



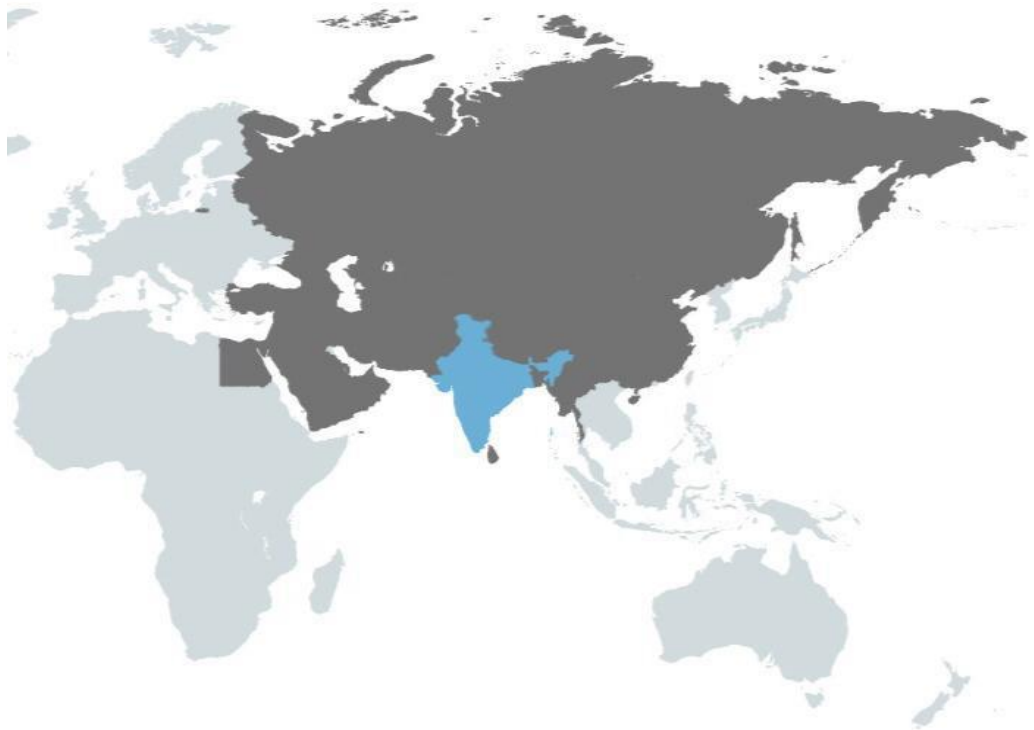
Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



INDIA STRATEGIC REVIEW

JUNE 2021



Volume II, Issue 6 | June 2021

Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003
www.delhipolicygroup.org



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

DPG India Strategic Review

Vol. II, Issue 6

June 2021

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Delhi Policy Group as an Institution.

DPG INDIA STRATEGIC REVIEW

The DPG India Strategic Review (ISR) is a monthly survey of key developments, trends and policies pertaining to India's immediate and continental neighbourhood. It is compiled by a research team which is led by Sanjay Pulipaka, Senior Fellow, and includes Research Associates Mohit Musaddi, Sanket Joshi, Shreyas Deshmukh and Anushka Nair. The ISR is based on open source official statements, reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to Mohit Musaddi at mohit@dpg.org.in. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

Cover Image:

World map

© 2021 by the Delhi Policy Group

Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,

India Habitat Centre,

Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.

www.delhipolicygroup.org

DPG India Strategic Review

Vol. II, Issue 6

June 2021

Contents

I. Overview: Responding to a Fluid Multipolar Order	
Sanjay Pulipaka and Mohit Musaddi	1
II. India and the Neighbourhood: Between Unrest and Stability	
Mohit Musaddi.....	7
III. Russia’s Engagement with India and the US	
Anushka Nair.....	15
IV. India-West Asia: Flourishing Partnership	
Sanket Joshi.....	20
V. India, CARs and PAI: Continued Uncertainty	
Shreyas Deshmukh	26

I. Overview: Responding to a Fluid Multipolar Order

Sanjay Pulipaka and Mohit Musaddi

In June, multipolarity was an important cornerstone of Indian diplomacy. Delhi hosted the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) Foreign Ministers' Summit, participated in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and was invited to three outreach sessions at the G7 Leaders' Summit. Foreign Secretary Harsh [Shringla stressed](#) that India "must have a dynamic and proactive global strategy in a multipolar world that adjusts to alliances and convergences that are fluid and issue-based".¹

The fluidity of the multipolar order was also evident in the summit meeting held between Presidents Biden and Putin in Geneva. Even though the results of the summit were meagre, it pointed towards a possible restoration of meaningful dialogue in US-Russia ties. Similar fluidity was also evident in the Middle East, with the simultaneous engagement of the major powers by Turkey, Israel and the Arab countries.

As China continues to make rapid inroads in India's neighbourhood, Delhi's development assistance in the subcontinent has registered an uptick. With Beijing unwilling to complete the disengagement process along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Delhi has increased its boots on the ground in Ladakh.

India-China

India-China border tension has now persisted for over a year, and friction points remain along the LAC. On June 25, the two countries held the 22nd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs ([WMCC](#)), in which they "agreed on the need to find an early resolution to the remaining issues along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh".² They have reportedly decided to focus on disengagement at [Gogra and Hot Springs](#), which will be discussed during the 12th round of the India-China military dialogue.³ However, there were reports that Delhi has redirected [50,000 additional troops](#) to the LAC⁴ in response to China moving "additional forces from Tibet to the Xinjiang Military Command, which is responsible for patrolling disputed areas along the Himalayas".⁵ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh travelled to Ladakh during the month and reiterated the need for talks to resolve bilateral issues with neighbours. During the month, he also [inaugurated 75 projects](#) built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), including in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, which are important to national security.⁶

Chinese companies were barred from 5G trials which commenced in India in June, underlining Delhi's intention to keep Chinese firms out of critical infrastructure. Indian companies Airtel and Tata Consultancy Services joined hands to implement the [5G broadband network](#) and related solutions in India.⁷

Neighbourhood

In India's neighbourhood, Beijing's economic engagements continued to generate concern. A [China-funded](#) coal power plant in Chattogram, Bangladesh, which was the site of recent protests, was again under the scanner for failing to comply with proper environmental standards.⁸ A government official said that Bangladesh would investigate the issue if it receives a formal complaint about air quality standards.⁹

Bangladesh's economic engagement with India continued its upward trend. India's exports to Bangladesh registered a [46 per cent increase](#) (on an annualised basis) during January-March this year.¹⁰ This is largely due to a 95.93 per cent increase in [India's agricultural exports](#) to Bangladesh in 2020-21.¹¹

On June 16, India agreed to provide Sri Lanka with a USD100 million [line of credit](#) to assist Colombo's target of renewable energy meeting 70 per cent of its national power requirements.¹² India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar, in a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, [discussed bilateral relations](#) and cooperation in multilateral mechanisms.¹³ They reportedly also discussed the China-funded Colombo Port City Project. India has expressed the hope that Sri Lanka will [remain mindful](#) of the bilateral relationship, including mutual security in the maritime domain.¹⁴

India continued to be a prompt responder to requests for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief management in the subcontinent. At the request of the Sri Lankan government, the Indian Navy's hydrographic survey ship INS Sarvekshak carried out an extensive [underwater survey](#) for MV Xpress Pearl, which sank after having caught fire in May this year.¹⁵

Political instability in Nepal continued, and no end is yet in sight. During the month, the Supreme Court of Nepal heard writ petitions against the President's move to dissolve the House of Representatives for the second time in five months. Prime Minister Oli sought to appoint new ministers to his cabinet, but the Supreme Court struck down the decision. As a result, PM Oli is left with only four cabinet ministers. Depending on the final verdict of the Supreme Court, Nepal is set to undergo fresh elections in November 2021. As China

operationalised a high-speed [rail line in Tibet](#) in June,¹⁶ there were reports that six routes have been proposed for a [China-Nepal railway line](#).¹⁷

In Myanmar, with Chinese support, the Tatmadaw is attempting to gain legitimacy on international platforms. Two events during the month indicated a willingness by some international actors to provide legitimacy to the Myanmar military coup. First, on June 3, a delegation comprising the ASEAN Secretary-General and Brunei's (ASEAN Chair) second minister for foreign affairs [visited Naypyidaw](#) and held talks with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.¹⁸ It is well known that the Chinese foreign minister held a conversation with his Brunei counterpart in April, during which he advised against "[inappropriate intervention](#)" in Myanmar.¹⁹ Second, Russia hosted General Hlaing for the [Moscow Conference on International Security](#). General Hlaing met with the secretary of the Russian Security Council and an executive from a Russian state-run arms exporter.²⁰ These developments also indicated a convergence between Moscow and Beijing in their Asia policies.

India, Russia and the US

Commenting on the larger geopolitical context, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on June 4 that [India-Russia relations](#) would continue to prosper despite closeness between Moscow and Beijing and cooperation in various sectors between Delhi and Washington.²¹ During the month, the India-Russia defence partnership registered progress with the possibility of India participating in systems trials for the [Russian Sprut-SDM1 light tanks](#).²² Significant strides were also made in India-Russia nuclear cooperation with the [commencement of work](#) on the fifth and sixth light water reactors at the Kudankulam power plant in Tamil Nadu.²³

While the summit meeting held in Geneva between Presidents Biden and Putin did not fundamentally alter the US-Russia bilateral relationship, it did raise hopes of a possible rapprochement. For India, a thaw will be a welcome development as it has the potential to increase the density of multipolarity in Asia.

India-US military cooperation continued, with the Indian Navy participating in a [Passage Exercise](#) with the US Navy's Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group in the Indian Ocean on June 23-24.²⁴ There is also an expectation that the US will soon begin [phased deliveries](#) of the 24 MH-60R Seahawk helicopters, which are being purchased for the Indian navy through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route.²⁵

Earlier, on June 3, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US Vice President Kamala Harris, in a telephone conference, discussed “ongoing efforts to further strengthen India-US vaccine cooperation” and explored the potential of the [India-US “partnership](#) to contribute to post-Covid global health and economic recovery”.²⁶ PM Modi thanked Vice President Harris “for the assurance of [vaccine supplies](#) to India.”²⁷

Officials of Quad countries are reportedly discussing the possibility of launching the [Quad Vaccine Initiative](#) to roll out 1 billion vaccines, a substantial portion of which will be allocated for “the Indo-Pacific region, including India.”²⁸ There are also reports that PM Modi may participate in the first in-person [Quad leaders’ meeting](#) in the US later this year.²⁹

Middle East

Four broad trends are impacting the larger geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East. First, the US is conducting a “major [realignment](#) of its military footprint” in the region to focus on challenges from China and Russia.³⁰ During the month, there were reports that Washington is reducing the presence of various weapons systems such as Patriot anti-missile batteries, THAAD systems, jet fighter squadrons and troops deployed in the region.³¹ Second, Turkey, while being a NATO ally, is scaling up relations with Russia. Turkey’s purchase of the Russian S400 missile system was [discussed](#) between President Biden and President Erdogan on June 14 on the sidelines of the NATO Summit.³² Third, the US’s punitive approach towards Iran is being negated through coordinated actions by Moscow and Beijing. Finally, Israel’s rapprochement with the Arab states appears likely to continue under the new Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who assumed office on June 13.

