thailand, the UK, and New Zealand and the training is happening on various islands from Hawaii to Palau. China's presence in the Pacific remains the focal point behind such trainings although there is no direct mention of any country officially. The training remains unique from the previous exercises done by the US. It focuses on fighting between the islands which US had done during the World War II but never after that. According to Captain Soliday, who works in the intelligence mentioned the complexities of the exercise as it involves people and assets from different islands including various types of terrain like steep valleys and flat lands. The exercise mostly focused on jointness and involved 'Pacific Fleet', 'Special Operations Command', and 'U.S. Marine Corps', named JPMRC 24-01. General Charles Flynn, the commander of U.S. Army Pacific stated the benefits of commencing such joint forces training especially in Hawaii and small Pacific island nations like Palau. Palau is geo-strategically significant and already achieved great attention from the QUAD leaders in the 2023 summit held in Hiroshima in terms of strengthening the security architecture for open Radio Access Networks, or RANs.

While managing a hidden command center, Major John Azbill has stated the complexities one faces in the jungle in terms of radio waves. He made a comparison between the diverse landscapes of the Pacific and desert regions. The desert region did not face significant communication interference compared to the Pacific. Thus, the Pacific remains a major challenge for the Army in terms of communication. It is anticipated that these kinds of exercises will facilitate communication despite such complications.

Apart from varied landscapes and interference in communication, the Army faces challenges with issues like linguistic disparities. Lieutenant Toby Johnstone, a platoon commander with the Royal Regiment of Scotland stated that only five of the ninety Thai soldiers spoke English and there exists language barriers. However, communication has improved throughout training.

Towards the end of the exercise General Flynn stated that there were two ways to look at the current scenario. One was the devious way in which China was acting. Other was, the more jointness observed among the militaries of multiple countries which is a good sign. Additionally, the United States has focused on maritime operations alongside land-based activities. The U.S. Navy took part in a 10-day joint exercise which started on November 10, 2023 led by Japan. The exercise is aimed at improving collaboration with the navies of the like-minded countries such as Australia and Canada. Philippines who is also a claimant to the South China Sea dispute participated as an observer for the first time. A few weeks ago, a Philippine coast guard ship and a Chinese maritime militia vessel collided. Karl Thomas, Vice Adm of the US Seventh Fleet, said:

'The more that our navies work together, the more multilateral our operations and our exercises are, the greater the security for this region. So I'm thrilled that Japan invited the Philippines to observe this year.' [1]



Source: The Nation

The joint land and sea training exercises, initiated by powers like the US and Japan, represent efforts to enhance capacity building processes in Southeast Asian nations, including those in the Pacific Islands. This strategy is primarily aimed at countering China's growing influence in the region. In the above backdrop, Indian Armed Forces should also undertake such multilateral exercises. The primary objective should be to incorporate more ASEAN nation in such training exercises considering China's growing influence in the region.

[1] The Shephard New (2023), "Philippines joins ANNUALEX Indo-Pacific naval exercise as observer as tensions rise in the region", [Online: web], Accessed 14 November 2023 <https://www.shephardmedia.com/news/training-simulation/philippines-joins-annualex-indo-pacific-naval-exercise-as-observer-while-tensions-rise-in-the-region/>

China, Australia Can Become 'Trusting' Partners, Xi Says

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/china-president-xi-jinping-meets-australia-pm-anthony-albanese-3899626>

BEIJING: Chinese leader Xi Jinping told Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Monday (Nov 6) that their countries could become "trusting partners", pledging to work with Canberra on everything from regional security to climate change as the two leaders eased years of tensions that cut billions of dollars in trade.

COMMENTS

Background

The China Australia Free Trade Agreement was a triumphant moment for bilateral relations between China and Australia in 2015. However, after former Prime Minister Scott Morrison came to power, Canberra switched towards downplaying Beijing in the name of 'security concerns'. The first outright action taken by Canberra against Beijing surfaced when Chinese company Huawei was robbed of rolling out 5G networks in Australia. The matter further aggravated as soon as COVID-19 hit and the Morrison administration requested for an investigation on the origins of COVID-19, which did start in China, itself. Thereafter, China handed a 'dossier' of 14 grievances [1] to put a check on Australia. These 14 grievances were a counter to diplomatically tackle unsettling ties with Canberra, but Beijing went a step further and imposed tariffs that costed the latter trade worth of billions of dollars. Following these tensions, Australia alongside its trusted allies, the US and the UK entered into a security pact under the umbrella term of AUKUS, which aims to provide Australia with US nuclear submarine technology. Although AUKUS has been mostly interpreted in terms of capability development through transfer of technology, the geopolitical underpinnings of countering China in the region cannot be ignored altogether. China has remained Australia's prime trading partner accounting to 32% and the tariffs imposed by the former and latter had created an economic dent that certainly was a crucial point of conflict that the incumbent Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had to secure a resolution with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Was the Albanese-Jinping Meeting A Success?

