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REGIONAL OVERVIEW

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AMIDST MAJOR POWER COMPETITION

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Major power competition was the primary topic du jour at virtually all of this trimester's major multilateral gatherings, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine continuing to serve as a litmus test—a test many participants struggled to avoid taking. It was clear which side of the fence the G7 leaders stood on; Putin's invasion was soundly condemned and Sino-centric warning bells were again gently sounded. At the BRICS Summit and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (sans the US), those alarms were clearly muted, as they were at the ASEAN Regional Forum, at which foreign ministers from all three were present. Headlines from the IISS Shangri-la Dialogue focused on the meeting that did not occur, as China's defense minister pointedly refused to meet with his US counterpart. At the ASEAN-ISIS' Asia-Pacific Roundtable, participants lamented the impact of major power tensions on ASEAN unity, even though ASEAN's main challenges are internal ones that predate the downturn in China-US relations. Meanwhile, Beijing and Washington both expended considerable effort at these and other events throughout the reporting period fortifying and expanding their partnerships, even as many neighbors struggled not to choose sides or to keep a foot in both camps.

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Growing China-US Tensions

Academics continue to spend a great deal of time arguing whether a new Cold War is upon us—both the differences and similarities to the original US-USSR version are pretty obvious—but there is no disputing that tensions between Washington and Beijing have grown considerably over the past year or so, with the implications being felt not only in the Indo-Pacific neighborhood but globally. US allies are becoming more candid in expressing concerns about China’s current actions and long-term ambitions, even as many in Asia and the so-called “Global South” repeat their time-honored “don’t force us to choose” refrain.

In the great East-West or Democracy-Authoritarianism divide, support for Ukraine and/or a willingness to condemn the Russian invasion increasingly appears to be a litmus test, one that many attempt to evade out of fear of alienating Moscow and/or Beijing. Some like India and Vietnam do so as a result of security concerns. Both rely heavily on Russian military hardware (at least for now; India is looking to diversify). Others like the Central Asian “Stans” claim neutrality while fearing they could be next. Some countries (read: China) unconvincingly claim neutrality while clearly tilting toward Moscow, while some members of the Global South want to pick the pockets of both sides. As the old saying (Miles’ Law) goes, “Where you stand depends on where you sit.” The Ukraine “issue” becomes particularly challenging at multilateral meetings where both Americans/Westerners and China/Russia are present.

The G7 Revives

The first big multilateral event of this reporting period was the annual summit of the Group of Seven (G7) leading industrial nations, hosted by Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in Hiroshima. We’ve been G7 skeptics, the symbol of a global order whose time has passed. Recently, however, the group has re-emerged as a vehicle for global governance, and Kishida deserves a good bit of the credit.



Figure 1 Leaders of the G7 member states in Hiroshima

When formed 50 years ago, G7 countries represented nearly two-thirds of global wealth. That figure has dropped to just 44% and its role as international economic manager has been eclipsed by the G20, formed in the wake of the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis. The invasion of Ukraine has given the group new urgency as its members seek to backstop an international order under assault, even as it has placed new challenges on G20 unity.

Kishida has made Ukraine the starting point for Japan’s chairmanship, and he has repeatedly declared that Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is a concern for the entire world and its operating rules and principles. In the [Leaders Declaration](#), the grandees pledged to

- support Ukraine for as long as it takes in the face of Russia’s illegal war of aggression;
- coordinate our approach to economic resilience and economic security that is based on diversifying and deepening partnerships and de-risking, not de-coupling;
- drive the transition to clean energy economies of the future through cooperation within and beyond the G7;
- launch the Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security with partner countries to address needs today and into the future; and
- deliver our goal of mobilizing up to \$600 billion in financing for quality infrastructure through the Partnership

for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII).

The first three priorities—resist unilateral attempts to redraw the status quo, promote economic security and resilience, and promote sustainable development—are repeated throughout the document.

While Russia is the immediate threat, China is clearly a concern. But China is not mentioned until the 51st paragraph, and the first four bullet points in that discussion emphasize cooperation with Beijing. It isn't until the penultimate line of the 35th page that a “China threat” emerges. The leaders voiced concern about Beijing’s militarization of the Indo-Pacific, the stability of the Taiwan Strait, and its expansive territorial claims in the East and South China Seas. Yet G7 countries still balance competing interests when engaging China. They seek mutual economic opportunities and de-risking rather than decoupling.

Beijing was not happy with the resulting compromise. It [charged](#) the G7 with “hindering international peace, undermining regional stability and curbing other countries’ development,” and called in Japan’s ambassador to scold his government for attempting “to smear and attack China, grossly interfering in China’s internal affairs.”

Kishida’s decision to hold the meeting in Hiroshima, his hometown, reflected his determination to produce a clear unambiguous statement that denounces the use of nuclear weapons, especially for intimidation or in furtherance of national territorial ambitions. The Declaration promised “to strengthen disarmament and nonproliferation efforts, towards the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all.” As Kishida [explained](#), “Hiroshima, once devastated by the atomic bombing, has rebuilt itself to become a city that seeks peace. I want the leaders of the G7 members and major countries of various regions to make efforts to demonstrate their commitment to peace that will go down in history in this city.” The leaders visited the Hiroshima Peace Park, laid wreaths

at the cenotaph for victims of the atomic bomb, were briefed by Hiroshima Mayor Matsui Kazumi on the history of the Atomic Bomb Dome and the events of Aug. 6, 1945, and met Ogura Keiko, a survivor of the attack. The power of those events was balanced by the realist calculations—the reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence and peace—that guide decision-making in G7 capitals.

Another priority is protecting countries from economic coercion. Both Russia and China have tried to use economic leverage for political gain, and the G7 declaration condemned such practices. The group launched the Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion to increase “collective assessment, preparedness, deterrence and response to economic coercion, and further promote cooperation with partners beyond the G7.” The leaders also released the [G7 Leaders’ Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security](#), which focused on building resilient supply chains and resilient critical infrastructure, and called for joint action to combat economic coercion, harmful practices in the digital sphere, cooperating on international standards setting, and protecting critical technologies.

A key partner in those efforts is the developing world and the declarations underscored outreach to “the Global South” to promote economic resilience and development more generally. As ever, the words make much sense and deserve applause. But they mean nothing in the absence of efforts to promote shared security, growth, and prosperity.

NATO Takes a Dip in the Indo-Pacific

Four regional leaders ventured to Vilnius, Lithuania in July for the annual summit of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This was the second consecutive year that the organization’s four major Indo-Pacific partners—Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, referred to as the AP4—attended that meeting. Each of the four is working on an Individually Tailored Partnership Program (ITPP) that will upgrade relations and facilitate cooperation on issues such as maritime security

cooperation, cybersecurity, new and emerging technologies, outer space, combatting disinformation and the impact of climate change on security.



Figure 2 Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (left), NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg (second from left), and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (right) arrive for a meeting with NATO's Indo-Pacific partners during the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 12. JACQUES WITT/POOL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Closer ties make sense in an age of “indivisible security” and the growing interest of European governments in the Indo-Pacific region. NATO’s most recent Strategic Concept, the document that guides planning and policy, was released last year and it noted that China’s stated ambitions and coercive policies “challenge our interests, security and values.”

There were reports during the spring that NATO might open a regional office in Japan, to facilitate contacts and implementation of those ITPPs. There has been support for closer ties from both Asian and European governments. Japan has been particularly assiduous in courting NATO. The office did not materialize, however, reportedly a result of French opposition: Paris wants NATO to remain focused on trans-Atlantic threats and challenges.

China wasn’t happy either. A foreign ministry spokesperson [warned](#) that “the Asia-Pacific does not welcome group confrontation, does not welcome military confrontation,” that NATO’s plan to develop a presence in the region “[undermines regional peace and stability](#)” and that countries in the area “should be on high

alert.” *China Daily* [editorialized](#) that Japan’s support for that effort was making it the “doorman” of NATO.