It is broadly in this fluid geopolitical context that India is seeking to scale up its engagement in the Middle East. The upward momentum in India’s relationship with Arab states continued in June with EAM Dr. Jaishankar’s visit to Kuwait on June 9-11. [India has received](#) oxygen cylinders, concentrators and other medical equipment from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.³³ While Kuwait’s immigration policy in the recent past had been a source of concern to India, the two countries [signed an agreement](#) on June 10 that will streamline the recruitment of Indian workers and provide them with “protection of the law”.³⁴

A key development during the month was the first [India-Arab Energy Forum](#) which was held virtually on June 8-9. The meeting explored “potential and challenges of cooperation in the fields of energy transition, intra-regional

power trading, hydrocarbons and nuclear power generation".³⁵ The economic partnership between India's Reliance Industries and Saudi Arabia's Aramco solidified through the appointment of the latter's chairperson as an [independent director](#) on the Reliance board.³⁶ Partnerships have moved to the provincial level as well, with greater Arab investments in India's economy, including online retail platforms. However, the pricing of crude oil by leading producers such as Saudi Arabia has been a source of concern for Delhi. There were reports that Saudi Arabia had [increased oil prices](#) for its main market of Asia and Europe, while those for the US remained constant.³⁷

[Qatar](#) has been the largest supplier of LNG and LPG to India and has recently also emerged as a key logistics and transportation hub.³⁸ In Doha, on June 9, EAM Dr. Jaishankar held discussions with the Qatari National Security Advisor against the backdrop of the Taliban-US talks held on the same day. There was speculation that the EAM may have met some Taliban leaders in Doha. However, the [MEA Spokesperson](#) called these reports "false and mischievous" and said no meeting had occurred between the EAM and any Taliban leader.³⁹

Afghanistan-Pakistan

There has been an increase in violence in Afghanistan, with the Taliban gaining foothold over large parts of the country, including cities that are vital for cross-border trade. The Taliban have [reportedly captured](#) over 100 districts and important border towns such as Sher Khan Bandar.⁴⁰

Pakistan is following dual policies with respect to Afghanistan. Islamabad is protecting and [promoting Chinese interests](#), which was evident in discussions during the China-Pakistan-Afghanistan trilateral held on June 4.⁴¹ Simultaneously, Islamabad has indicated its willingness to accommodate Washington's interests in Afghanistan. While Pakistan has maintained that it will not allow US boots on the ground or military bases on its territory, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said that the US has had "[constructive discussions](#) in the military intelligence and diplomatic channels with Pakistan on terrorism emanating from Afghanistan".⁴² Further, there were reports that the US Central Intelligence Agency director had made an [unannounced visit](#) to Pakistan in an effort to explore the possibility of a US airbase in the country.⁴³

However, Islamabad's grand geopolitical game stands alongside a dire economic situation. There has been severe stress in the Pakistani economy with weak agriculture growth and [an increased trade deficit](#).⁴⁴ Moreover, the continued listing of Pakistan in the '[grey list](#)' of the Financial Action Task Force

(FATF)⁴⁵ has dampened prospects for Pakistan's external engagement, and foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into the country.

Multilateralism

Reforming the multilateral order was the dominant theme of India's external engagements during the month. In his virtual [address to the G7](#), on June 12, PM Modi stated that "India is a natural ally for the G7 countries in defending the shared values from a host of threats stemming from authoritarianism, terrorism and violent extremism, disinformation and economic coercion".⁴⁶ India, along with the G7 countries, issued an [Open Societies Statement](#), which "reaffirmed and encouraged others to embrace the values such as democracy, social inclusion, gender equality and an effective multilateral system underpinned by principles of openness, transparency and accountability."⁴⁷

At the [BRICS foreign ministers meeting](#) held on June 1, EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar noted that as the chair of the BRICS forum on its 15th anniversary, India would work to reform the multilateral system.⁴⁸ Dr. Jaishankar also participated in the [G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting](#) on June 29, in which he "shared views on contemporary challenges" and highlighted that "livelihood, health, digital access and climate action should now constitute the new developmental priorities".⁴⁹ The Ministers adopted the '[Matera Declaration](#)', which focused on food security, nutrition and food systems.⁵⁰

During the month, India was [elected to](#) the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for 2022-24.⁵¹ India also supported the election of the Maldives' Foreign Minister, Abdulla Shahid, as President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). Subsequently, an Indian foreign service officer has been appointed as Shahid's '[chef de cabinet](#)' (chief of staff).⁵² With this development and with India as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, Delhi is better positioned to push for reform of the multilateral system and respond to the challenges of a multipolar order.

II. India and the Neighbourhood: Between Unrest and Stability¹

Mohit Musaddi

Russia and China continued to provide legitimacy to the military coup in Myanmar. There was no end in sight for Nepal's ongoing political crisis amidst a global pandemic. Bangladesh emerged as the fourth largest export destination for India, while Delhi provided USD 100 million Line of Credit to Sri Lanka. Maldives assumed the UNGA Presidency for the first time, and an Indian official has been named the 'chief of staff'. India and Bhutan held the 3rd round of development cooperation talks and also signed an MoU on environmental cooperation.

Myanmar

More than four months after the military coup, the [trial](#) of ousted Myanmar civilian leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi began on June 14.⁵³ The [main charges](#) levied against her include allegations of sedition, inciting public disorder and flouting coronavirus restrictions.⁵⁴ Some charges carry prison terms of up to 15 years, and conviction on almost any allegation will result in Suu Kyi "being banned from running in any future election".⁵⁵

The UN Security Council held a [closed-door discussion](#) on Myanmar on June 18. Myanmar's Ambassador to the UN called for "effective collective measures to prevent any possible crimes against humanity" by the military regime.⁵⁶ On June 18, the UN General Assembly adopted a draft resolution, "[The situation in Myanmar](#)", in which 119 member states, including Myanmar, voted in favour of, 36 nations abstained while Belarus voted against it.⁵⁷ India abstained from voting on the resolution as its views were not reflected in the draft, and it did not believe that the resolution would be conducive "towards strengthening [the] democratic process" in Myanmar.⁵⁸ [The resolution](#) called on the Tatmadaw to "immediately and unconditionally release" all who have been arbitrarily detained, charged or arrested.⁵⁹ Moreover, "to de-escalate violence, the Assembly called on all Member States to prevent the flow of arms to the country".⁶⁰ Even as the resolution was being adopted at the UN, Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was in Moscow to attend a [security conference](#) and reportedly discuss arms acquisitions from Russia.⁶¹ Russian

¹ In the neighbourhood, this chapter will cover developments in Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan.

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has said that Moscow is committed to deepening military ties with Myanmar.



Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Myanmar's Commander in Chief Min Aung Hlaing in Moscow, June 22, 2021

Clashes between the Tatmadaw and civilian forces continued during the month. In June, a village in central Myanmar was [set ablaze](#) by the Tatmadaw.⁶² On June 22, the Tatmadaw also [raided](#) a People's Defence Force base in Mandalay.⁶³ More and more Myanmar civilians, including Buddhist monks, have [taken up arms](#) in the fight against the military coup.⁶⁴ Some of them have joined various [ethnic armed organisations](#) (EAOs) across the country's borderlands.⁶⁵ Others have joined civilian defence forces that have sprung up in cities.

There have been reports that the Tatmadaw now has access to top-of-the-line [surveillance technology](#).⁶⁶ The Tatmadaw has sought to acquire "[forensic and surveillance technology](#) from American, Chinese, Russian and European companies" that could "extract data from smartphones, access phone conversations, and monitor people's movements".⁶⁷

It is estimated that [at least 230,000 people](#) have been dislocated, with some crossing borders, while others have been hiding in jungles.⁶⁸ Reports have emerged that more than 10,000 refugees have [crossed over](#) to Mizoram.⁶⁹

These include security personnel and lawmakers, with the latest high-profile individual being the [Chief Minister of Chin state](#).⁷⁰ On June 15, the Mizoram Chief Minister said that the Government has "[sanctioned money](#) for relief operations for Myanmar refugees in the state".⁷¹ The refugee situation along India's northeast has led to an increase in arms trafficking. On June 22, the Assam Rifles [seized large caches of arms](#) that were being smuggled from Mizoram to Myanmar, reportedly for the Chin National Army (CNA).⁷²

On June 4, General Min Aung Hlaing met with the ASEAN Secretary-General and, according to the [state media](#), discussed Myanmar's cooperation on "humanitarian issues [and] holding an election once the country was stable".⁷³

The military coup has worsened the economic situation in Myanmar. "Factories in the Japan-backed Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Yangon have [suspended operations](#) amid post-coup turmoil".⁷⁴ A report from Oxford Economics has said that the Myanmar economy [could contract](#) by 13 per cent by the end of the financial year.⁷⁵ On June 21, the [EU sanctioned](#) "8 individuals, 3 economic entities and the War Veterans Organisation in relation to the military coup".⁷⁶

On June 24, India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Myanmar to import [350,000 tonnes of lentils](#) every year from 2021-22 to 2025-26 through private trade.⁷⁷



Remains of the houses after they were burnt in Kin Ma village in Myanmar. Source: The Guardian

Nepal

On June 9, the Supreme Court of Nepal issued a [show-cause notice](#) against President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli over the dissolution of the Nepal House of Representatives.⁷⁸ The House was dissolved for the second time in five months by President Bidya Devi Bhandari in May on the advice of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, who is currently heading a minority government. [Petitions](#) were filed against the move in the Supreme Court, and a constitutional bench was set up.⁷⁹ In response to the Supreme Court's notice, the President submitted a [written clarification](#) defending the decision and contested that "any action carried out by the President as per Article 76 of the Constitution cannot become a subject of any petition and this cannot be an issue for judicial review".⁸⁰ PM Oli also issued an [18-point response](#) arguing that "government formation is a political process and that it cannot be decided by the Supreme Court".⁸¹

During the month, PM Oli also [reshuffled his cabinet](#) and appointed members from the Janata Samajbadi Party, including a deputy Prime Minister.⁸² However, on June 22, the Supreme Court [quashed the decision](#) on the grounds that PM Oli is currently heading a caretaker government and, therefore, the appointments are "against the intent and spirit of the government".⁸³ As a result, Oli is left with only five ministers in the cabinet, including himself. Depending on a final verdict by the Supreme Court, Nepal is set to undergo fresh elections in November 2021.

