

# COMPARATIVE

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## C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL  
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

## THE “YEAR OF ELECTIONS” IS UPON US!

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The major multilateral gatherings of the past year’s final trimester—the East Asia Summit (EAS) and associated ASEAN-arranged summitry in Indonesia in early September, the India-hosted G20 Summit a week later (Sept. 9-10 in Delhi), the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in Indonesia, and the concurrent Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting in San Francisco on Nov. 16-17—were largely overshadowed by events (very) near and far away. The EAS and G20 Summits were most notable for who wasn’t there. Russian President Vladimir Putin skipped both meetings, sparing the hosts of the challenge (or embarrassment) of honoring (or ignoring) the international arrest warrant issued for him stemming from the Kremlin’s invasion and war against Ukraine. Those hoping for a fence-mending summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden at the EAS or G20 were doubly disappointed; Xi skipped both meetings, while Biden only attended the G20, leaving the EAS to Vice President Kamala Harris.

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Readers of the Western press would be excused if they missed the APEC “Gathering of Economies” completely, since press coverage focused almost exclusively on the Biden-Xi Summit along its sidelines (its lack of significant outcomes notwithstanding). The few non-Biden-Xi San Francisco headlines centered on the much-anticipated but disappointing gathering of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) participants, as Washington apparently could not achieve consensus on next steps. The Israeli invasion of Gaza following the horrendous Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel prompted the taking of sides at the ADMM-Plus, where an apparent lack of agreement on who to condemn resulted in no reference to the conflict in the final statement, which focused instead on the issue of women, peace, and security.

As we look forward, 2024 is being called the “Year of Elections” with national leadership up for grabs (in some cases more than others) in seven of the world’s 10 largest countries, all (technically speaking) in the Indo-Pacific region. All told, more than 60 countries representing half the world population—some 4 billion people—will hold regional, legislative, and presidential elections this year. We will be examining the implications and outcomes of many of these elections in coming issues.

### **EAS: Major Power Tensions Dominate Despite No-Shows**

ASEAN’s preoccupation with major power confrontation highlighted in last trimester’s [Regional Overview](#) was very much in evidence during the ASEAN-hosted series of summits that took place in Indonesia on Sept. 4-7. These included the [43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit](#), the [26<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Plus Three Summit](#), the various ASEAN Plus One Summits with ASEAN’s Dialogue Partners, and the main event, the annual East Asia Summit involving the 10 ASEAN states (minus Myanmar, which continues to be excluded as the junta leaders continue to ignore ASEAN’s April 2021 [Five Point Consensus](#)) and its key dialogue partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States.

At the [US-ASEAN](#) meeting, attended by Vice President Harris, the two sides agreed upon a [Statement](#) on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), reaffirming US support for “ASEAN centrality” and the

principle of inclusivity embodied in the AOIP. The statements from the other ASEAN Plus One Summits can be found [here](#).



*Figure 1 Vice President Kamala Harris of the United States participates in the 11th ASEAN-U.S. Summit during the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia, on September 6, 2023. Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/Pool via Reuters/Filephoto*

The [Chairman’s Statement](#) from the 18<sup>th</sup> EAS contained the usual boilerplate support for ASEAN centrality, inclusivity, and the peaceful resolution of disputes, etc., etc., while highlighting “the continued importance of constructive dialogue on strategic issues” among and between its members. As regards Ukraine, members “reiterated our national positions,” while noting the UN General Assembly resolution which “deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine,” further noting that “most members strongly condemn the aggression against Ukraine.”

### **South China Sea: One Small Step Forward?**

While the Chairman’s Statements from both the EAS and the [ASEAN Summit](#) merely reiterated time-honored talking points about the need for the long-awaited Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (SCS), the trimester ended with a [surprise](#), namely a rare standalone ASEAN foreign ministers’ [statement](#) on “Maintaining and Promoting Stability in the Maritime Sphere in Southeast Asia.” In a message clearly aimed at Beijing, the ministers reaffirmed the need for claimants to “exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability [and] avoid actions that may further complicate the situation...” This statement may have been

stimulated by (thus far failed) [attempts](#) by Philippine President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. to promote an ASEAN-only SCS Code of Conduct. While we applaud Marcos’ efforts, there is a long way to go, given that ASEAN claimants themselves have overlapping claims that they have been unable to resolve, plus the fact that the largest landholder of disputed territory in the SCS, Taiwan, has not even been allowed to sit at the discussion table.