In truth, NATO is unlikely to make a direct contribution to regional security. It is too far away and there are far more compelling needs closer to home. Still, the possibility of a European presence complicates an adversary’s planning and a united front of like-minded nations would support deterrence in other ways. They should not be undervalued.

Bigger May Not be Better for BRICS

Countering the G7 (at least in the minds of some of its participants) was the 15th BRICS summit that convened in late August in Johannesburg, South Africa. The BRICS—which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—seems to have adopted as its *raison d’être* the revision of a world that does not afford its members the respect and influence they feel they deserve. As their Declaration [explained](#), they are animated by the “BRICS spirit of mutual respect and understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, strengthened collaboration and consensus.” They seek “a more representative, fairer international order, a reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system, sustainable development and inclusive growth.”



Figure 3 South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, center, delivers the XV BRICS Summit declaration, flanked by, from left, President of Brazil Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, President of China Xi Jinping, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, in Johannesburg, South Africa, Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023. /AP

They were originally identified as a group of countries that were underestimated in assessments of global power and would, if their trajectories continued, exercise real influence. That potential remains potential for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, the five countries still clamor for change and a greater say in the international system. Chinese leader Xi Jinping [explained](#) “Right now, changes in the world, in our times, and in history are unfolding in ways like never before, bringing human society to a critical juncture,” adding that “The course of history will be shaped by the choices we make.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin was angrier—understandably so, as he was prevented from attending because of an indictment issued by the International Criminal Court for actions in Ukraine and his South African hosts would have been obliged to arrest him if showed up. He [condemned](#) the West for domineering policies and hypocrisy, and countered that “We are against any kind of hegemony,” and accused the West of “continuing neocolonialism.” He blamed “the desire of some countries to maintain this hegemony that led to the severe crisis in Ukraine.”

The BRICS resent dominance by the West and the imposition of Western values. That is a powerful attraction. Reportedly over 40 countries have expressed interest in joining the group and two dozen are said to have applied to join. At the end of the meeting, the group agreed to expand and Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were invited to join from the start of next year as the “first phase of the expansion process.” South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, meeting chair, added that other nations will join later.

Doubling the size of the group is ambitious and on paper the new members are impressive. They are big trading nations and that, as well as their desire to reduce US power and influence, encourages them to find alternatives to the dollar in international trade. That will not be easy, however, as most other nations have discovered over the last 50 years. No other

currency is used as widely, is tradeable, and enjoys the trust of third parties.

In addition, expanding the group will make it even harder to find consensus. Their shared sense of grievance will not be enough to paper over tensions between, say, China and India, or Saudi Arabia and Iran. Delhi and Beijing are at odds over many issues, relations with Washington among them. Moreover, there is little appetite for the most ambitious agenda. Brazil’s president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, was more circumspect, [saying](#) “We do not want to be a counterpoint to the G7, G20, or the United States,” adding that “We just want to organize ourselves.”

Shanghai Cooperation Organization Expands as Well

The [Shanghai Cooperation Organization](#), originally comprised of China, Russia, and four former Soviet Central Asia Republics (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), has also expanded in recent years to include Pakistan and BRICS member India, which served as 2022–23 chair and thus hosted this year’s SCO Summit on July 4. Since the meeting was held virtually, Putin was among the attendees. The Council of Heads of State of SCO issued a [New Delhi Declaration](#) which, unsurprisingly, made no reference to Ukraine even as it professed support for “non-interference in internal affairs and non-use of force or threats to use force” and the “peaceful settlement of disagreements and disputes.” Given its peace-loving nature, this year the SCO welcomed Iran as its ninth member.

ASEAN-led Multilateralism Overshadowed

Readers will be excused if they missed the meeting of regional foreign ministers as ASEAN convened the annual ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and associated side meetings in Jakarta in July, an event that has become largely overshadowed not only by the East Asia Summit (EAS) but by its own ineffectiveness in dealing with key regional security issues like Myanmar,

the South China Sea, and North Korea's missile and nuclear ambitions.



Figure 4 Various Foreign Ministers at the Asian Regional Forum in July

With foreign ministers from China, Russia, and the United States in attendance, the July 14 ARF session proved to be quite [contentious](#). ASEAN struck a careful pose on Russia since it is seeking Moscow's support for an initiative on food security at the EAS. Most ASEAN members maintain their own ties with Russia despite condemning its attacks on Ukraine, underscoring ASEAN's "complex balancing act of pushing for peace in Ukraine without compromising key economic interests."

The ARF [Chairman's Statement](#) stated: "With regard to the war in Ukraine, as for all nations, the Meeting continued to reaffirm its respect for sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity. The Meeting discussed the war in Ukraine, and views were expressed on the recent developments and the need to address the root causes. The Meeting reiterated its call for compliance with the UN Charter and international law. The Meeting underlined the importance of an immediate cessation of hostilities and the creation of an enabling environment for peaceful resolution."

The Statement was tougher when it came to Myanmar, not only reaffirming the importance of the largely-ignored [Five Point Consensus](#), but strongly condemning "continued acts of violence, including air strikes, artillery shelling, and destruction of public facilities." It called on "all parties" to "take concrete action to

immediately halt indiscriminate violence, denounce any escalation, and create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogue," which the ruling junta will no doubt continue to ignore.

After two decades of discussions, China and ASEAN, during their bilateral side session, "[edged closer](#)" to agreeing upon a South China Sea Code of Conduct by instituting some guidelines aimed at preventing further deterioration of the security situation. The ARF Chairman's Statement "welcomed the progress achieved so far in the ongoing negotiations on the Code of Conduct." Forgive us if we don't hold our breath.

Shangri-la Standoff

Tensions were also clearly in evidence at this year's 20th [Shangri-la Dialogue](#) in Singapore in June, as highlighted by Beijing's refusal to allow its Minister of National Defense, General Li Shangfu, from meeting bilaterally with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, [citing](#) continuing US sanctions against Li and other senior Chinese officials. (Li was originally sanctioned by the Trump administration over his role in the acquisition of weapons from Russia.)

Austin, in his opening [plenary address](#) on "US Leadership in the Indo-Pacific," focused primarily on America's positive contributions to regional security but did, toward the end, complain about the "alarming number of risky intercepts" by Chinese aircraft against US and allied aircraft "flying lawfully in international airspace." His final words reminded Beijing that the US "remains deeply committed to preserving the status quo in the strait, consistent with our long-standing One China policy and...will continue to categorically oppose unilateral changes to the status quo from either side."

Li, in his separate [plenary remarks](#) on "China's New Security Initiatives," praised President Xi Jinping's "win-win" Global Security Initiative and outlined China's contributions to international peace and stability. He also noted

China's "objective and impartial stance" on the Ukraine "issue" – perish the thought that we might call it an invasion or war. Li addressed US-China tensions more directly and comprehensively, noting that "severe conflict or confrontation between China and the US will be an unbearable disaster for the world."

In time-honored Chinese fashion, Li generally avoided naming names, merely noting that "a major country should behave like one...instead of provoking bloc confrontation for self-interests" while accusing "some countries" of taking a "selective approach to rules and international laws" or "willfully [interfering] in other countries' internal affairs and matters." He asked the audience: "Who is disrupting peace in the region?" We would have been inclined to name China as the most likely culprit but suspect he had the United States in mind.

Implications for ASEAN

At this year's 36th [Asia-Pacific Roundtable](#) in Kuala Lumpur in August, major power confrontation and its implications for the Asia-Pacific region (Indo-Pacific being a less-favored term in Southeast Asia at least) was a central feature in almost all discussions. There was spirited debate between US and Chinese interlocutors (one example is summarized [here](#)), with Chinese lamenting the deterioration in bilateral relations while failing to recognize (or at least acknowledge) China's role in this downturn. Southeast Asian participants were more concerned on the impact major power tensions could have on the already-fragile state of ASEAN unity.

These concerns were best summed up by Malaysian Prime Minister Yab Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim in his Roundtable [keynote address](#). "The intensifying major power rivalry between China and the United States is testing, and straining, the fabric of the region's longstanding architecture and norms." After lamenting "the emergence of new mini-lateral groupings across the board, which despite its window dressing, could be cast as exclusive and

exclusionary in nature," Anwar concluded that "It would be a great loss for the entire region if this unfettered rivalry affects all that have been painstakingly achieved by existing and consequential ASEAN-led multilateral mechanisms."