In preparation for the upcoming parliamentary elections, PM Oli said that "there were [misunderstandings \[with India\]](#) at one time, but now those misunderstandings are gone".⁸⁴ He also spoke on the recent surge in Covid-19 cases in India and Nepal and requested the Indian Prime Minister to "extend full cooperation to Nepal".⁸⁵ On the occasion of the International Yoga Day (June 21), PM Oli [claimed](#) that yoga had originated in Nepal, but it was unable to make it popular.⁸⁶ On June 11, the Indian Army [handed over medical equipment](#), including ventilators, ambulances and ICU beds worth NPR288 million (USD 2.43 million) to the Nepal Army.⁸⁷



Indian Envoy to Nepal hands over medical equipment to Chief of the Nepali Army, June 11, 2021. Source: Twitter/@sidhant

The political upheavals in Nepal continue amid Covid-19 and natural disasters. Heavy rain across the country has caused [floods and landslides](#), killing at least 18 people while 21 others went missing.⁸⁸ In terms of Covid-19, although Nepal seems to have passed the peak of the second wave, there is not much cause for optimism as the country still [reports](#) close to 1,500 daily new cases.⁸⁹ Kathmandu has reportedly procured four million doses of the Chinese [Sinopharm vaccine](#) under a "non-disclosure agreement".⁹⁰ Some media reports quoted the price as USD10 per dose, but the Nepal Health Ministry [dispelled](#) the reports calling the price "speculative and misleading".⁹¹

Bangladesh

India's exports of goods to Bangladesh have risen by 46 per cent (on an annualised basis) and recorded figures of USD3.16 billion during January-March 2021. As a result, Bangladesh is now India's [fourth-biggest](#) export destination, and this has largely been fuelled by "diplomatic efforts, logistics in terms of rail and waterways, and demand for agricultural items".⁹²

The pandemic has also caused a dent in Bangladesh's foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. According to the UNCTAD World Investment Report 2021, Bangladesh's [FDI inflows](#), which had dropped 10.8 per cent to USD2.6 billion in 2020, are unlikely to pick up in 2021.⁹³ Chinese investments in Bangladesh continue to come under scrutiny. A [Chinese-backed](#) coal-fired power plant,

which was subjected to a crackdown on protests in April, was found to have failed to “ensure proper environmental inspections”.⁹⁴

The Indian High Commissioner to Dhaka said on June 20 that India is keen to resume exports of [Covid-19 vaccines](#) to Bangladesh but did not say when it would be able to do so.⁹⁵ [Covid-19 cases](#) in the country had peaked at more than 7,500 per day in April 2021 and remained high at around 4,000 cases per day in June.⁹⁶ Bangladesh has vaccinated close to three per cent of its population through a combination of Pfizer, Sinopharm and the made-in-India Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines. It is also [reportedly purchasing](#) 70 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine through the COVAX initiative.⁹⁷

Sri Lanka

On June 21, India’s External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar held a [telephone conversation](#) with his Sri Lankan counterpart to review the bilateral agenda and discuss BIMSTEC, IORA and other regional mechanisms.⁹⁸ India is also closely monitoring developments in the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill. On June 17, the [MEA spokesperson](#) said that “we expect Sri Lanka will remain mindful of our excellent bilateral cooperation, including for mutual security in our shared environment, which includes the maritime domain”.⁹⁹ The project will be China-funded and is next to the main Colombo Port.

In order to fulfil Sri Lanka’s vision of ensuring that 70 per cent of its power requirements are met via renewable energy sources by 2030, the EXIM bank of India extended a Line of Credit ([LOC](#)) worth [USD100 million](#). The LOC will help finance projects in the solar energy sector for Sri Lanka and enhance global efforts to tackle climate change.¹⁰⁰

India has stepped up focus on “facilitating the [reconciliation](#) of Sri Lanka’s Tamil minority by giving them greater representation through the implementation of the 13th amendment to the country’s constitution”.¹⁰¹ On June 17, India’s High Commissioner to Sri Lanka [discussed](#) the issue with a five-member delegation from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in which the “delegation apprised [the] high commissioner on progress regarding provincial council elections”.¹⁰²

In May, the Singapore-bound MV X-Press Pearl caught fire and sank a month later in June. A UN representative warned against [potential environmental damage](#) that could “threaten lives and livelihood of the population in the coastal areas”.¹⁰³ Colombo submitted an interim claim of USD40 million to the ship’s operating company while the police launched a criminal investigation into the

incident. The [Indian Navy](#) had deployed its coast guard vessels to douse the fire and provide pollution control help.¹⁰⁴

Sri Lanka, facing an acute shortage of the AstraZeneca vaccine, has [asked Japan](#) to provide 600,000 doses for administering the second dose to its citizens.¹⁰⁵ As of March 2021, India had provided over [1.2 million doses](#) of the vaccine before it had to limit exports to meet domestic demand.¹⁰⁶ There has been an increase in the number of cases and deaths due to the celebrations and shopping during Sri Lanka's traditional New Year festival.¹⁰⁷



The MV X-Press Pearl. Source: Twitter/@SriLankaNavy

The Maldives

Male secured a multilateral victory in June as Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid was elected as the 76th [UNGA President](#) receiving 143 votes out of the 191 ballots.¹⁰⁸ The Maldives received public support from India and will occupy the office for the first time. FM Shahid has said that, as UNGA President, his [agenda will be](#) ensuring vaccine equity, addressing human rights issues and facilitating consultations for multilateral reform.¹⁰⁹ An Indian IFS officer has been named FM Shahid's '[chef de cabinet](#)'.¹¹⁰

The People's Majlis (the legislative body of the Maldives) has [voted in favour](#) of the Maldives joining the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC).¹¹¹ ICIEC is a member of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group and "was established to provide investment and export credit insurance solutions".¹¹² Male had applied in 2017 for ICIEC membership and hopes it will help "increase investment opportunities and expand businesses".¹¹³

The [tourism sector](#) in the Maldives is picking up momentum. More than 483,000 tourists have arrived in the Maldives in 2021 (as of June 16). Russians account for more than 24 per cent of arrivals, followed by Indians (18.5 per cent) and Germans (5.5 per cent).¹¹⁴

Bhutan

On June 28, Delhi and Thimphu virtually held the Third [India-Bhutan Development Co-operation Talks](#) and reviewed the “entire gamut of India’s development partnership with Bhutan”.¹¹⁵ So far, the “Government of India has committed INR4500 crore for the implementation of development projects and INR400 crore for the transitional Trade Support Facility during Bhutan’s 12th Five Year Plan (2018-2023). Seventy-seven large and intermediate projects and 524 small development projects (SDPs)/ high impact community development projects (HICDPs) are at various stages of implementation under the 12th Five Year Plan”.¹¹⁶

India and Bhutan, on June 18, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for [environmental cooperation](#), which “will open new vistas of bilateral cooperation in the area of climate change, waste management, etc.”¹¹⁷ Through the MoU, Delhi and Thimphu will also explore possibilities of conducting joint environmental projects in areas of mutual interest.¹¹⁸

In a major shift in policy, the Bhutanese Government is expected to introduce a proposal during the ongoing session of Parliament to [lift the ban](#) on the sale of tobacco products.¹¹⁹ There are frequent reports of smuggling of such products through Bhutan’s porous borders, which could be a contributing factor in the spread of Covid-19 in the country.¹²⁰ The sale, manufacture and distribution of [tobacco products](#) are banned in Bhutan since 2010, but it has allowed controlled imports after hefty duties.¹²¹

BIMSTEC

On the occasion of the 24th BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation) Day, Indian PM Narendra Modi [remarked](#) that the organisation “has emerged as a promising regional grouping to fulfil the common aspirations of its people and serve the shared interests of the Member States”.¹²² He recalled that “progress has been made on several fronts including the finalisation of the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity and the text of the BIMSTEC Charter”.¹²³ Leaders from all member states, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand, [delivered a message](#) on the occasion of the 2021 BIMSTEC Day.¹²⁴

III. Russia's Engagement with India and the US

Anushka Nair

Russia-India

On June 1, a virtual meeting of the BRICS Foreign Ministers' forum was held. India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, who chaired the meeting, identified [four key deliverables](#) for India's Chairship: reform of the multilateral system, counter-terrorism cooperation, using digital and technological solutions to achieve SDGs and enhancing people-to-people cooperation.¹²⁵ Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov addressed the media after the meeting and reiterated that both Moscow and Delhi are committed to military-technical cooperation, particularly meeting the [delivery schedule](#) for the S-400 systems that are due in India later this year.¹²⁶

Reports indicate that India will participate in system trials for the Russian Sprut-SDM1 light tanks. Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had expressed Delhi's desire to [acquire](#) the Sprut-SDM1 during his visit to Russia last year.¹²⁷ This is the first time that Russia will permit a foreign nation to witness product trials of one of its systems still under development. The tanks are of interest to India as they are suitable for use in mountainous terrain and can be deployed on India's northern borders.

INS Chakra, an Akula-class nuclear-powered attack submarine that had been leased from Moscow in December 2011, was [returned to Russia](#) in June, before the expiry of its ten-year lease period.¹²⁸ While Russian news sources reported that the submarine's return was necessitated by [significant damage](#) caused by an explosion on board in 2020, the report was later retracted.¹²⁹

India-Russia [nuclear cooperation](#) made forward strides this month, with the commencement of the construction of two new nuclear reactors at the Kudankulam power plant in Tamil Nadu.¹³⁰ The Russian nuclear firm, Rosatom, will provide technology for what will become India's first light water reactors. The two reactors (costing approximately INR49,621 crore) are expected to be commissioned in 2026 and 2027, respectively. The Russian envoy hailed the development as a [significant moment](#) for bilateral nuclear cooperation, adding that Russia was also keen to share technology on its "state-of-the-art Generation III+ Russian-designed nuclear power units at a new site in India".¹³¹

On the research and development (R&D) front, three Indian firms have been chosen to participate in joint [R&D transfer projects](#) under the India-Russia Joint Technology Assessment and Accelerated Commercialisation Programme.¹³² While two of the firms will work on medical technology, the third is being funded for joint incubation of aviation-related systems.¹³³ The three firms comprise the first batch of applicants that were accepted by the India-Russia joint venture in the commercial space after it was launched in July 2020.

Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed Moscow's commitment to its ties with New Delhi on the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and highlighted that the India-Russia Relationship was robust. President Putin alluded to Russia's attempts at bringing India and China together at numerous multilateral platforms such as BRICS and SCO on issues of mutual interest. He [noted that](#) the Moscow-Delhi relationship would not be influenced in any way by Russia's partnership with China or India's participation in any multilateral groupings such as the India-US-Japan-Australia quadrilateral alliance framework.¹³⁴ From a larger geopolitical perspective, improved Russia-US relations may alter Asian geopolitics, favourable to India.¹³⁵

Russia-US

After considerable tension and deterioration in the Russia-US relationship in the past few months, the leaders of the two nations, President Putin and President Biden, met in Geneva on June 16. Nothing significant was expected to result from the meeting by either side, and the outcome was proportionately mild.



US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva, June 16.