Australian Prime Minister's visit to Beijing coincidentally also marked the 50th Anniversary since the first Australian Prime Minister Edward Gough Whitman set foot in China. The meeting between the two countries was extremely crucial, especially for Australia and its economy. The two sides have exchanged cordial greetings and have agreed to work on matters that concerns each of their national interests. However, an interesting point that needs attention here is how Australia has carefully demarcated its economic and security needs. Earlier, Australia was left with the viable option of either siding with its long standing ally i.e the US or its economic

[1] Galloway, "If You Make China the Enemy, China Will Be the Enemy": Beijing's Fresh Threat to Australia."

AUSTRALIA



Source: CNA Asia

partner, China. However, Albanese's visit has proved that governments must engage where business is involved. Albanese mentioned that the bilateral relations between Australia and China is one where they can agree and disagree based on their national interests. The meeting, deemed historic by Albanese comes as huge relief for the Australian economy and thereby more bilateral exchanges between Canberra and Beijing can be expected as implied. [2]

However, what remains crucial is Australia cannot choose between China and the US. The meeting has highlighted how Canberra has manoeuvred cautiously to engage in the benefit of the country's national interests. The official transcript of the meeting highlighted that Albanese and Xi exchanged views on China's intentions to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement For Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). [3] There has been strong opposition from Japan and Australia for China's entry in CPTPP [4], however Albanese set the tone for pragmatic solutions for China's intentions to join the partnership. [5] Although it is too early to arrive at concrete conclusions, the bilateral meeting has certainly added momentum for trade to retreat towards normalization and further strengthen cooperation that would forge stronger regional economic cooperation.

Will AUKUS be affected?

The meeting between Anthony Albanese and Xi Jinping has raised concerns related to the future of AUKUS. Though the bilateral meeting intended to ease economic relations between the two countries, the security domain cannot be overlooked. Since its inception, the reception of AUKUS has been diabolical. [6] Although the pact clearly has stated transfer of nuclear submarine technology without naming 'the adversary' in the region, the intention of AUKUS to deter China in the region by arming Australia, a less maritime capable power, has been crystal clear. However, it is noteworthy here to understand that it is not only Australia but even other countries including the US have been trying to re-establish lines of communication with China. Despite the competition, both economic and security, the US and its allies have been trying to not walk away from China, but rather continue to forge communications. The same principle would apply for AUKUS too. Even Albanese assured that Australia is gearing up for proper implementation of AUKUS and that it is in Australia's national interests. Further AUKUS has become a 'vehicle to promote peace and stability in the region'. [7]

[2] PM Transcripts, "Meeting with President Xi Jinping" URL:<https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-45475>

[3]PM Transcripts, "Press Conference-Beijing-People's Republic of China" URL:<https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-45474>

[4] Phillip Coorey, "Australia-China Visit: Anthony Albanese Advises China to Play by Global Trade Rules," Australian Financial Review, November 5, 2023, <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/albanese-advises-china-to-play-fair-on-trade-20231105-p5ehow>.

Future of the Pacific Island Countries: An Emerging Contestation?

China has started to increase its footprints in the Pacific region with the creation of bilateral relations and artificial infrastructure. The Pacific Countries of Solomon Islands and Kiribati have switched allegiance to supporting Beijing. Australia has been concerned along its Northern shores especially after China formalized an 'alleged security pact' with the Solomon Islands. Even during Albanese's visit, Australia remained firm on its support for status quo regarding Taiwan, however the recent development between Tuvalu and Australia may play as a trump card between Beijing and Canberra. The 'Falepili Union' between Tuvalu and Australia allows the latter to provide upto 3000 resident visas on a ballot basis starting next year. [8] Additionally, it allows Australia to act additionally on behalf of Tuvalu against any military aggression. This clearly means that 'any foreign' interference may allow presence of Australian troops at the request of the Pacific country. This outrightly may counter China's ambitions with the Pacific countries. Tuvalu has maintained one China policy by recognising the sovereignty and autonomy of Taiwan. Australia has been increasing its support for the Pacific countries since 2021. [9]

Implications for India

The meeting between Australia and China has shed light on how countries must manoeuvre between economic and political realities. India engages with Australia, Japan and the US as a partner in QUAD. Except for India, the other QUAD countries have been navigating their 'economic relations' with Beijing. [10] The post Albanese visit may provide momentum to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) from which India withdrew in 2019. Although India continues to forge Free Trade Agreements with nearly all RCEP countries, it may need to address the economic realities and take the bull by its horn. India's exit from RCEP remains contested but certainly its functions as a strong pillar of regional trade architecture cannot be underestimated. India needs to monitor trade and economic patterns to secure and bolster regional growth and cooperation.

[5] PM Transcripts, "Press Conference-Beijing-People's Republic of China" URL: <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-45474>

[6] John Lee, "Why AUKUS Is in Danger of Stalling," Foreign Policy, October 25, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/10/25/aukus-australia-us-uk-china-biden-albanese-submarines-defense-military-strategy-geopolitics/>.

[7] Ibid

[8] Daniel Hurst and Josh Butler, "Tuvalu Residency and Security Treaty: What Is It and Why Is Australia Doing It?," Australian Foreign Policy | the Guardian, November 11, 2023, https://amp.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/nov/10/tuvalu-residency-and-security-treaty-what-is-it-and-why-is-australia-doing-it#amp_tf=From%20%251%24s&aoh=17001366561332&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com.