True, but as other conference discussions highlighted and Anwar himself acknowledged, "continued post-coup violence and instability in Myanmar, remains one of ASEAN's biggest strategic and humanitarian challenges." While one could point a finger at Beijing and Moscow for propping up the junta—Anwar didn't—he did note that a "failure to act [by ASEAN] would be tantamount to a dereliction of collective responsibility."

Anwar avoided the subject of Ukraine in his prepared remarks. When asked about Kuala Lumpur's stance on the Russia-Ukraine War in the Q&A session, however, he noted that though war stands in violation of international law, "Russia's concerns behind the attack" must be taken into consideration.

ASEAN participants were also bound and determined to avoid making what Anwar described as a "binary choice" between the United States and China. Good relations with both were necessary "to promote a stronger rules-and-norms-based order." Sending a message to both Washington and Beijing, Anwar stressed that "This order is not based on might, or the tendency to ignore the very rules and norms one preaches about when it is inconvenient. That is unconducive and hypocritical." However, Washington would have little trouble agreeing with him when he argued that "it must be an order based on fairness, respect and understanding, compassion, and international law."

ASEAN participants had little trouble making a binary choice when it came to the South China Sea, however. Anwar noted that "the continued militarization of the maritime region coupled with the use of grey zone tactics to reinforce claims and stymie the lawful exploitation of resources is neither peaceful nor constructive." The Philippine and Vietnamese presentations, in particular, pointed a finger directly at Beijing for

changing the status quo in these contested waters. And all this was before China further [infuriated its neighbors](#) with a new national map reaffirming its now 10-dash line claim (the tenth being to the east of Taiwan). For a summary of all Roundtable discussions, see ISIS-Malaysia's conference [report](#).

Busy, Busy, Busy

While, as argued earlier, NATO as an organization may not have a direct role to play in the Indo-Pacific, NATO is a model of cooperation and coordination among security partners, and the growing complexity of regional security relationships in the Indo-Pacific will soon demand some rationalization. There is just too much going on for security bureaucracies to just keep piling on meetings, initiatives, and mechanisms.

For example:

After mounting complaints from Australian [analysts](#) and UK [legislators](#), the US appears [ready](#) to modify International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) that pose significant obstacles to the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) security partnership. While this has immediate implications for the submarine deal that dominates perceptions of AUKUS, it will have longer term, and likely more significant, payoffs in Pillar 2 of the agreement, which concerns new technologies. There are several working groups focused on these technologies, and that expanding body of work has echoes in other bilateral and multilateral security forums.

The first quadrilateral defense leaders meeting, involving Australia, Japan, the Philippines and the United States [occurred](#) on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue. The four officials—Defense Ministers Richard Marles, Hamada Yasukazu, Carlito Galvez, and Lloyd Austin, respectively—“reaffirmed that they share a vision for Free and Open Indo-Pacific and collectively make efforts to ensure the vision continues to thrive.”

This was followed two weeks later by the first [meeting](#) of national security advisors from the Japan, the Philippines and the US, in Tokyo, at which “they emphasized the importance of enhancing trilateral cooperation and response capabilities based on the Japan-United States Alliance and Philippines-United States Alliance in order to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.”

The four governments [held](#) joint naval exercises in the South China Sea in August. Originally scheduled to be a trilateral, the Philippines joined as tensions increased following Chinese attempts to prevent Manila from resupplying forces in the region.

Then there was the Camp David Summit between the US, Japan, and South Korea in August, which attempted to take advantage of the political moment in the three countries and pushed for the institutionalization of relations between them. The Camp David Summit is discussed in more depth elsewhere in this issue of *Comparative Connections*, but for us, the key point here is the progress in multilateralization—and the growing burden that it poses for security bureaucracies as relations thicken among allies and partners. In that summit [statement](#), the three leaders pledged to “hold trilateral meetings between our leaders, foreign ministers, defense ministers, and national security advisors at least annually, complementing existing trilateral meetings between our respective foreign and defense ministries. We will also hold the first trilateral meeting between our finance ministers as well as launch a new commerce and industry ministers track that will meet annually. We will also launch an annual Trilateral Indo-Pacific Dialogue to coordinate implementation of our Indo-Pacific approaches and to continually identify new areas for common action.” They will also discuss ways to coordinate efforts to counter disinformation and launch a trilateral development policy dialogue.

All this is applaudable progress, but we have been there before. Prior to the turn of this century, spurred on by the then-historic

[Statement](#) on a “new partnership” between Japan and Korea, we were talking about a “[virtual alliance](#)” among the US, Japan, and Korea as “both possible and essential for long-term peace and stability in the region.” We wish all three better luck this time around.

Add to the above mix developments in all US alliances, the Quad, relations among allies without the US, the economic dialogues, technology consultations and, well, you get the idea. It is a huge and growing menu of conversations and some form of rationalization is required. NATO isn’t the archetype, but it is a model of organization. Something is needed.

That something won’t emerge in the last trimester of the year but the need for some way to make regional security discussions more efficient will become ever more apparent. Keep an eye out for the inklings of an expanded—viz the tri- and multilateral frameworks—regional security conversation. And expect still greater pushback from China, Russia and like-minded nations as they contemplate its purpose and prospects.

REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY

MAY—AUGUST 2023

May 1, 2023: US says it is [prepared](#) to assist the Philippines as China interferes with Manila’s efforts to resupply a grounded naval ship in the South China Sea.

May 1–5, 2023: Philippine President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr., [visits](#) Washington, his first visit to the capital since his father was forced to leave office in 1986.

May 3, 2023: US and the Philippines [move](#) toward real-time sharing of military information and greater coordination to guard against any coercive behavior by China in the South China Sea.

May 4, 2023: Philippine President Marcos [expands](#) upon his agreement to grant the US access to more military bases in his country and reassures Chinese officials by stating that the bases will not be used for “offensive action” against any country. He also clarifies that the US has not asked the Philippines to provide troops in case of war between China and the US over Taiwan.

May 5, 2023: US [moves](#) a \$500 million proposed arms sale package bound for Taiwan to a fast track through the “Presidential Drawdown Authority” created for streamlining aid to Ukraine.

May 8, 2023: US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns [meets](#) China’s Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing where they agree on the need to stabilize relations between the two countries.

May 10, 2023: House Rules Committee [holds](#) a hearing on “Examining China’s Coercive Economic Tactics.”

May 10–11, 2023: National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [meets](#) Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Wang Yi in Vienna.

May 10–12, 2022: Indonesia [hosts](#) the first ASEAN Summit of the year in Labun Bajo. Myanmar is not represented .

May 10, 2023: Flotilla of Chinese vessels [enters](#) Vietnamese waters and loiter in a Russia–Vietnam offshore lease. A Chinese research vessel moves at speed appropriate for surveying,

May 11, 2023: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen [calls](#) on G7 democracies to build economic resilience to help developing nations counter the threat of nondemocratic states like China and Russia.

May 12, 2023: President Yoon [hosts](#) former Japanese Prime Minister Aso Taro for dinner.

May 12, 2023: Japan and South Korea announce [aim](#) to lower blind spots on North Korean missile activity by linking radar systems through the US, a move designed to allow the sharing of launch data in real time. The US would link the radar systems used by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, the South Korean military, and US troops stationed in both Japan and South Korea, to share data such as where North Korean missiles are launched, as well as the speed and distance travelled.

May 14, 2023: Thai general elections [are held](#), with a record turnout of 75.22%. Parties cover the political spectrum from the pro-democracy Move Forward Party to two parties —Thai Union and Phalang Pracharat—headed by the organizers of the 2014 coup.

May 15, 2023: US and Micronesia [agree](#) to renew a key strategic pact—the Compact of Free Association Agreement—as the US shores up support among Pacific Island states to counter competition from China.