Source: Twitter/@mfa_russia

The leaders reached an agreement on two fronts. The first was the decision to return their ambassadors to their respective postings in Moscow and Washington, allowing for the resumption of formal [diplomatic engagement](#), which had been suspended. The Russian ambassador returned to Washington on June 20, and his American counterpart arrived in Moscow on June 24.¹³⁶ The second was the joint commitment to nuclear arms control, as was demonstrated earlier in the year by the US and Russia's extension of the New START Treaty. The [joint statement](#) referred to a strategic stability dialogue, which will serve as a foundation for future arms control and risk reduction initiatives.¹³⁷

It remains evident that the Russia-US dynamic is far from friendly. On June 20, America's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan announced that Washington is preparing [fresh sanctions](#) against Moscow over the Alexei Navalny poisoning case.¹³⁸ Earlier, Russian President Putin had remarked that "Navalny received his due punishment for violating the terms of his probation."¹³⁹ Navalny's case has been a sore point for months in Russia's ties with the United States as well as the European Union, with both placing sanctions on senior Russian officials over the incident.

Russia announced that it would go ahead with the decision to [exit the Open Skies Treaty](#), with effect from December 18 this year.¹⁴⁰ The development comes after President Biden's administration announced that it would not re-join the accord that his predecessor had withdrawn from in November 2020. Moscow's move has been [decried by NATO's](#) North Atlantic Council, saying that it was backing away from "an important legally binding instrument which contributes to transparency, security and stability, and mutual confidence in the Euro-Atlantic area."¹⁴¹

Election Update

On June 17, the Kremlin issued a release announcing September 19, 2021, as the date for the [election to](#) the State Duma, Russia's lower House of Parliament.¹⁴² President Putin has attempted to give his United Russia ruling party a much-needed boost by promising infrastructure, health and education expenditures for the months leading up to the election. He has also presented his two most popular ministers, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, to head the candidates' list for the polls. Both ministers enjoy considerable support among the citizenry for their staunch views on the Western challenge to Russia and are expected to play a key role in this election to help cement Putin's position and public image by the time of the Presidential election in 2024.

Russian authorities have also proceeded to wipe out any significant opposition to the ruling party by [introducing a law](#) that prohibits 'extremists', 'foreign agents' and affiliates of 'undesirable organisations' from occupying any public office, without any concrete information as to who would be classified under these categories.¹⁴³ UN Human Rights chief Michelle Bachelet criticised Russia's [stifling of civil liberties](#), particularly highlighting jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny and his political movement that the Russian Government has worked to actively dismantle.¹⁴⁴ It is well known that the Russian Government sees "any rebuke from the West as interference in Russia's domestic affairs".¹⁴⁵ While most of Navalny's allies had hoped to run for office in September, they now stand barred from contesting for their ties to Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption.

Moscow Security Conference

Russia's Defence Ministry declared open the [ninth Moscow Conference](#) on International Security (MCIS 2021) on June 23.¹⁴⁶ The conference hosted 700 participants this year, both in-person and virtually, including defence and foreign policy ministers, military chiefs and delegations from over 109 countries.¹⁴⁷ Apart from India, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Pakistan sent delegations to the conference. The plenary sessions covered security concerns of different regions of the world and the role played by militaries in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.



The 9th Moscow Conference on International Security. Source: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation

Vaccine Update

Speaking at the MCIS, the Russian Security Council Secretary made a statement that Russia would never use its Covid vaccines with an [ulterior political motive](#) while claiming that some Western nations have been doing that.¹⁴⁸ The statement seems to be a response to the observations of US President Biden last month, in which he accused Russia and China of using their vaccine diplomacy to gain political favours globally.

India received the first batch of 150,000 doses of Sputnik V in May and has begun administration of the vaccine in June. After the BRICS meeting, FM Lavrov stated that Moscow would be delivering the second batch of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine to India soon. On June 5, Brazil became the 67th country to [approve the Sputnik V](#) vaccine for use.¹⁴⁹ Sputnik V is now ranked second globally in terms of the number of government-issued approvals for use. The single-dose Sputnik Light vaccine is also making progress, with Mauritius, Mongolia, and the Republic of Congo issuing approvals for it in June.

Russia's own vaccination drive, however, is not progressing too well. Figures shared by the Deputy Prime Minister on June 23 indicate that about [16 million](#) Russians have been fully vaccinated, and over 20 million have received their first shot of one of Russia's three approved vaccines, which implies that only about 14 per cent of Russia's population has so far been vaccinated.¹⁵⁰ Polls show that 6 out of 10 Russians [do not support](#) the move of making vaccines compulsory, as the Government has announced in Moscow and three other regions for the time being.¹⁵¹

IV. India-West Asia: Flourishing Partnership

Sanket Joshi

India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar, visited Kuwait on June 10 and celebrated the 60th anniversary of [India-Kuwait relations](#) in the company of his counterpart.¹⁵² The two sides signed an MoU that will streamline the recruitment of Indian workers by giving them [greater protection](#) and discussed ways to boost cooperation in the food, cyber, and energy security sectors.¹⁵³ Further, EAM Dr. Jaishankar held a meeting with Indian [Ambassadors to the Gulf countries](#), focusing on the welfare of the Indian community in the region. He called for a speedy resumption of flights and pushed trade interests that would contribute to economic recovery in India.¹⁵⁴



External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar launches the celebration of the 60th anniversary of India-Kuwait diplomatic relations, June 10, 2021. Source: Twitter/@DrSJaishankar

Dr. Jaishankar also met Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani to show New Delhi's [appreciation for Doha's solidarity](#) with India during the second wave of COVID-19.¹⁵⁵ Qatar's special envoy for counter-terrorism and conflict resolution, Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani spoke about his belief that "India was [engaging with the Taliban](#) as the group is seen as a "key component" in any future Afghan government".¹⁵⁶ In this context, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs stressed that it remains "in [touch with various stakeholders](#) in [Afghanistan], including regional countries".¹⁵⁷ Further, the MEA drew attention to "the recent statement made by External Affairs Minister at the [United Nations Security Council Debate](#) earlier in the week which lays out India's concerns at the upsurge in violence and vision for [Afghanistan's] future".¹⁵⁸

On the occasion of International Yoga Day, New Delhi and Riyadh signed an MoU to increase cooperation and promote [yoga in Saudi Arabia](#).¹⁵⁹ It will help establish formal yoga standards and courses in the Kingdom.¹⁶⁰ In a development of great impact for Indian Muslims, Saudi Arabia has once again [barred foreign travellers](#) from performing Hajj this year, owing to concerns over the spread of COVID-19.¹⁶¹ A total of 60,000 fully vaccinated pilgrims residing in Saudi Arabia alone will be allowed to perform the Hajj.¹⁶² Saudi Arabia has also recognised [India's Covishield vaccine](#) as equivalent to the AstraZeneca dose.¹⁶³



India and Saudi Arabia sign Memorandum of Understanding on Yoga Cooperation, June 22, 2021. Source: Twitter/@IndianEmbRiyadh

Energy Security

Energy security issues continued to figure prominently in India-Saudi relations. Over the past few months, India has urged the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) to [ease global output cuts](#) to rein in surging oil prices.¹⁶⁴ In reply to Delhi's concerns, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India stressed "Riyadh's commitment to meet India's [requirements of petroleum products](#)".¹⁶⁵ As the global demand for crude recovers, there are reports that [oil prices may rise](#) further to touch USD80 per barrel in the near future.¹⁶⁶ Further, as crude prices surged above USD70 per barrel and OPEC forecast that global demand would heavily outstrip supply over the rest of the year, Saudi Arabia increased [oil prices](#) of its key Arab light grade for July shipments to Asia.¹⁶⁷

The [First Arab-India energy forum](#) was held in a virtual format on June 8 and 9, 2021, under the co-chairmanship of India and the Kingdom of Morocco.¹⁶⁸ The forum "explored the potential and challenges of cooperation in the fields of the energy transition, intra-regional power trading, hydrocarbons and nuclear power generation".¹⁶⁹

Economic Relations

In a major development, [Yasir Al-Rumayyan](#), Chairman of Saudi Aramco and the Governor of the Public Investment Fund (PIF), has joined the board of India's Reliance Industries as an independent director.¹⁷⁰ "Reliance in 2019 had announced its interest to sell a 20 per cent stake in the company's flagship [chemicals and refining business](#) to Saudi Aramco in a deal valued at USD15 billion"; this deal could materialise this year.¹⁷¹ Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India highlighted that "Saudi Arabia in 2020 made investments worth USD2.81 billion in India and is looking at greater momentum in bilateral economic ties in areas like petroleum, renewable energy, IT, and artificial intelligence".¹⁷² Further, on June 14-15, the Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia organised a Telangana [investment seminar](#) in partnership with Saudi Centre for International Strategic Partnership (SCISP) and the Telangana government.¹⁷³

During the month, the [Indian Ambassador to Egypt](#) addressed 3P Egypt International Expo 2021 about "India-Egypt Business Promotion, Challenges, and Opportunities".¹⁷⁴ The Indian Ambassador stressed Egypt's strategic location, political stability and Cairo's liberal economic policies that have enabled Indian industries to invest more than USD3.15 billion in the country.¹⁷⁵

[India-UAE](#) economic relations have strengthened despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷⁶ Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund, 'ADQ', is in

talks to invest USD500 million in the Indian [e-commerce platform 'Flipkart'](#).¹⁷⁷ The Indian Ambassador further shared that in the financial year that ended in March 2021, India received USD81.7 billion foreign direct investment (FDI), of which USD3.5 billion investments came through the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) and Mubadala Investment Company.¹⁷⁸ The Indian Ambassador highlighted the "continuous flow of goods between the two countries, despite the restrictions imposed by lockdown", including "creation of a food security corridor".¹⁷⁹

India plays an important role in the food security of the Gulf countries. In FY21, [India's agricultural exports](#) (cereals, non-basmati rice, wheat, millets, maize, and other coarse grains) have jumped 17.34 per cent to USD 41.25 billion.¹⁸⁰ In a related development, mangoes from the Indian states of West Bengal and Bihar are being displayed at a week-long [mango promotion](#) programme in Bahrain.¹⁸¹ India has also started exporting Geographical Indications (GI) certified '[Jalgaon Banana](#)' (hailing from the western Indian state of Maharashtra) to Dubai.¹⁸²

India-Israel Partnership

Along with Arab countries, India's partnership with Israel has picked up momentum in the recent past. [Naftali Bennett](#) was sworn in as Israel's new Prime Minister ousting long-term PM Benjamin Netanyahu. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Naftali Bennett and stressed the need to further strengthen the "[strategic partnership](#) between the two countries, as New Delhi and Tel Aviv celebrate 30 years of the upgradation of diplomatic relations next year".¹⁸³ The Israeli Government confirmed [Naor Gilon](#) as Tel Aviv's next Ambassador to India.¹⁸⁴

Security Developments

In continuation to India's defence outreach in the region, the Indian Navy's 'INS Trikanth' participated in the maiden anti-piracy "[IN-EUNAVFOR](#)" [joint naval exercise](#) in the Gulf of Aden with warships from Italy, Spain, and France on June 18 and 19.¹⁸⁵



INS Trikand participates in maiden "IN-EUNAVFOR" joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Aden, June 18, 2021. Source: Twitter/@indiannavy

India is tracking down cadres who [joined the Islamic State](#) (IS) in Syria and Afghanistan. The exact number who joined the IS in Middle East (West Asia) is not known; however, according to some reports, the number could be around 60, including women and children.¹⁸⁶ There are concerns that the return of these individuals, without proper verification processes, may result in a spike in domestic terrorism. India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) has released visuals of suspects involved in the [blast near the Israeli Embassy](#) in New Delhi in January 2021.¹⁸⁷ Subsequently, [four suspects have been arrested](#) from the Indian Union Territory of Ladakh (Kargil) in connection with this blast.¹⁸⁸

[India defended its decision](#) to abstain in a vote at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that led to the setting up of an inquiry into rights violations during the recent Israel-Hamas conflict.¹⁸⁹ New Delhi stressed that this was not a new position, and it has acted in a similar manner in the past also.¹⁹⁰

Regional Dimensions

In an important development, Turkish President Erdogan, during his meeting with US President Biden at the NATO summit, made it clear that [Turkey will not change its stance](#) on the purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defence system for which Washington has imposed sanctions on Ankara.¹⁹¹ Turkey's relations with Russia and the US need to be monitored as it will have an impact on regional security.