[9] Jon Letman, "Australia's Support to Pacific Surges as China Focuses on 'Friendly' States, Aid Map Shows," The Guardian, October 30, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/31/australias-support-to-pacific-surges-as-china-focuses-on-friendly-states-aid-map-shows>.

[10] Asha Sundaram, "India's RCEP Exit and Its Regional Future | East Asia Forum," East Asia Forum, October 8, 2023, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/04/13/indias-rcep-exit-and-its-regional-future/>.

NATO's Stoltenberg Urges Vigilance Over Chinese Digital Infrastructure Influence

<https://politicstoday.org/nato-stoltenberg-urges-vigilance-over-chinese-digital-infrastructure-influence/>

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg issued a stern warning to allies on Thursday, November 9, 2023, about the risks of integrating Chinese technology into their critical digital infrastructure. Speaking at NATO's first annual Cyber Defense Conference in Berlin, Stoltenberg urged that the lessons from dependence on Russian energy must extend to technology, highlighting the need for caution to avoid similar vulnerabilities.

COMMENTS

Background

As part of realising the grand vision of the Chinese dream and National Rejuvenation, the Belt and Road Initiative was initiated in 2013. The initiative aimed at improving regional cooperation through better connectivity infrastructure development of ports, roads, railways and airports.[1] What began as a geoeconomic initiative, slowly diversified to a geopolitical and geostrategic initiative due to the close involvement of the Chinese government.[2] With a focus on "policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and people-to-people connectivity", [3] the initiative had 'digital trade' and 'expansion of communication networks' for 'an information Silk Road' added in 2015 as one of the subgoals of connectivity.[4] This was referred to as the Digital Silk Road (DSR). The assistance in DSR works toward resolving the digital divide by improving digital infrastructure in telecommunication networks, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, e-commerce and mobile payment systems, surveillance technology, smart cities, and other high-tech areas.

With a growing need for inexpensive, high-quality technology to benefit from the digital world a number of developing countries have signed the DSR agreement. While the true number of agreements and investments in DSR are not known, it is estimated that about one-third of the BRI participating nations are cooperating on DSR projects.[5] This has allowed China's Internet enterprises and the Chinese technological products to penetrate overseas market by providing equipment, infrastructure, training, research and development programmes and even transfer of technology in many areas.

The Fear

Some democracies have raised concerns about the DSR as being a means for China to enable authoritarianism through technology as the Chinese internet enterprises while being private, are required to store data on servers in China and submit to checks [6] when required as part of the Chinese cybersecurity legislation. [7]

EUROPE

This increased supply of high end telecommunication technologies such as 5G technology by the Chinese firms would allow them to set technology standards for the industry [8] and even allow inserting “backdoor mechanisms” to help Beijing increase its intelligence, propaganda, and blackmail politics in BRI partner countries. [9] This would eventually accelerate the fracture of the global internet with some countries exercising internet control while others encouraging internet freedom. This has led to unease for the US and its allies towards a growing influence of China. However, countering the growing influence of Chinese digital hardware is a challenge for these nations. [10]

The Present Status

Many of the BRI routes crisscross the European continent and while there is no confirmation of the nations in the EU who have signed the DSR agreement, the cheap hardware for a digital world produced by China has made inroads in the European markets in a large way, so much so that nearly 50% of the 5G equipment in 31 European countries at the end of 2022 was supplied by Chinese vendors. [11] Such large scale use and development of 5G equipment has allowed China to take a lead role in the preparation of standards for 5G technology. This has thus further allowed them to submit 40% of the standards and 32% of documents to International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) as part of the UN’s International Telecommunication Union’s “2020 5G development schedule”. [12]

Such increasing use of Chinese hardware and internet protocol [13] has resulted in a rising concern for the West which are driven by apprehensions over State driven surveillance and increased dependence on a single country. Such single nation dependency disallows transparency and competition thereby creating increased apprehensions about use of digital technologies for strategic implications especially when a ‘backdoor’ access to data can be created. While the concerns are not new and the EU has banned the use of Chinese 5G technology in 2020, only about a third of the EU nations implemented the proposed ban [14] with apprehensions that the ban would take till 2024 to be enforced due to the cumbersome procedure of passing laws in the EU. [15]



Source: Politics Today

The Involvement of NATO

The NATO General Secretary, Jens Stoltenberg feels that the present trend of use of digital infrastructure from China in the NATO nations impacts the values, interests, security and free and open cyberspace. There is hence a need for strengthened cooperation amongst NATO members to develop technologies and cyberspace strategies to secure cyberspace for the collective population of NATO. Such an approach needs to involve the private sector for keeping NATO safe and avoid the risk of espionage and coercion from other States. On a similar note, the US earlier has been lobbied its Five Eyes allies to boycott Chinese 5G technology. [16]

Despite questions being raised, Chinese companies continue to call the proposed ban as 'unlawful' [17] and China continue to push forward its efforts of the Digital Silk Road as it has already invested nearly 79 billion USD on DSR related projects [18] which is only likely to grow with time and the conflict between the two camps would only intensify. [19]

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