May 17, 2023: Biden [cancels](#) visit to Papua New Guinea to return to Washington for debt ceiling negotiations.

May 18, 2023: China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [publishes](#) a 5,000-word report criticizing "America's Coercive Diplomacy and Its Harm."

May 18, 2023: President Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [meet](#), seeking unified G7 policies on China and agree to work together to counter "coercive behavior."

May 17, 2023: United States and Palau [agree](#) to renew COFA.

May 20, 2023: Leaders of the Quad countries—the US, Japan, India and Australia—[meet](#) on the sidelines of the G7 summit and hold brief discussion releasing a joint statement, vision statement, and fact sheet, which includes support for quality undersea cable networks in the Indo-Pacific.

May 20, 2023: G7 communique, released by member countries [lays](#) out common "de-risking" path on China, and calls for international standards that regulate artificial intelligence.

May 20, 2023: US and Japan [impose](#) sanctions on hundreds of people and organizations connected to Russia's war on Ukraine, including businesses involved in aerospace, quantum computing and finance as the G7 reiterates its determination to raise the costs of Moscow's invasion.

May 22, 2023: United States and Papua New Guinea [conclude](#) a Defense Cooperation Agreement and an Agreement Concerning Counter Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity Operations.

May 25, 2023: South Korea and US [stage](#) massive live-fire drills marking the 70th anniversary of their alliance.

May 28, 2023: At US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework meeting, trade ministers [agree](#) to strengthen supply chains for essential materials such as chips and critical minerals to reduce dependence on China. This is the first time the 14 participating countries—the US, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, Fiji, and

seven members of ASEAN—agreed on specific measures since IPEF launched in May 2022.

May 31, 2023: Pyongyang [fails](#) to launch a claimed military spy satellite.

June 2, 2023: Defense Minister Andrew Little [acknowledges](#) New Zealand's interest in cooperating with Australia, the UK, and the US under their AUKUS trilateral security framework in nonnuclear areas such as artificial intelligence, cyber-security and quantum computing.

June 2, 2023: Japanese, US, and Philippines Coast Guards [conduct](#) joint drills, the first exercise of its kind between the three countries, in the face of China's expansion in the South China Sea.

June 2-4, 2023: 20th Asia Security Summit (Shangri-la Dialogue, SLD) is held in Singapore. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [meets](#) on the sidelines with counterparts from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

June 2, 2023: Defense Secretary Austin [shakes hands](#) with Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu at 20th SLD, but they hold no "substantive dialogue"; Beijing rejected Washington's request for a meeting on the conference's sidelines.

June 2, 2023: China and Singapore defense establishments [agree](#) to set up a secure, bilateral hotline to strengthen high-level communication between their defense leaders.

June 2, 2023: CIA [announces](#) that Director William Burns made a secret trip to China in May in an attempt to keep lines of communication open despite security and economic tensions.

June 3, 2023: US, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines [hold](#) first quadrilateral defense chief talks in Singapore on the sidelines of the SLD to ponder challenges posed by China in the South China Sea and in waters around Taiwan.

June 3, 2023: Japan, US, and South Korean defense chiefs [agree](#) to real-time sharing of information about North Korean missiles by the

end of 2023. This system will allow the three nations to detect and track projectiles fired by the North more accurately and swiftly

June 4, 2023: North Korea [denounces](#) UN Security Council for holding a meeting on its recent satellite launch upon “robbery demands” from the US, vowing to continue rejecting sanctions and taking “self-defensive” action.

June 5, 2023: US and India [release](#) a Roadmap for US-India Defense Industrial Cooperation prior to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s four-day state visit to the US.

June 6-7, 2023: Two Russian Tu-96 and two Chinese H-6K strategic bombers [conduct](#) the [sixth](#) joint patrols of the Sea of Japan, East China Sea, and Western Pacific. Russian bombers landed and took off from a Chinese military airfield.

June 7, 2023: China, Pakistan, and Iran [hold](#) their first trilateral meeting on counter-terrorism in Beijing, involving “in-depth” exchanges on the prevailing regional counter-terrorism situation.

June 8, 2023: US Senate panel [approves](#) measure to strip China of “developing” status after passing the “Ending China’s Developing Nation Status Act” without dissent.

June 8, 2023: ASEAN [announces](#) it will hold its first joint military exercise in the North Natuna Sea, the southernmost waters of the South China Sea, in its latest multilateral security drills.

June 8, 2023: Japan [conveys](#) “strong concern” and lodges protest against China after the PLA Navy enters Japan’s waters near Yakushima Island. Two Chinese Coast Guard vessels also reportedly entered Japan’s territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands, which China calls Diaoyu, and attempted to approach a Japanese fishing boat.

June 8, 2023: Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar [notes](#) that India and China must find a way to step back from potential confrontation in the western Himalayas, as militarized,

disputed border could lead to conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

June 9, 2023: With eye on China, the Five Eyes (Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the US) and Japan [condemn](#) trade practices that amount to economic coercion in a joint declaration.

June 9, 2023: China’s largest naval training ship [sails](#) for the Philippines on a regional “friendly” tour, amid growing unease over Chinese maritime activities in the South China Sea. Training conducted by the ship, is expected to focus on navigation, anti-piracy and shooting exercises with light-weight weapons, according to Chinese state media.

June 9, 2023: Chinese coastal patrol ship Haixun03 [starts](#) patrolling waters around Hainan Island and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea and aims to inspect ships in these waters. The patrol is expected to continue for around one month and cover 900 nautical miles.

June 11, 2023: Taiwan military [releases](#) updated civil defense handbook including a section on differentiating between Chinese and Taiwanese soldiers based on uniforms, camouflage, and insignia.

June 11, 2023: Taiwan’s Air Force [scrambles](#) after spotting 10 Chinese warplanes crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait, in its second recce in less than a week after 37 Chinese military aircraft flew into the island’s air defense zone.

June 11, 2023: China’s Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong [summons](#) South Korean ambassador to express “serious concern and dissatisfaction” over Seoul’s “improper reaction” to comments made by the Chinese envoy, who warned Seoul against making “wrong bets” in the Sino-US rivalry.

June 11, 2023: Honduras [opens](#) embassy in China after cutting diplomatic relations with Taiwan earlier this year.

June 12, 2023: Biden administration [adds](#) 43 entities to an export control list, including

Frontier Services Group Ltd, a security and aviation company previously run by Erik Prince, for training Chinese military pilots and other activities that threaten US national security.

June 12, 2023: China [deploys](#) a reconnaissance aircraft over Pacific waters east of Taiwan to monitor and gather intelligence on an exercise involving the navies of the United States, Japan, France, and Canada.

June 12-16, 2023: South Korea and the US [stage](#) the Combined Distribution Exercise in Pohang.

June 13, 2023: China [holds](#) military exercises in the East China Sea north of Taiwan, including live-fire exercises from warships, as the US and its allies conduct their drills in the Western Pacific.

June 14, 2023: Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu [discusses](#) the need for maintaining the status quo in its relationship with neighboring China, encouraging European states to offer support and courage for resilience; while addressing a press conference in Prague.

June 15, 2023: National Security Advisers for the US, Japan, and South Korea [discuss](#) maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait and coordination in the East China and South China Seas. At a trilateral meeting in Tokyo, they also examined North Korea's "illicit nuclear and missile programs and most recent provocations and identified next steps to strengthen their cooperation."

June 15, 2023: North Korea [condemns South Korea's live-fire drills with the United States](#) and threatens to sternly respond to "any kind of protests or provocations by enemies" in the region.

June 15, 2023: North Korea [fires](#) two short-range [ballistic missiles](#) toward East Sea.

June 15, 2023: US [targets](#) North Korea's missile development in new sanctions after South Korea's military raps Pyongyang for firing two short-range missiles less than an hour after it warned of an "inevitable" response to military drills staged by South Korean and US troops.