At the sixth round of the Vienna [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#) (JCPOA) talks on June 20, the Russian Ambassador underscored that "[t]here are a few

controversial points which require political decisions. Apparently diplomatic efforts to find common language have been almost fully exhausted. So, the time has come for political decisions".¹⁹² Enrique Mora, the European Union official who chaired the meeting, stressed that "we are closer to a deal, but we are not still there".¹⁹³

In a significant [downscaling of its military presence](#), the United States is pulling out approximately eight Patriot anti-missile batteries from the Middle East countries that include Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.¹⁹⁴ Washington's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System (THAAD) is also being removed from Saudi Arabia.¹⁹⁵ This move comes amid the US global force posture review aimed at redeployment to confront the Chinese and Russian challenges.¹⁹⁶



US Patriot missile battery (file photo). Source: US Department of Defense

V. India, CARs and PAI²: Continued Uncertainty

Shreyas Deshmukh

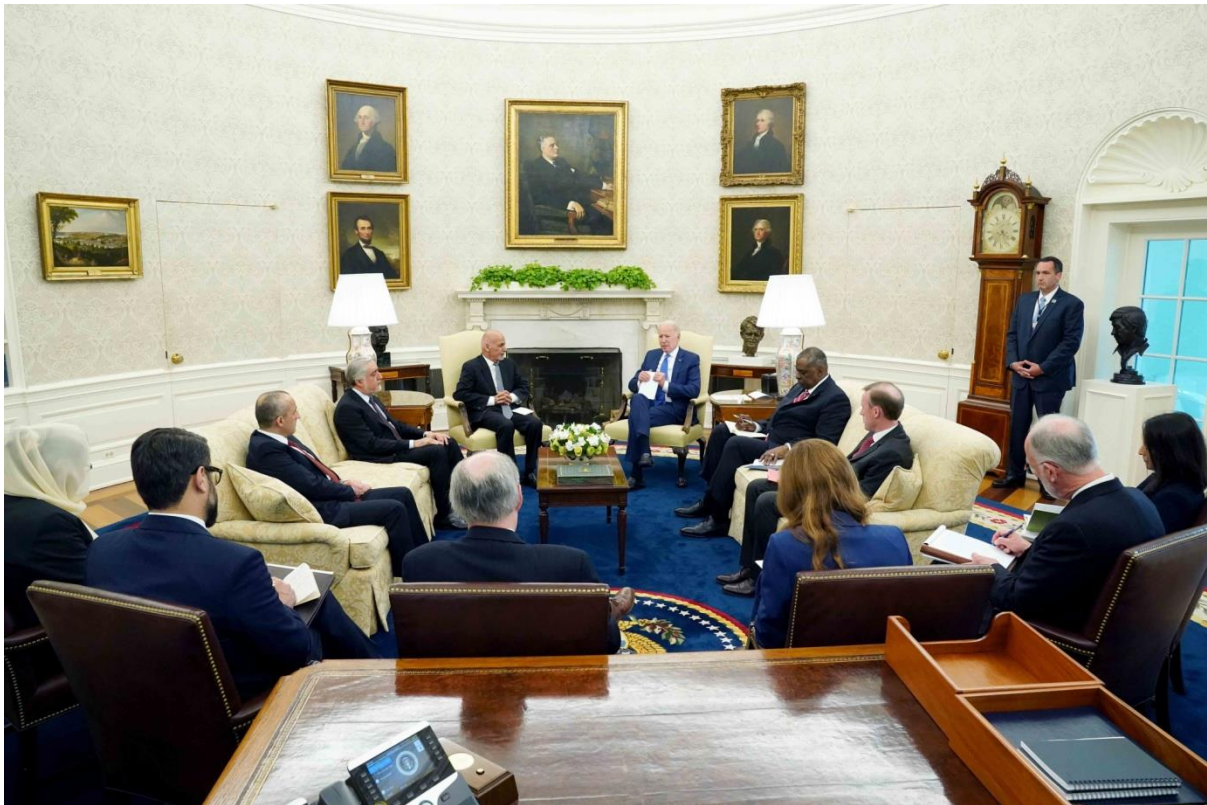
A surge in violence in Afghanistan has propelled fears of the country spiralling into a civil war. Pakistan, on the other hand, continues to maximise benefits from geopolitical uncertainties. The Central Asian Republics (CARs) are focused on strengthening borders and maintaining a diplomatic balance between Russia, China, and the US. A brief account of events that have taken place in the month of June is presented below.

Afghanistan: On Brink of Civil War

Since May 2021, the Taliban have [captured](#) more than 100 districts in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁷ In one of the most significant gains, on June 22, the Taliban seized [Sher Khan Bandar](#), the main border crossing with Tajikistan, 50km from Kunduz city.¹⁹⁸ With the fall of the dry port city, the Afghanistan government is currently losing more than USD32,000 per day in income from the [customs office](#).¹⁹⁹ If the situation continues to deteriorate, it will force local militias to protect their areas, leading to a civil war-like situation. According to media reports, the minority Hazara community has already started forming their [army](#) called 'self-protection groups'.²⁰⁰ Hundreds of public uprising forces have been [deployed](#) in the main areas of Mazar-e-Sharif to protect the city from a possible attack by the Taliban.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, the Taliban is using the [chaos](#) and the Government's inability to protect its citizens from spreading its influence and hinted that only the Taliban's Islamic governance model could bring stability to the country.²⁰²

The lack of leadership and internal political conflicts have further weakened the Afghan Government's position. On June 20, President Ghani announced the [appointment](#) of Gen. Bismillah Khan Mohammadi as new Acting Minister of Defence, Gen. Abdul Sattar Mirzawal as Acting Minister of Interior, and Gen. Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai as the new Army Chief amidst the surge in violence.²⁰³ During the month, President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah also expectedly travelled to Washington to meet President Biden. President Biden [assured them](#) that the US is going to "stick with" Afghanistan. But Kabul needs more than promises right now; it needs sustenance for the Government and an immediate ceasefire.²⁰⁴

² CARs stand for Central Asian Republics and PAI stands for Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran.



President Ashraf Ghani and President Biden at the White House, June 26, 2021.

Source: Twitter/@DrabdullahCE

The US will vacate its airbases in July 2021. Considering the offensive launched by the Taliban, the Pentagon is seeking [authorisation](#) to carry out airstrikes to support the Afghan security forces if Kabul or another major city is at risk of falling to the Taliban.²⁰⁵ Meanwhile, Turkey agreed to take over the [responsibility](#) of protecting Kabul airport in a USD130 million deal with NATO.²⁰⁶ A secure airport is essential for the presence of diplomatic missions in the country. The US also announced that it would maintain [650 troops](#) to protect its mission after the withdrawal.²⁰⁷ The Taliban has [opposed](#) the move and has warned countries of adverse consequences should they plan to retain a military presence in Afghanistan.²⁰⁸

On June 20, the foreign ministers of Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan held a [trilateral meeting](#) in Antalya and emphasised the need for active cooperation among countries to contribute to the peace process.²⁰⁹ Earlier on June 5-6, the foreign ministers of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan held meetings in Herat, Afghanistan, to discuss key regional [energy transfer](#) and trade projects, including the TAPI pipeline and the Lapis Lazuli transit route.²¹⁰

News reports suggest that, for the first time, the Indian Government has [opened channels](#) of communication with nationalist Afghan Taliban leaders, including the group's deputy leader Mullah Ghani Baradar. India has continued

to maintain steady engagement with the Afghan leaders as MEA's Secretary (PAI) visited Kabul in May 2021.²¹¹ On June 22, Indian Foreign Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar participated in the UNSC debate on the [UN Assistance Mission](#) in Afghanistan in which he advocated a leading role for the United Nations, as it "would help improve the odds for a lasting and durable outcome".²¹²

Pakistan: Using Afghanistan as an Opportunity

In the 4th China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue, which was organised on June 3, Chinese Foreign Minister [Wang Yi](#) laid down a detailed economic plan to bring Afghanistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Afghanistan is geo-economically important for both Pakistan and China, and both countries are interdependent in terms of protecting their interests in Afghanistan. China has geopolitical heft and economic capital to invest, while Pakistan knows the rules of engagement in Afghanistan.

While talking to the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives on June 10, Pakistan FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that peace in Afghanistan is a prerequisite for [economic progress](#) in Pakistan and the region.²¹³ While the Pakistan leadership has welcomed the US decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, it is also [blaming](#) the US for the sudden withdrawal.²¹⁴ Taliban interlocutors have frequently been travelling between Qatar and Pakistan for consultation. To resolve these issues and others, including logistical support and its need for an airbase in Pakistan to build 'over the horizon' capability, the CIA director [reportedly](#) visited Rawalpindi in May.²¹⁵ Pakistani officials have demanded numerous restrictions for operationalising a US base in the country.²¹⁶

Pakistan is using the same leverage with other regional countries, including Russia. In a telephone conversation between the foreign ministers on June 14, the two countries [agreed to work closely](#) for an early negotiated political settlement of the Afghan issue.²¹⁷ Earlier, in the last week of May, Pakistan and Russia signed the amended Inter-Governmental Agreement for North-South Gas Pipeline (NSGPP) of 1,122 Km from Port Qasim (Karachi) to Kasur (Punjab) at an initial cost of USD2.25 billion. According to this renegotiated agreement, the North-South Gas pipeline has been renamed as Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP), and Islamabad will have 74 per cent stake while Russia will have a 26 per cent equity." At present, there is [no pipeline](#) available to transport the imported RLNG within the country.²¹⁸



General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan Chief of Army Staff, discussed Afghan Peace Process related developments with Mr Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, June 24, 2021. Source: ISPR

The Pakistan Army has also launched an extensive outreach to establish strategic relations with other countries. During his visit to Islamabad on June 2, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon signed an MoU to [buy weapons](#) from Pakistan.²¹⁹ Pakistan Chief of Army Staff General Bajwa visited [Azerbaijan](#)²²⁰ on June 21 and also travelled to [Turkey](#)²²¹ and [Germany](#)²²². During his meetings with his counterparts, the Afghan peace process and enhancing bilateral military cooperation were the main issues discussed. In May, Gen Bajwa [had travelled to Ukraine](#) and observe field tests of various weapons and equipment at the Military Test Site in the Kharkiv region.²²³