June 16, 2023: National security advisers of the US, Japan and the Philippines hold trilateral meeting to [discuss](#) regional security issues and ways to [strengthen](#) relations. They deliberate contentious issues in the South and the East China Sea, North Korea and reiterate the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

June 16, 2023: US [imposes sanctions](#) on two North Korean nationals for assisting the country's illegal weapons program.

June 16, 2023: China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong [condemns](#) Hong Kong resolutions passed by the European Parliament, calling them a "despicable act" that "trampled" on principles of international law.

June 17, 2023: Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, [share](#) pessimism on Myanmar, calling for continued pressure on the military junta and sustained efforts to scale-up negotiation across all stakeholders.

June 18-19, 2023: Secretary of State Blinken [visits](#) Beijing where he holds 12 hours of meetings with top Chinese officials including President Xi—the first visit of its kind since 2018. Blinken [also holds](#) meetings with then-Foreign Minister Qing Gang and Central Foreign Affairs Commission director Wang Yi. Xi and Blinken [agree](#) to stabilize US-China relations in Beijing talks, while failing to produce any breakthrough during Blinken's visit to the city.

June 19, 2023: North Korea [cites](#) botched [satellite launch](#) as its "most serious" failure.

June 19, 2023: Secretary Blinken [urges](#) China's vigilance on its firms providing technology to Russia that could be used against Ukraine.

June 19, 2023: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz [rejects](#) blanket state supervision of exports to China, noting that the country has drafted a new laws to guarantee the security of the economy.

June 19, 2023: US Navy [runs](#) rehearsal for ballistic submarine USS Michigan visit to Busan

amid tensions driven by North Korea's weapons testing, and as Seoul and Washington are bolstering their military cooperation to deter Pyongyang.

June 20, 2023: Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov [shows](#) confidence in Russia's strategic partnership with China. He acknowledges that China has the sovereign right to forge ties with other countries and that Russia is not worried about US attempts to sway the former's policy toward Moscow.

June 20, 2023: Wall Street Journal report [suggests](#) that China and Cuba negotiating to establish a new joint military training facility on the island, sparking alarm in the US that it could lead to stationing Chinese troops and other security operations 100 miles off Florida's coast.

June 20, 2023: Lowy Institute Poll of Public Attitudes [finds](#) 82% of Australians support the security alliance with the US. They also favored responding to a Chinese attack on Taiwan with economic sanctions, arms supplies, or using the navy to prevent a blockade, without becoming an active combatant. The prospect of a military conflict between the US and China over Taiwan is seen as a "critical threat" by 64% of Australians, twice as many people as two years ago. The top threat cited by 68% percent of respondents, was cyber attacks from other countries.

June 21, 2023: US Treasury [announces](#) new sanctions on Myanmar and designates two regime-controlled banks, Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) and Myanma Investment and Commercial Bank (MKN), both of which have been instrumental in facilitating the military's use of foreign currency to procure arms and jet fuel abroad.

June 21, 2023: Taiwan [raises](#) caution over a Chinese aircraft carrier group led by the vessel Shandong, sailing through the Taiwan Strait amid heightened military tension.

June 21, 2023: Taiwan on [alert](#) for Chinese-funded election interference through means of illicit funding of Beijing-friendly

candidates using communications apps or group tours, according to three internal security reports released by the government.

June 21, 2023: Annual position paper released by the European Chamber of Commerce in China [notes](#) slowdown in both the Chinese and global economies as the biggest issue affecting European firms in the country. The number of European companies reporting China-sourced revenues decreased in 2022, while the importance of China to companies' global profits fell for a second consecutive year.

June 21, 2023: North Korea [criticizes](#) Blinken's China visit as "begging trip," in what it called a policy failure to pressure China. The commentary carried by KCNA news agency, states that the US is responsible for escalating regional tensions with "anti-China complexes," such as the Quad grouping with Japan, India, and Australia, and the AUKUS pact with Britain and Australia.

June 21, 2023: Japan to [harmonize](#) standards for domestically produced defense equipment with those of the US and Europe to reduce maintenance costs and increase business opportunities for Japanese defense companies, under draft guidelines issued by the government.

June 21, 2023: Secretary Blinken [voices](#) deep concerns over Chinese military activities in Cuba, at a press conference in London.

June 22, 2023: US Coast Guard ship Stratton [sails](#) through the Taiwan Strait, after Secretary Blinken's high-profile visit to Beijing. The US Navy's 7th Fleet in an official statement declares that "Stratton's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

June 22, 2023: US and India [declare](#) themselves "among the closest partners in the world" [during a state visit](#) by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington hosted by President Biden.

June 22, 2023: G7 [affirms](#) unity and need for close coordination on China after Secretary

Blinken's meeting with Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the EU on the sidelines of a conference in London.

June 22, 2023: Chancellor Olaf Scholz [addresses](#) German Parliament, vowing to reject all unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas by force or coercion, especially Taiwan. He reiterates concern for human rights and the state of the rule of law in China.

June 22, 2023: In the 18th intrusion this year, four Chinese coast guard Haijing vessels [sail](#) near the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands for around two hours.

June 23, 2023: US [convenes](#) a meeting of working-level experts from China, France, Russia, and the UK to discuss nuclear weapons issues including strategic risk reduction, as a part of "a routine, continuing dialogue and ongoing exchange in the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

June 23-24, 2023: Russia's mercenary Wagner Group [rebels](#) against Russian leadership over its handling of the Ukraine war, only to halt the uprising before reaching Moscow a day later after a deal allows group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin to go to Belarus. Prigozhin is later [killed](#) in a plane crash on Aug. 23.

June 26, 2023: Suspicions over Chinese intelligence collection outposts in Cuba [renew](#) concerns over its efforts to establish a global network for power projection.

June 28, 2023: China [signs](#) cooperative arrangements with "friend" New Zealand, aimed at improving market access for a Western country that has long maintained a conciliatory approach toward China.

June 28, 2023: A Chinese survey vessel is [detected](#) in the waters near the Senkaku Islands in Okinawa Prefecture, though there is no intrusion into Japanese territorial waters.

June 28, 2023: China [issues](#) warnings to foreign consulates, reminding them that dual-national

detainees cannot receive visits from consular officers.

June 28, 2023: Taiwan says it [spots](#) two Russian frigates sailing through waters near Taiwan, in a move that could heighten tensions in the region.

June 29, 2023: Japan's Ministry of Defense [announces](#) that engineering company IHI will begin repairing engines in F-35 fighter jets used by the SDF and the US military, in a move that will enable troops to move more quickly and act as a deterrent against aggressive neighbors.

June 30, 2023: South Korea and US [stage](#) air drills involving a B-52H strategic bomber.

July 1, 2023: Chinese media [announce](#) that a PLAN flotilla led by a Type 075 amphibious assault ship recently passed through the first island chain from straits south of Japan, marking the first time that this type of large warship was reported operating in the vicinity of Japan.

July 1, 2023: An investigative report says Russia has been [importing](#) drones from Chinese companies explicitly for use in its invasion of Ukraine, despite denials from Beijing.

July 4, 2023: Taiwan Vice President and Democratic Progressive Party Presidential candidate [Lai Ching-te, publishes an opinion column](#) in the Wall Street Journal promising to defend Taiwan's democracy against Chinese coercion.

July 6, 2023: Justice ministers from Japan and ASEAN [pledge](#) to cooperate in promoting the rule of law amid China's increasing maritime assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.

July 6-9, 2023: Treasury Secretary Yellen [visits](#) China where she has "frank, pragmatic, in-depth and constructive" meetings with top Chinese officials in charge of economic affairs.

July 7, 2023: South Korean government [announces](#) that based on its own scientific [analysis](#), Japan's plan to release the Fukushima wastewater would meet international standards.

July 10, 2023: North Korea [denounces](#) US move to introduce a nuclear missile submarine to waters near the Korean Peninsula, stating that the action brings a nuclear conflict closer to reality.

July 10, 2023: China and the Solomon Islands [announce](#) a comprehensive strategic partnership, as they bolster relations four years after the Pacific nation switched ties from Taiwan to China.

July 10, 2023: China and South Korea [push](#) for deep-sea mining as a United Nations body convenes a meeting in Jamaica to discuss setting guidelines for such activities.