Pakistan: A National Budget Which Leads Nowhere

Newly-appointed Pakistan Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin presented the [national budget](#) for 2021-2022 on June 11. Even with deepening structural issues, Mr. Tarin presented positive numbers such as a current growth rate of 3.9 per cent and a targeted growth rate of 4.8 per cent in the coming year.²²⁴ He has also placed an ambitious tax [collection target](#) of PKR5.8 trillion (USD36.6 billion). However, it should be noted that the country is still failing to recover its energy bills.²²⁵ Data provided in the [Pakistan Economic Survey 2020-21](#)²²⁶ is contrary to the ground realities; there is no growth in the agricultural sector, a

decline in FDI, and a rising trade deficit as the country has become a [net importer](#) of food items (sugar, wheat, palm oil).²²⁷ Following a populist path, with an eye on the National Assembly elections due in 2023, the Finance Minister has been opposing the IMF suggested [structural changes](#).²²⁸ Besides, Pakistan has already received a large chunk promised under the EEF facility from IMF and secured large sums from Saudi and the World Bank in June. As a result of Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Saudi in May, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) approved a PKR37.4-billion (USD 236.5 million) [loan for the construction](#) of the 800 megawatt Mohmand hydropower project in Pakistan, at an interest rate of 2 per cent and a 25-year repayment period, on June 10.²²⁹ Pakistan also secured USD4.5 billion funding for a three-year period under the [trade financing facility](#) from the Jeddah-based Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) to cover the import cost of crude, petroleum products, and liquefied natural gas (LNG).²³⁰ This may increase Pakistan's foreign currency reserve and help reduce pressure on the Government in the short term, but Prime Minister Imran Khan, who won the elections promising economic stability in the country, has so far failed to deliver on his promise.

Central Asia and Iran

The month of June has seen relative stability and little activity on the India-CARs front. Iran was engaged in presidential elections and focused on crucial ongoing JCPOA talks.



On the sidelines of the SCO NSAs Meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Indian NSA Ajit Doval met his Russian counterpart Nikolai Patrushev, June 25, 2021. Source: Twitter/@NSAajitdoval

On June 23-24, Indian National Security Advisor Mr. Ajit Doval [participated](#) in the 16th Meeting of Security Council Secretaries of SCO member states in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.²³¹ The meeting was also attended by the Pakistan and Afghanistan national security advisors. However, there was no report of any interaction between India's NSA and his Pakistan counterpart Dr. Moeed Yusuf. Mr. Doval held discussions with Russian NSA Nikolai Patrushev.

The Union Cabinet of India has given its ex-post facto approval for the signing and [ratification of an agreement](#) on "Cooperation in the field of Mass Media" between all the Member States of SCO, which was signed two years ago. The agreement will promote equal and mutually beneficial cooperation among associations in the field of mass media.²³²

The Pasteur Institute of Iran (IPI) and India's Bharat Biotech have signed an agreement on the exchange and transfer of knowledge on the [rotavirus vaccine](#) on June 19, 2021. It will be an effective step towards decreasing the number of cases among children with rotavirus.²³³ During the signing ceremony, Iran's Ambassador to New Delhi expressed the hope that the Bharat Biotech-manufactured COVID-19 vaccine could soon be delivered to Iran.

Defence Updates

- The Pakistan government proposed a PKR1370 billion [defence budget](#) for the fiscal year 2021-22, which shows a 6.28 per cent increase over the estimated allocations for the year 2020-21. The proposed allocations are 16.1 per cent of the federal budget's total outlay of PKR8,480 billion and 2.8 per cent of the GDP.²³⁴
- Iran's navy took delivery of two [new warships](#) on June 14. One is indigenously made and equipped with a helicopter landing pad and a range of defence and attack systems. Another is a minesweeper named "Shahin", which is over 33 metres in length and is capable of detecting and neutralising diverse types of naval mines.²³⁵
- The manufacturing of the fourth MILGEM Class Corvette for the Pakistan Navy (PN) began with the performance of the [steel cutting ceremony](#), which was held at Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KS&EW) on June 15. The PN has concluded a contract with M/s ASFAT for the construction of four corvettes, of which two are being constructed at the Istanbul Naval Shipyard and the remaining two at KS&EW. These corvettes will be fitted with the surface, sub-surface and anti-air weapons and sensors, integrated through an advanced Network Centric Combat Management System.²³⁶

ENDNOTES

I. Overview: Responding to a Fluid Multipolar Order

- ¹ "Foreign Secretary's Vimarsh Talk on "Global Rebalancing and India's Foreign Policy", Vivekananda International Foundation", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 30, 2021
- ² "22nd Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 25, 2021
- ³ Shishir Gupta, "India-China to discuss Gogra-Hot Springs disengagement, Depsang is a 2013 legacy", [Hindustan Times](#), June 29, 2021
- ⁴ Sudhi Ranjan Sen, "India Shifts 50,000 Troops to China Border in Historic Move", [Bloomberg](#), June 28, 2021
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Krishn Kaushik, "Rajnath in Ladakh: Neighbours can talk, need pure intentions", [The Indian Express](#), June 29, 2021
- ⁷ "Airtel and TCS announce collaboration for 'Made in India' 5G network", [Business Standard](#), June 21, 2021
- ⁸ "China-backed coal plant in Bangladesh is accused of omitting critical pollution data", [The Print](#), June 15, 2021
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Rajeev Jayaswal, "Bangladesh is now among India's top 5 export destinations", [Hindustan Times](#), June 17, 2021
- ¹¹ "India's agriculture exports jump to \$ 41 billion despite pandemic disruptions", [Economic Times](#), June 10, 2021
- ¹² "India extends USD 100 million Line of Credit to Sri Lanka for solar energy projects", [The Economic Times](#), June 17, 2021
- ¹³ Dr. S. Jaishankar, [Twitter Post](#), June 21, 2021, 4:43 PM IST
- ¹⁴ "Transcript of Virtual Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 17, 2021
- ¹⁵ Dinakar Peri, [Twitter Post](#), June 29, 2021, 2:49 PM IST
- ¹⁶ Maggie Hiufu Wong, "Tibet's first bullet train line enters service", [CNN](#), June 30, 2021
- ¹⁷ Stephen Chen, "China-Nepal rail link may go through protected Himalayan park", [South China Morning Post](#), June 26, 2021
- ¹⁸ "ASEAN envoys arrive in Myanmar for talks with junta chief", [France24](#), June 3, 2021
- ¹⁹ "Senior Chinese diplomat hopes ASEAN summit helps with Myanmar 'soft landing'", [Reuters](#), April 23, 2021
- ²⁰ "Myanmar junta chief woos Russia with Moscow trip", [Nikkei Asia](#), June 22, 2021
- ²¹ "Putin confident Russian-Indian relations will continue to develop", [TASS](#), June 4, 2021
- ²² Snehash Alex Philip, "India sets eyes on Russian Sprut light tanks to counter China, gets rare access to trials", [The Print](#), June 14, 2021
- ²³ Rezaul H. Laskar, "Russian agency begins work on 5th reactor at Kudankulam nuclear power plant", [Hindustan Times](#), June 29, 2021
- ²⁴ Elizabeth Roche, "Indian naval ships to join maritime patrol of US Navy's Passage Exercise", [Mint](#), June 22, 2021
- ²⁵ Huma Siddiqui, "Deadly 'Romeos' helicopters coming to India! Indian Navy to get first MH-60Rs", [Financial Express](#), June 7, 2021
- ²⁶ Narendra Modi, [Twitter Post](#), June 3, 2021, 9:30 PM IST
- ²⁷ Narendra Modi, [Twitter Post](#), June 3, 2021, 9:30 PM IST
- ²⁸ Shubhajit Roy, "1 billion doses: Delta surge makes Quad rethink, rollout may be year early", [The Indian Express](#), June 27, 2021
- ²⁹ "Modi may travel to US for Quad Summit", [The Times of India](#), June 16, 2021
- ³⁰ Gordon Lubold, Nancy A. Youssef and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Military to Withdraw Hundreds of Troops, Aircraft, Antimissile Batteries From Middle East", [The Wall Street Journal](#), June 18, 2021
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Amanda Macias, "Biden unable to reach agreement with Turkey's Erdogan over Russian missile system deal during NATO summit", [CNBC](#), June 17, 2021
- ³³ "Indian Naval ship docks in Dammam for oxygen containers, medical equipment", [Saudi Gazette](#), June 2, 2021
Also see, "INS Tarkash brings medical oxygen consignment from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia", [India Strategic](#), June 2021
- ³⁴ "India, Kuwait Sign Pact For Cooperation On Recruitment Of Indian Workers", [NDTV](#), June 11, 2021
- ³⁵ "The first Arab-India Energy Forum (June 8-9, 2021)", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 9, 2021
- ³⁶ Sambit Mohanty and Agamoni Ghosh (ed), "Reliance, Saudi Aramco closer than ever in sealing their marriage", [S&P Global](#), June 30, 2021
- ³⁷ "Saudi Arabia increase oil prices for India, other Asian countries", [Mint](#), June 4, 2021
- ³⁸ Shishir Gupta, "Foreign minister S Jaishankar on thank you mission to Kuwait via Qatar", [Hindustan Times](#), June 9, 2021
- ³⁹ "Transcript of Virtual Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), July 2, 2021
- ⁴⁰ "Taliban control Tajikistan border crossing as Ghani heads to US", [France24](#), June 23, 2021
- ⁴¹ "Joint Statement of the Fourth China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue – On Deepening Trilateral Cooperation", [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China](#), June 4, 2021
- ⁴² "US had constructive discussions with Pakistan on Afghanistan issue: National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan", [The Economic Times](#), June 8, 2021
- ⁴³ Mark Mazzetti and Julian E. Barnes, "C.I.A. Scrambles for New Approach in Afghanistan", [The New York Times](#), June 6, 2021
- ⁴⁴ Mubarak Zeb Khan, "Trade deficit swells to \$30.8bn in FY21", [Dawn](#), July 2, 2021
- ⁴⁵ Suhasini Haider, "Pakistan to stay on FATF 'greylist' over failure to convict UNSC-designated terror leaders", [The Hindu](#), June 25, 2021
- ⁴⁶ Rezaul H Laskar, "India a natural G7 ally: PM at summit", [Hindustan Times](#), June 13, 2021
- ⁴⁷ "G7 and Guest Countries: 2021 Open Societies Statement", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 13, 2021

- ⁴⁸ "Welcome Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 1, 2021
- ⁴⁹ Dr. S. Jaishankar, [Twitter Post](#), June 30, 2021, 12:36 AM IST
- ⁵⁰ "Matera Declaration on food security, nutrition and food systems", [G20 Italy](#), June 29, 2021
- ⁵¹ Arpan Rai (ed), "India joins UN Economic and Social Council for 2022-24 term: All you need to know", [Hindustan Times](#), June 8, 2021
- ⁵² Yashwant Raj, "Indian IFS officer K Nagaraj Naidu named to lead UN bureaucracy for a year", [Hindustan Times](#), June 10, 2021