July 10, 2023: 10 members of South Korea's National Assembly, civic activists, and South Korean fishermen [protest](#) Japan's planned discharge of Fukushima water outside Japanese Prime Minister Kishida's residence in Tokyo.

July 10-14: China [conducts](#) a week of naval and air exercises in the Taiwan Strait.

July 11, 2023: North Korea [accuses](#) the United States of violating its airspace.

July 12, 2023: Philippines [launches](#) website containing "official information" about Manila's arbitration victory against Beijing in their South China Sea territorial dispute. The site's launch represents the latest effort by President Marcos' administration to firm up Manila's position in the dispute.

July 12, 2023: North Korea [fires](#) an intercontinental ballistic missile.

July 12, 2023: Chinese company [launches](#) world's first methane-liquid oxygen rocket-Zhuque-2, beating US rivals in sending what could become the next generation of launch vehicles into space.

July 12, 2023: State-owned Bank of China (BOC) [opens](#) first representative office in Papua New Guinea, kick-starting Xi Jinping's plans to build a comprehensive strategic partnership with PNG.

July 13, 2023: South Korea and the US [stage air drills](#) involving s B-52H strategic bomber in response to the North's launch.

July 13, 2023: Japanese government [signs](#) a new partnership agreement with NATO to enhance security coordination with Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg explicitly referencing concern China's military buildup.

July 13-14, 2023: Secretary Blinken [travels](#) to Indonesia, where he participates in the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting and the 30th ASEAN Regional Forum. Blinken [meets](#) China's top diplomat Wang Yi on the sidelines for "candid and productive" talks.

July 14, 2023: US [calls](#) for [UN Security Council](#) action against North Korea's ICBM test, but permanent members China and Russia oppose it.

July 14, 2023: Secretary Blinken [holds](#) "candid and constructive" talks with Wang Yi in Jakarta in interactions Washington says are aimed at managing competition between the rival superpowers.

July 14, 2023: Solomon Islands [denies](#) suggestions by the US, New Zealand, and Australia on its policies dealing with Beijing and maintains that China will enhance the capability of its 1,500 police officers in cybersecurity and community policing.

July 15, 2023: President Yoon [makes](#) a [surprise visit](#) to Ukraine in show of support.

June 15, 2023: Pyongyang fires two short-range ballistic missiles.

July 16-19, 2023: Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry [visits](#) China where he holds meetings with top Chinese climate officials to discuss opportunities for cooperation.

July 18, 2023: US nuclear missile sub [visits](#) South Korea for the first time since the 1980s, as the allies launched Nuclear Consultative Group talks to coordinate responses in the event of a nuclear war with North Korea.

July 18, 2023: UN Command says US national Travis King [crosses](#) military [demarcation line](#) into North Korea.

July 18, 2023: Officers from the JSDF and the Chinese military [meet](#) in Beijing, resuming an in-person exchange program for the first time since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

July 19, 2023: US climate envoy Kerry [urges](#) China to separate climate from politics in a meeting with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng, calling it a “universal threat” that should be handled separately from broader diplomatic issues and be treated as a “free-standing” challenge that requires the collective efforts of the world’s largest economies to resolve.

July 19, 2023: North Korea [fires](#) two short-range ballistic missiles into [East Sea](#).

July 20-23, 2023: Russia and China [conduct](#) joint sea and naval drill “North/Interaction-2023” in the Sea of Japan. Five Russian and five Chinese naval ships participate.

July 22, 2023: US [commissions](#) warship in Sydney, the first time a US Navy vessel joined active service at a foreign port, as the allies step up military ties in response to China’s expanding regional reach.

July 21, 2023: Japan [returns](#) South Korea to its white list of preferred trading partners, four years after removing it from the list.

July 22, 2023: North Korea [fires](#) “several” [cruise missiles](#) toward west coast.

July 22, 2023: China [seeks](#) to reassure multinationals over anti-spying law and pledges transparency to Western, Japanese, and South Korean business lobbies by increasing the predictability of policies via regular exchanges with foreign partner companies.

July 23, 2023: Following general elections in Cambodia in which the Cambodian People’s Party won 120 out of 125 seats, the State Department [said](#) it had “taken steps” to impose visa restrictions “on individuals who

undermined democracy and implemented a pause of foreign assistance programs” after determining the elections were “neither free nor fair.”

July 24, 2023: Australia to [buy](#) 20 Hercules military planes worth \$6.6 billion ahead of visit by Secretary Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

July 24, 2023: China and Russia [conclude](#) four-day military exercise in the Sea of Japan to, according to the Chinese defense ministry, “enhance strategic cooperation between the two countries and strengthen their ability to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.”

July 25, 2023: North Korea [fires](#) late-night [ballistic missiles](#) after US submarine visits South.

July 25, 2023: Qin Gang is [replaced](#) in as China’s foreign minister by his predecessor Wang Yi.

July 26, 2023: Secretary Blinken [visits](#) Tonga, dedicating a new embassy there as part of efforts to shore up the US presence in the Pacific.

July 27, 2023: North Korea and South Korea [mark](#) 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice agreement.

July 28, 2023: Indonesia [secures](#) at least \$13 billion in investment pledges from Chinese companies following meeting between Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo and President Xi in Chengdu.

July 28, 2023: Japan [releases](#) 2023 Defense White Paper saying that the international community is facing its greatest trial since World War II and has entered a new era of crisis. This includes China rapidly enhancing its military capability qualitatively and quantitatively, including nuclear and missile forces.

July 28, 2023: White House [announces](#) \$345 million military aid package for Taiwan—including anti-air and anti-armored munitions—through the fast-track “Presidential Drawdown Authority,” prompting

China to accuse the US of turning the island into a “powder keg and ammunition depot” a day later.

July 28, 2023: South Korea and the US [stage](#) joint air drills with F-35A and F-16 jets.

July 28-Aug. 21, 2023: Chinese and Russian navies [conduct](#) the third joint patrol of the western and northern Pacific.

July 29, 2023: US and Australia [agree](#) to upgrade two additional air bases in northern Australia and to step up cooperation on weapons production and maintenance, as China’s growing strategic ambitions solidify defense ties between Washington and Canberra.

July 29, 2023: US [bars](#) Hong Kong leader from APEC summit, for his role in crackdowns against pro-democracy protests under a stringent national security law enacted by Beijing in 2020.

July 29, 2023: Japanese defense ministry [announces](#) the presence of five Chinese and five Russian warships in its territorial waters, as they sailed through the Soya Strait between Hokkaido and Sakhalin to the Sea of Okhotsk, possibly in connection with a joint patrol in the Pacific Ocean.

July 29, 2023: South Korea and US [stage](#) joint [anti-submarine](#) [drills](#) involving nuclear-powered sub.

July 29, 2023: US [announces](#) \$345 million in military aid for Taiwan that includes defense, education and training for the Taiwanese, in addition to supply of man-portable air defense systems, or MANPADS, intelligence and surveillance capabilities, firearms, and missiles.

July 30, 2023: Ten Chinese and Russian naval vessels [pass](#) through the Soya Strait between Cape Soya in the northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido and the Russian island of Sakhalin in the first China-Russia joint naval vessel sailing near Japan since September 2022.

July 31, 2023: China [announces](#) curbs on exports of drone-related equipment including drone engines, lasers, communication equipment, and

anti-drone systems; set to take effect Sept. 1 2023, amid US tech tensions.

July 31, 2023: State Administrative Council (SAC) on Myanmar [extends](#) the state of emergency for another six months.

Aug. 1, 2023: Xi [appoints](#) new chief of China’s nuclear arsenal to oversee conventional and nuclear missiles, one day before the anniversary of the People’s Liberation Army. Wang Houbin, former deputy commander of the navy, is named head of the PLA Rocket Force, and Xu Xisheng its new political commissar.

Aug. 1, 2023: President Xi [calls](#) “for enhancing the planning of war and combat, strengthening the command system for joint operations, and stepping up training under real combat conditions to raise the forces’ capabilities to fight and win,” during visit to PLA Eastern Theater Command headquarters.