II. India and the Neighbourhood: Between Unrest and Stability

- ⁵³ Jessie Yeung, "Trial begins for ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi following military coup", [CNN](#), June 14, 2021
- ⁵⁴ "Suu Kyi confronted with sedition charge on 2nd day of trial", [The Hindu](#), June 15, 2021
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ "Myanmar's UN envoy calls for 'effective' measures ahead of Council meeting", [Frontier Myanmar](#), June 15, 2021
- ⁵⁷ "India abstains on resolution on Myanmar", [The Hindu](#), June 20, 2021
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ "General Assembly Reappoints Secretary-General to Second Five-Year Term, Adopting Resolution Condemning Lethal Violence by Myanmar's Armed Forces", [United Nations GA/12339](#), June 18, 2021
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ "Russia says to boost military ties with Myanmar as junta leader visits", [Reuters](#), June 23, 2021
- ⁶² "Junta troops burn Myanmar village to the ground after fighting, residents say", [CNN](#), June 17, 2021
- ⁶³ Hanah Beech, "Resistance Fighters Battle Myanmar's Military in Mandalay", [The New York Times](#), June 22, 2021
- ⁶⁴ "Buddhist Monk Takes up Arms Against The Myanmar Junta", [Radio Free Asia](#), June 15, 2021
- ⁶⁵ Emily Fishbein, Thang DeihTuang and Nu NuLusan, "Our only option': Myanmar civilians take up arms for democracy", [Al Jazeera](#), June 15, 2021
- ⁶⁶ Thin, [Twitter Post](#), June 16, 2021, 5:24 PM IST
- ⁶⁷ Zach Campbell and Caitlin L. Chandler, "Tools for repression in Myanmar expose gap between EU tech investment and regulation", [The Intercept](#), June 14, 2021
- ⁶⁸ Emily Fishbein, Thang DeihTuang and Nu NuLusan, "Our only option': Myanmar civilians take up arms for democracy", [Al Jazeera](#), June 15, 2021
- ⁶⁹ Henry L Khojol, "Over 10,000 Myanmar refugees now taking shelter in Mizoram", [East Mojo](#), June 28, 2021
- ⁷⁰ "Myanmar province CM in Mizoram", [The Hindu](#), June 16, 2021
- ⁷¹ Henry L Khojol, "Mizoram CM: Money sanctioned for relief operations for Myanmar refugees", [East Mojo](#), June 16, 2021
- ⁷² "Arms bound for Myanmar seized in Mizoram", [The Hindu](#), June 22, 2021
- ⁷³ "Myanmar junta opponents say no faith in ASEAN as envoys visit", [Reuters](#), June 4, 2021
- ⁷⁴ "Factories Shuttered in Myanmar's First Special Economic Zone Amid Post-Coup Turmoil", [The Irrawaddy](#), June 9, 2021
- ⁷⁵ Sharon See, "Once a 'growth star', Myanmar GDP could contract 13% due to political crisis: Oxford Economics", [The Business Times](#), June 25, 2021
- ⁷⁶ "Myanmar/Burma: third round of EU sanctions over the military coup and subsequent repression", [European Council](#), June 21, 2021
- ⁷⁷ Jayashree Bhosale, "India signs 5-year pulses import deals with Myanmar, Malawi", [The Economic Times](#), June 26, 2021
- ⁷⁸ "Supreme Court issues show cause notice to offices of the President and prime minister over House dissolution", [The Kathmandu Post](#), June 9, 2021
- ⁷⁹ "Constitutional Bench proceeds with hearing writs against House dissolution", [The Himalayan Times](#), June 9, 2021
- ⁸⁰ Tika R Pradhan, "Bhandari, Oli defend House dissolution, Sapkota calls it unconstitutional", [The Kathmandu Post](#), June 18, 2021
- ⁸¹ "Oli says government formation a political process and it cannot be decided by the court", [The Kathmandu Post](#), June 17, 2021
- ⁸² Tika R Pradhan, "For Oli, power—not governance—is priority, as country fights virus wave", [The Kathmandu Post](#), June 4, 2021
- ⁸³ Tika R Pradhan, "In a big blow to Oli, Supreme Court annuls appointments of 20 ministers", [The Kathmandu Post](#), June 23, 2021
- ⁸⁴ "Nepal PM Oli says 'misunderstandings' with India resolved", [The Hindu](#), June 7, 2021
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ Karan Manral, "'Yoga originated in Nepal': KP Sharma Oli's latest startling claim", [Hindustan Times](#), June 22, 2021
- ⁸⁷ Sidhant Sibal, [Twitter Post](#), June 11, 2021, 4:33 PM IST
- ⁸⁸ "Landslides and floods kill 18 in Nepal", [The Hindu](#), June 20, 2021
- ⁸⁹ "Nepal: Coronavirus Cases", [Worldometer](#), June 21, 2021
- ⁹⁰ Anil Giri, "Nepal to purchase 4 million doses of Sinopharm vaccine from China", [The Kathmandu Post](#), June 16, 2021
- ⁹¹ Anil Giri, "Nepal is talking about vaccines from China. And the Chinese don't seem to be happy", [The Kathmandu Post](#), June 19, 2021
- ⁹² Rajeew Jayaswal, "Bangladesh is now among India's top 5 export destinations", [Hindustan Times](#), June 17, 2021
- ⁹³ Rejaul Karim Byron, "FDI outlook bleak for Bangladesh", [The Daily Star](#), June 22, 2021
- ⁹⁴ "Clean air group calls out China-backed coal plant in Bangladesh", [Al Jazeera](#), June 15, 2021
- ⁹⁵ "India keen to resume Covid-19 vaccine export to Bangladesh", [The Times of India](#), June 21, 2021
- ⁹⁶ "Bangladesh: Coronavirus Cases", [Worldometer](#), June 22, 2021

- ⁹⁷ Mohammad Al-Masum Molla, "Govt to buy 7 crore J&J vaccine shots", [The Daily Star](#), June 22, 2021
- ⁹⁸ Dr. S. Jaishankar, [Twitter Post](#), June 21, 2021, 4:43 PM IST
- ⁹⁹ "Transcript of Virtual Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 17, 2021
- ¹⁰⁰ "US\$ 100 million LoC for Projects in the Solar Energy Sector in Sri Lanka", [High Commission of India in Colombo](#), June 16, 2021
- ¹⁰¹ Nayanima Basu, "India in 'close touch' with Sri Lanka amid concerns over new Colombo-Beijing bonhomie", [The Print](#), June 21, 2021
- ¹⁰² "High Commissioner meets Tamil National Alliance delegation", [High Commission of India in Colombo](#), June 17, 2021
- ¹⁰³ "UN: Sri Lanka ship fire caused 'significant damage to planet'", [Al Jazeera](#), June 20, 2021
- ¹⁰⁴ "Indian vessels in Operation Sagar Araksha II", [High Commission of India in Colombo](#), June 10, 2021
- ¹⁰⁵ "Sri Lanka requests Japan to provide 6,00,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine", [The Indian Express](#), June 10, 2021
- ¹⁰⁶ The figure includes grant, commercial supply as well as through COVAX. See, "Vaccine Supply", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), May 29, 2021
- ¹⁰⁷ "Sri Lanka requests Japan to provide 6,00,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine", [The Indian Express](#), June 10, 2021
- ¹⁰⁸ Shubhajit Roy, "India by his side, Maldives minister Abdulla Shahid is UNGA president", [The Indian Express](#), June 8, 2021
- ¹⁰⁹ Suhasini Haider and Meera Srinivasan, "We must avoid vaccine nationalism at all costs: UNGA President-elect Abdulla Shahid", [The Hindu](#), June 9, 2021
- ¹¹⁰ Yashwant Raj, "Indian IFS officer K Nagaraj Naidu named to lead UN bureaucracy for a year", [Hindustan Times](#), June 10, 2021
- ¹¹¹ Aishath Shaany, "Majlis approves for Maldives to join ICIEC", [Raajje](#), June 21, 2021
- ¹¹² Ibid.
- ¹¹³ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁴ Zunana Zalif, "Maldives tourist arrivals exceed 483,000-mark", [Raajje](#), June 18, 2021
- ¹¹⁵ "Third India-Bhutan Development Cooperation Talks", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 28, 2021
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁷ "India and Bhutan sign MoU for developing cooperation in the areas of Environment", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 18, 2021
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ MB Subba, "Govt. proposes Tobacco Act amendment", [Kuensel](#), June 19, 2021
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ "COVID-19 prompts Bhutan to lift tobacco ban", [The Economic Times](#), August 31, 2020
- ¹²² "BIMSTEC emerged as a promising regional grouping: PM Modi", [The Hindu](#), June 6, 2021
- ¹²³ Ibid.
- ¹²⁴ "Messages from the BIMSTEC Leaders, Foreign Ministers of the Member States and the Secretary General on the occasion of BIMSTEC Day 2021", [BIMSTEC](#), June 5, 2021

III. Russia's Engagement with India and the US

- ¹²⁵ "Welcome Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations", [Ministry of External Affairs](#), June 1, 2021
- ¹²⁶ "Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement and answers to media questions at a news conference following the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting", [The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), June 1, 2021
- ¹²⁷ Snehash Alex Philip, "India sets eyes on Russian Sprut light tanks to counter China, gets rare access to trials", [The Print](#), June 14, 2021
- ¹²⁸ "Indian Navy's lone nuclear-powered attack submarine on its way back to Russia", [Hindustan Times](#), June 5, 2021
- ¹²⁹ "Cancellation news", [TASS News Agency](#), June 9, 2021
- ¹³⁰ "Construction of Kudankulam nuclear reactors 5 and 6 begins", [The Hindu](#), June 30, 2021
- ¹³¹ Elizabeth Roche, "Russia Begins Construction of Fifth Nuclear Power Unit at Kudankulam", [Mint](#), June 29, 2021
- ¹³² Press Release, "Three Indian S&T led enterprises selected for joint R&D and technology transfer with Russia", [Press Information Bureau](#), June 11, 2021
- ¹³³ Ibid.
- ¹³⁴ "Meeting with heads of international news agencies", [The Kremlin](#), June 4, 2021
- ¹³⁵ Sanjay Pulipaka and Mohit Musaddi, "The ups and downs of quest for stronger India-Russia ties", [Asia Times](#), September 8, 2020
- ¹³⁶ "After two month absence, American ambassador to Moscow will return to Russian capital this week – US State Department confirms", [Russia Today](#), June 21, 2021
- ¹³⁷ Press Release, "U.S.-Russia Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability", [The Kremlin](#), June 16, 2021
- ¹³⁸ "U.S. Preparing New Sanctions Against Russia Over Navalny Poisoning", [RFE/RL](#), June 20, 2021
- ¹³⁹ "Alexei Navalny deserved prison sentence, says Putin", [The Hindustan Times](#), June 16, 2021
- ¹⁴⁰ Press Release, "Foreign Ministry's statement following the Russian Federation's sending notifications to the states parties to the Treaty on Open Skies", [The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), June 18, 2021
- ¹⁴¹ Press Release, "Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the Treaty on Open Skies", [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](#), June 18, 2021
- ¹⁴² Press Release, "Executive Order on setting State Duma elections date", [The Kremlin](#), June 17, 2021
- ¹⁴³ Anna Smolchenko, "Russia Widens Opposition Crackdown With Bill, Jailing of Critic", [The Moscow Times](#), June 2, 2021
- ¹⁴⁴ "UN 'Dismayed' by Russia Undermining Election Rights", [The Moscow Times](#), June 21, 2021
- ¹⁴⁵ "I Woke Up An Extremist': Navalny Team Vows To Challenge Putin, Despite Watershed Ruling", [Radio Free Europe](#), June 10, 2021

- ¹⁴⁶ Press Release, "IX Moscow Conference on International Security starting in Moscow", [Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation](#), June 23, 2021
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁸ "Russia won't use its COVID-19 vaccine with political aims, says security chief", [TASS News Agency](#), June 24, 2021
- ¹⁴⁹ Press Release, "Brazil becomes the 67th country in the world to authorize Sputnik V vaccine", [Russian Direct Investment Fund](#), June 5, 2021
- ¹⁵⁰ "More than 16 million Russians are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 – Golikova", [TASS News Agency](#), June 23, 2021
- ¹⁵¹ "6 in 10 Russians Against Compulsory Vaccination – Poll", [The Moscow Times](#), June 17, 2021

IV. India-West Asia: Flourishing Partnership

- ¹⁵² Dr. S. Jaishankar, [Twitter Post](#), June 10, 2021, 6:39 PM IST
- ¹⁵³ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁴ Dr. S. Jaishankar, [Twitter Post](#), June 11, 2021, 2:44 AM IST
- ¹⁵⁵ Dr. S. Jaishankar, [Twitter Post](#), June 15, 2021, 12:54 PM IST
- ¹⁵⁶ Shubhajit Roy, "Qatar envoy says India officials met Taliban; Jaishankar points to no dip in Afghan violence", [The Indian Express](#), June 23, 2021.
- ¹⁵⁷ Transcript of Virtual Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson, [Ministry of External Affairs Government of India](#), June 24, 2021.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁹ India in Saudi Arabia, [Twitter Post](#), June 21, 2021, 3:23 PM IST
- ¹⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁶¹ "Hajj hopefuls saddened at Saudi decision to bar foreign pilgrims", [Deccan Chronicle](#), June 13, 2021.
- ¹⁶² "Hajj hopefuls saddened at Saudi decision to bar foreign pilgrims", [Deccan Chronicle](#), June 13, 2021.
- ¹⁶³ India in Saudi Arabia, [Twitter Post](#), June 6, 2021, 3:17 PM IST
- ¹⁶⁴ "India urges OPEC+ to ease production cuts", [The Economic Times](#), February 18, 2021.
- ¹⁶⁵ Saudi Arabia committed to meet India's crude oil requirement: Saudi Ambassador, [The Times of India](#), May 30, 2021.
- ¹⁶⁶ "Iraq expects oil prices to reach \$80/bbl - state news agency", [Reuters](#), June 20, 2021.
- ¹⁶⁷ "Saudi Arabia increase oil prices for India, other Asian countries", [Mint](#), June 4, 2021.
- ¹⁶⁸ "The first Arab-India Energy Forum", [Ministry of External Affairs Government of India](#), June 9, 2021.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁰ Kalpana Pathak, "RIL-Saudi Aramco deal to close this year: Mukesh Ambani", [Mint](#), June 24, 2021.
- ¹⁷¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁷² Ibid.
- ¹⁷³ "India's Telangana state eyes Saudi investment", [Arab News](#), June 15, 2021.
- ¹⁷⁴ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Indian businesses could access Europe, West Asian & African markets through Egypt", [The Economic Times](#), June 17, 2021.
- ¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁶ Suneeti Ahuja Kohli, "India-UAE ties strengthened during Covid-19 pandemic: Ambassador Pavan Kapoor", [Khaleej Times](#), June 2, 2021.
- ¹⁷⁷ Baiju Kalesh and Dinesh Nair, "UAE's ADQ to invest \$500 million in Flipkart", [Bloomberg](#), June 13, 2021.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁰ "India's agriculture exports jump 17.34% to \$41.25 billion in FY21", [Business Standard](#), June 10, 2021.
- ¹⁸¹ "Week-long Indian mango promotion begins in Bahrain", [ANI News](#), June 11, 2021.
- ¹⁸² "India starts exporting GI-certified Jalgaon banana to Dubai", [Mint](#), June 16, 2021.
- ¹⁸³ Narendra Modi, [Twitter Post](#), June 14, 2021, 9:39 AM IST
- ¹⁸⁴ Lahav Harkov, "Meet the 36 new ambassadors approved to new posts around the world", [The Jerusalem Post](#), June 20, 2021.
- ¹⁸⁵ Spokesperson Navy, [Twitter Post](#), June 18, 2021, 6:05 PM IST
- ¹⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁷ Neeraj Chauhan, "NIA hunts two suspects for blast near Israel embassy, releases video", [Hindustan Times](#), June 15, 2021.
- ¹⁸⁸ Mahender Singh Manral, Jignasa Sinha "Four Ladakh students held over blast near Israel Embassy in Delhi", [The Indian Express](#), June 25, 2021.
- ¹⁸⁹ Rezaul H Laskar, "India defends decision to abstain during UNHRC vote on Israel-Hamas conflict", [Hindustan Times](#), June 4, 2021.
- ¹⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁹¹ "Erdogan says he told Biden Turkey to keep stance on S-400s", [AL Jazeera](#), June 17, 2021.
- ¹⁹² "Iran nuclear talks make progress in Vienna, diplomats say", [CNBC](#), June 20, 2021.
- ¹⁹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁴ Gordon Lubold, Nancy A. Youssef and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Military to withdraw hundreds of troops, aircraft, anti-missile batteries from Middle East", [The Wall Street Journal](#), June 18, 2021.
- ¹⁹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

V. India, CARs and PAI: Continued Uncertainty

- ¹⁹⁷ "Taliban Enter Key Cities in Afghanistan's North After Swift Offensive", [The New York Times](#), June 20, 2021
- ¹⁹⁸ "Taliban captures Afghanistan's main Tajikistan border crossing", [Aljazeera](#), June 22, 2021
- ¹⁹⁹ "Customs Revenue Lost as Taliban-Held Kunduz Dry Port is Closed", [Tolo News](#), June 24, 2021

- 200 "Attacked and Vulnerable, Some Afghans Are Forming Their Own Armies", [The New York Times](#), June 22, 2021
- 201 "Hundreds of Public Forces Deployed to Guard Mazar-e-Sharif", [Tolo News](#), June 22, 2021
- 202 "The Taliban Are Getting Stronger In Afghanistan as U.S. and NATO Forces Exit", [NPR](#), June 5, 2021
- 203 "Afghan Government Unveils Major Security Shake-Up as War Rages On", [Tolo News](#), June 19, 2021
- 204 "Joe Biden meets with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at White House, says 'we're gonna stick with you'", [ABC News](#), June 26, 2021
- 205 "U.S. Weighs Possibility of Airstrikes if Afghan Forces Face Crisis", [The New York Times](#), June 9, 2021
- 206 "Turkey to run Kabul international airport in deal with Nato", [The National](#), June 2, 2021
- 207 "US plans to keep about 650 troops in Afghanistan after withdrawal", [TRT World](#), June 25, 2021
- 208 "Taliban Reject Foreign Military Role in Guarding Kabul Airport After Troop Exit", [VOA](#), June 12, 2021
- 209 "Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran hold trilateral meeting", [Anadolu Agency](#), June 20, 2021
- 210 "Afghanistan, Turkmenistan discuss key energy projects", [Anadolu Agency](#), June 5, 2021
- 211 "In a huge shift, India opens channels with Afghan Taliban factions and leaders", [The Hindustan Times](#), June 9, 2021
- 212 "Statement by External Affairs Minister at the UNSC Debate on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan", [Ministry of External Affairs of India](#), June 22, 2021
- 213 "Pakistan, US unanimous on regional peace: Qureshi", [The News](#), June 11, 2021
- 214 "Shifting blame on Pakistan to 'save face' amid US withdrawal from Afghanistan unacceptable: Moeed", [Dawn](#), June 4, 2021
- 215 "C.I.A. Scrambles for New Approach in Afghanistan", [The New York Times](#), June 11, 2021
- 216 Ibid
- 217 "Pakistan, Russia agree to cooperate for Afghan settlement", [Dawn](#), June 15, 2021
- 218 "North South Gas Pipeline Project: Pakistan, Russia sign amended IGA", [The News](#), May 29, 2021
- 219 "Tajikistan to buy weapons from Pakistan", [Dawn](#), June 3, 2021
- 220 "Pakistan keen to enhance military cooperation with Azerbaijan: Gen Qamar", [The Express Tribune](#), June 21, 2021
- 221 "General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on a day long official visit to the Republic of Turkey", [ISPR](#), June 23, 2021
- 222 "General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), during an official visit to Germany, called on His Excellency General Eberhard Zorn, Chief of Defence German Army", [ISPR](#), June 25, 2021
- 223 DG ISPR, [Twitter Post](#), May 20, 202, 7:40PM
- 224 "Pakistan Budget Brief", [KPMG](#), June 12, 2021
- 225 "Budget 2021-22: In final debate session, govt announces adjusted revenue measures, spending plan", [Geo News](#), June 25, 2021
- 226 "ECONOMIC SURVEY 2020-21: Focus on boosting growth, fighting inflation: Tarin", [Dawn](#), June 11, 2021
- 227 "Pakistan spends \$7.5bn on food imports in July-May", [Dawn](#), June 20, 2021
- 228 "Pakistan's finance minister says refused IMF direction to impose Rs700 billion in new taxes", [Arab News](#), June 25, 2021
- 229 "Saudi Arabia loans Rs37bln for Mohmand hydropower project", [The News](#), June 10, 2021
- 230 "Pakistan gets \$4.5bn facility for oil, LNG imports", [Dawn](#), June 25, 2021
- 231 "NSA Ajit Doval attends SCO meeting in Dushanb", [India Today](#), June 24, 2021
- 232 "Cabinet approves Signing and Ratification of an Agreement on "Cooperation in the field of Mass Media" between all the Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation", [PIB](#), June 2, 2021
- 233 "Iran, India sign agreement to share knowledge about rotavirus vaccine", [IRNA](#), June 21, 2021
- 234 "Defence budget increased by Rs44 bn to Rs1,370 bn", [The News](#), June 12, 2021
- 235 "Iran's Navy Receives Two New Warships", [Barron's](#), June 14, 2021
- 236 "Manufacturing of new Pak Navy ship begins in Karachi", [The News](#), June 16, 2021



Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi - 110003
India

www.delhipolicygroup.org