Aug. 2, 2023: US [extends](#) invite to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during meeting at the State Department between Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink and Yang Tao, director-general of North American and Oceanian Affairs at China’s Foreign Ministry.

Aug. 3, 2023: Xi Jinping announces that China [seeks](#) advances in artificial intelligence-powered drones and hypersonic weapons in a broader military buildup, as Xi prepares the country for “extreme” scenarios.

Aug. 4, 2023: China [deepens](#) military ties with Russia for “non-Western” front, as Russian anti-submarine ships and fighter jets join the Northern Theater Command of the PLA for joint exercises.

Aug. 4, 2023: China to [lift](#) tariffs on Australian barley imports that had been in place for three years affecting billions of dollars of trade, as the two nations repair strained ties.

Aug. 5, 2023: US [weighs](#) deploying new military elements in Japan to better coordinate operations with the JSDF under the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), as a

Taiwan contingency would necessitate a swift collective response.

Aug. 5, 2023: Chinese Coast Guard and maritime militia vessels [use](#) water cannons and other maneuvers to obstruct a Philippine resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal. The State Department issues an immediate statement of support for the Philippines. The Philippine military [condemns](#) this as “excessive and offensive,” to block a Filipino supply boat from delivering

Aug. 7, 2023: China [asks](#) Philippines to remove grounded ship from Second Thomas Shoal after blocking two Manila supply ships with water cannons, as both sides assert their claims of the area.

Aug. 9, 2023: Australia [revamps](#) Pacific Island foreign aid by unveiling a new international development aid policy focusing on climate change. The policy, revised for the first time in roughly a decade, will establish a fund of up to A\$250 million (\$163 billion) to encourage private-sector investment in Pacific Island and Southeast Asian nations.

Aug. 9, 2023: Secretary of Defense Austin [pledges](#) to defend Philippine vessels if attacked in the South China Sea, after the China Coast Guard ship water cannon firing incident.

Aug. 9, 2023: President Biden [signs](#) executive order requiring US persons to notify the Treasury Department of certain transactions and investments in China, particularly those in high-tech sectors such as semiconductors, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and other technologies with potential military applications.

Aug. 10, 2023: India, Japan, the US, and Australia [hold](#) naval exercise off Sydney, and Japanese and Indian navy vessels make pit-stops in Solomon Islands and PNG on the way to Sydney, highlighting the strategic importance of the region. In a news conference in Sydney, Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander of the US Seventh Fleet notes that the deterrence that the four Quad nations provide as they

operate together “shall serve as a “foundation for all the other nations operating in this region. “

Aug. 11, 2023: New Zealand [acknowledges](#) awareness of China-linked intelligence activity in country, calling it a “complex intelligence concern.” The accusations are the latest comments from the New Zealand government outlining concerns about China’s behavior and its destabilizing impact.

Aug. 12, 2023: Malaysia [holds](#) six state elections, a contest between the government coalition (PH) led by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and the opposition coalition (BN), which includes the Islamist fundamentalist party PAS. As expected, results are split evenly—each side won three states each—but the PH won their states with a smaller majority than previously, with gains by PAS.

Aug. 13, 2023: China’s foreign ministry [condemns](#) brief US visit by Taiwan Vice President William Lai Ching-te, saying he is “troublemaker through and through” and Beijing would take strong steps to protect its sovereignty.

Aug. 13, 2023: China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi [visits](#) Cambodia to reaffirm his country’s commitment to the country after its incumbent prime minister handed off the job to his son, Hun Manet following an election in July.

Aug. 14, 2023: Beijing [concludes](#) agreements with government of Guinea to build a trans-Guinean railway to carry iron ore from the nation’s inland to the coast to cut China’s reliance on Australia iron-ore.

Aug. 14, 2023: During US visit, Taiwan’s Vice President Lai [vows](#) that his country shall remain unafraid and never back down in the face of authoritarian threats.

Aug. 14, 2023: Japan and US [begin](#) discussions on joint development of an interceptor missile for hypersonic projectiles, expected to improve deterrence against China, Russia, and North Korea.

Aug. 14, 2023: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [calls](#) for increase in missile production to help secure “overwhelming military power” and be ready for war, as South Korea and the US prepare for annual military drills.

Aug. 15, 2023: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol [calls](#) for real-time nuclear and missile information sharing with Japan and the US as Seoul marks Liberation Day.

Aug. 16, 2023: US [cements](#) “game-changing” defense ties with Australia and Japan amid growing concerns posed by China, following a new security deal between Canberra and Tokyo.

Aug. 16, 2023: North Korea [claims](#) US Pvt. Travis King wants [refuge](#) in North or third country.

Aug. 18, 2023: Indonesia [taps](#) local fishers to boost Natuna Islands defense, which have transformed into the front lines of the country’s remote island protection, amid increased Chinese activity in the area.

Aug. 18, 2023: President Biden, President Yoon, and Prime Minister Kishida [hold](#) historic trilateral summit at Camp David, and adopt the [Spirit of Camp David](#) and the [Camp David Principles](#). They [commit](#) to immediately consult in event of [common threat](#).

Aug. 18, 2023: Associated Press reports that China [appears](#) to be constructing an airstrip on a disputed South China Sea island.

Aug. 19, 2023: Vietnam announces [plans](#) to fortify its military presence on the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, where it is locked in territorial disputes with China and the Philippines. The project, led by Vietnam’s defense ministry and navy, involves constructing and expanding military and other facilities on Pearson Reef and Pigeon Reef, over which Hanoi holds effective control.

Aug. 19, 2023: US [tightens](#) export controls of nuclear power items to China to ensure that items are used only for peaceful purposes rather than proliferation of atomic weapons.

Aug. 19, 2023: Chinese sources [denounce](#) the spirit of Camp David—the meeting of President Biden, President Yoon, and Prime Minister Kishida—as “hypocritical anti-China pantomime with a mini-NATO in the making.”

Aug. 21, 2023: China [lodges](#) representations with relevant parties over US, Japanese, and South Korean leaders’ criticism of China at Camp David.

Aug. 21, 2023: South Korea and India [join](#) the US, Japan, and European countries in supporting the Philippines in its maritime disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea, as China’s recent use of water cannon against a Philippine resupply ship creates a global backlash.

Aug. 21, 2023: Central American parliament expels Taiwan, replacing it with China at the behest of Nicaragua, which switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in December 2021.

Aug. 21, 2023: South Korea and the US [begin](#) joint large-scale military exercise aimed at bolstering defense and preparedness against North Korea’s evolving nuclear and missile threats.

Aug. 22, 2023: Philippines [completes](#) resupply mission to grounded warship on Second Thomas Shoal despite attempts by the China Coast Guard and Chinese Maritime Militia “to block, harass, and interfere.”

Aug. 22, 2023: Cambodian legislature [approves](#) nomination of Hun Manet, eldest son of former prime minister Hun Sen, as prime minister, marking a generational shift in the dominant Cambodian People’s Party (CPP).

Aug. 22, 2023: China firmly [opposes](#) the Philippines exploiting the opportunity of resupplying troops to transport “illegal” construction materials to a grounded warship Sierra Madre, in Second Thomas Shoal.

Aug. 22, 2023: After more than three months of political and judicial maneuvering, the Thai Parliament [approves](#) nomination of the Pheu Thai Party’s Srettha Thavisin for prime

minister. On the same day, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra returns to Thailand after a 15-year exile.

Aug. 22–24, 2023: 15th BRICS Summit is held in Johannesburg, South Africa and invites six countries (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) to join the group, from Jan. 1, 2024.

Aug. 23, 2023: China's climate envoy Xie Zhenhua and US counterpart Kerry [hold](#) video talks on climate-change cooperation.

Aug. 23, 2023: US Treasury [expands](#) use of sanctions in Myanmar to impose penalties on any individual or entity operating in the jet fuel section of the country's economy, designating two individuals and three entities involved in procuring and distributing jet fuel to the its military.

Aug. 23, 2023: Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen [makes](#) rare visit to a memorial park on Kinmen Island, less than 1.2 miles from Chinese-controlled territory, to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the beginning of the Second Taiwan Strait crisis.

Aug. 24, 2023: Japan [commences](#) releasing treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean, prompting China to announce an immediate blanket ban on all aquatic products imported from the former.

Aug. 24, 2023: Deputy Treasury Chief Adeyemo [says](#) the US is well-prepared to weather China's economic headwinds and is closely monitoring economic developments in China, [where growth is faltering](#) amid a worsening property slump, weak consumer spending, and tumbling credit growth.

Aug. 24, 2023: Taiwan [proposes](#) \$3 billion spending on new weapons.

Aug. 24, 2023: United States [seeks](#) a six-month extension to a science and technology agreement with China, to undergo negotiations with the latter to "amend and strengthen" the landmark deal.

Aug. 24, 2023: US State Department [approves](#) sale of equipment worth \$500 million to Taiwan, to upgrade infrared search and track systems for F-16 fighter jets, as well as other machinery.

Aug. 24, 2023: China [suspends](#) imports of Taiwanese mangoes, citing a "severe threat" to China's agricultural and ecological security posed by citrus mealybugs in shipments of the fruit, making full use of its economic and military playbook to scare the Taiwanese electorate ahead of January's presidential election. Imports of Taiwanese apples, pineapples, and grouper fish had previously been banned by Beijing.

Aug. 24, 2023: North Korea claims a failed satellite launch.

Aug. 25, 2023: Japan [scrambles](#) jet to monitor Chinese military drone flying near the country's westernmost Yonaguni island and Taiwan. As per the Defense Ministry, the spy drone came from the East China Sea north of Taiwan and went to the Bashi Channel that separates Taiwan's southern coast and the Philippines.

Aug. 25, 2023: China's Defense Ministry [urges](#) the US to stop "arming" Taiwan, after the State Department approved a [\\$500 million sale](#) of infrared search, track systems for F-16 fighter jets and well as other equipment, to the island.

Aug. 25, 2023: Australia [acknowledges](#) its security interest in the South China Sea and vows to work more closely with the Philippines on joint patrols. More than 2,000 Australian and Philippine defense personnel, as well as US Marines, are participating in amphibious landing and air assault drills and [conducting bilateral exercises](#) with the Philippine Navy.

Aug. 25, 2023: Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka [indicates](#) that the Pacific Islands should remain a "zone of peace," adding that he hopes a rivalry between the US and China does not develop into a military conflict.

Aug. 25, 2023: China and Australia [raise](#) climate change, security at Pacific leaders' summit as the leaders of four nations debate declaring the

strategic region “neutral” as China and the US [jostle for influence](#). Climate change, security and trade dominate the opening day of a summit of the leaders of PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and New Caledonia’s ruling FLNKS party.

Aug. 25, 2023: Taiwan’s presidential front-runner William Lai Ching-te [pledges](#) to adopt “values-based diplomacy” to support democracies in the region, an apparent sign of a shift from President Tsai’s approach of prioritizing commerce and countries that formally recognize Taiwan.

Aug. 26, 2023: Chinese police experts [arrive](#) in Vanuatu amid political crisis in which Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau lost a no-confidence vote for signing a security pact with Australia.

Aug. 26, 2023: Taiwan [reports](#) 20 Chinese air force planes entering the island’s air defense zone, including a combat drone that flew along Taiwan’s Pacific east coast.

Aug. 26, 2023: Japan’s ASDF [scrambles](#) jet fighters to monitor two Chinese H-6 bombers flying between Okinawa and Miyako islands.

Aug. 27, 2023: Three US marines killed when an Osprey aircraft [crashes](#) near Darwin, Australia during an exercise.

Aug. 27, 2023: US Navy official [highlights](#) the need for China’s ‘aggressive behavior’ in South China Sea to be challenged and checked after the country used the water canon of its coast guard against a Philippine vessel.

Aug. 27, 2023: Russian ships [return](#) after more than three weeks of joint-patrolling the Pacific Ocean with Chinese navy ships. Warships of Russia’s Pacific Fleet, together with a detachment of Chinese navy ships travelled more than 7,000 nautical miles through the Sea of Japan, the Sea of Okhotsk, the Bering Sea, and the Pacific Ocean.

Aug. 27-30, 2023: Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo [visits](#) China to meet with counterparts, and the two sides agree to new

consultations on trade and export control systems.

Aug. 28, 2023: China and Japan [agree](#) to postpone visit by head of Japan junior coalition partner “in light of current China-Japan relations.” China’s foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin remarks that the country “stands ready to work with it to make active efforts for improving and growing China-Japan relations.”

Aug. 28, 2023: South Korean government [announces](#) that the amount of tritium in seawater after Japan began discharging ALPS-treated wastewater is safe and well below the standard limit.

Aug. 28, 2023: Japan [complains](#) of harassment calls from China over Fukushima water release, with condemning the instances of stone-pelting of the Japanese Embassy in Beijing.

Aug. 29, 2023: South Korea, Japan, and the US [hold](#) a trilateral missile defense exercise in respond to North Korea’s failed satellite test.

Aug. 29, 2023: Taiwan [warns](#) of surge in tensions after reporting renewed Chinese military activity including fighter jets crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait. The ministry spotted 12 Chinese military aircraft in its air defense identification zone, of which seven crossed the median line in addition to five Chinese ships which carried out “combat readiness patrols” in the region.

Aug. 29, 2023: In a speech to [mark](#) Navy Day, North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un condemns “gang bosses” of the US, Japan, and South Korea after they announced regular joint military exercises, apparently referring to their [Aug. 18 summit](#) as a “confrontational move” forcing the waters off the Korean Peninsula to be reduced to “world’s biggest war hardware concentration spot.”

Aug. 30, 2023: US [deploys](#) B-1B bombers for separate drills with South Korea, Japan as the three allies step up responses to counter threats from North Korea. A US B-1B flew alongside South Korean FA-50 jets and US Air Force F-16

fighters as part of Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises.

Aug. 30, 2023: State Department [notifies](#) Congress of \$80 million arms deal to Taiwan through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program, which is usually reserved for sovereign states.

Aug. 31, 2023: Philippines, Taiwan, and Malaysia [reject](#) China's latest South China Sea map with an updated 10-dash line that covers about 90% of the South China Sea.

Aug. 31, 2023: Russia [says](#) it will deepen ties with North Korea as "Moscow and Pyongyang maintain good, mutually respectful relations," but doesn't confirm Putin-Kim letter exchange.

Aug. 31, 2023: China [holds](#) intensive anti-submarine exercises in the South China Sea as part of efforts to hone its capabilities amid rising maritime tensions with its neighbors and their allies.

Aug. 31, 2023: China and former Taiwan-ally Nicaragua [sign](#) free trade agreement, deepening economic ties since the country switched its allegiance to Beijing from Taiwan in 2021.

Aug. 31, 2023: Biden [approves](#) military aid worth \$80 million to Taiwan under the Foreign Military Financing program normally used for sovereign states.

Aug. 31, 2023: Fiji to [sign](#) a defense agreement with France, after the Cabinet of the Pacific Islands nation approved the deal. French President Emmanuel Macron toured the Pacific Islands in July, where France has overseas territories, [denouncing predatory behavior](#) by big powers in a region where China is extending trade and security ties.

Aug. 31, 2023: Japan [makes](#) record defense spending request amid tension with China by asking for a \$52.67 billion in spending for the 2024 fiscal year. The plan, announced last year, seeks to double defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2027.

Aug. 31, 2023: China [says](#) countries should see its national map in 'objective' way after countries, including the Philippines, India and Malaysia, protested Beijing's newly released map expanding its claim over regions of the South China Sea.

Aug. 31, 2023: China's Ministry of Defense [states](#) that military-to-military communication between Beijing and Washington has "not stopped," amid high tensions between the two superpowers over the South China Sea, Taiwan, and other issues.