### A G20 “For the People”

India chaired the G20 in 2023 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi used that opportunity to make the case for Delhi’s leadership of the developing world. He had [said](#) that he wanted the group to be more inclusive and human-oriented, “to focus on the development of the people, by the people and for the people.” He hosted the annual G20 summit in Delhi Sept. 9-10. The [Leaders Declaration](#), “One Earth, One Family, One Future,” is an 83-paragraph, 29-page document (with an additional five-page list of 25 annexed documents). Its contents range from fighting hunger to fighting corruption, with calls to promote the Green economy, ready countries for the technological transformation, prepare multilateral institutions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, provide equitable taxation, empower women, and fight terrorism and money laundering. [According](#) to Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, it “focuses on promoting strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth.”



Figure 2 The G20 Summit 2023 held in New Delhi from September 9 to 10. Photo: PTI

A sticking point in the document—like every other that purported to represent multilateral consensus—was Ukraine. Throughout India’s year-long tenure as chair, it was unable to issue any joint statements as there was no agreement on how to assess the Ukraine issue. In what was deemed a diplomatic triumph, the final

statement noted that “All states must refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition against the territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence of any state” while adding that “The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible.” It conceded that some members of the group insisted that “the G20 is not a platform to resolve geopolitical and security issues,” but went on to note that “we acknowledge that these issues can have significant consequences for the global economy.” Indeed, the statement highlighted “the human suffering and negative added impacts of the war in Ukraine with regard to global food and energy security, supply chains, macro-financial stability, inflation and growth, which has complicated the policy environment for countries, especially developing and least developed countries.”

Russia [called](#) the agreement “balanced.” Critics pointed out that this language is a retreat from that of the G20 Leaders Declaration of the previous year, which [said](#) the G20 “deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine.”

The other big outcome of the meeting, and keeping with India’s desire for a more inclusive group, was the African Union’s accession to full G20 membership. With 55 members—more than twice the number of G20 states—the AU presence should provide a megaphone for the developing world. The declaration is already leaning in that direction with calls for “better, bigger and more effective” multilateral development banks, as well as billions and trillions of dollars “to rapidly and substantially scale up investment and climate finance.”

### San Francisco Sideshow

The substance of the Xi-Biden Summit in San Francisco is covered in detail in this journal’s US-China chapter. No real breakthroughs were anticipated or happened but both leaders tried to set a more positive, cooperative tone, despite media attempts to undermine this effort by fixating on the infamous “Is Xi still a dictator?” [CNN gotcha question](#) to the US president. Biden tried to finesse his answer: “Well, look, he’s a dictator in the sense that he is a guy who runs a country that is a communist country that’s based on a form of government totally different than ours.” Anyway, we made progress.” This

avoided the even worse (politically speaking) headline: “Biden refuses to call Xi a dictator!” It nonetheless resulted in CNN leading with the headline “Biden says he still believes Xi Jinping is a dictator.” The rest of the mainstream [media followed suit](#), drawing the inevitable strong Chinese [protest](#). We understand a reporter’s desire to make headlines, but the media focus on Biden’s forced response (and not on the “we made progress” part), intended or not, helped to undermine the Summit’s main message and intent.

### APEC Overshadowed

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting that the US hosted in San Francisco in November was destined to be overshadowed. APEC has become a forum for broad statements and agreement on technical issues that could make a difference to regional economic cooperation but defy sexy headlines. In addition, this year’s meeting competed with the Xi-Biden summit as well as the anticipated results of a year and a half of discussions to conclude the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF, taken up below). Not surprisingly, [opined](#) Wendy Cutler, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute and a former acting deputy US trade representative, the concrete agreed-upon results “could be seen as disappointing.” She described the meeting well, arguing that the US gave up on high-profile results—a smart calculation given the participants, referring to China and Russia—and instead “emphasized the themes of inclusivity, resiliency and sustainability and framed ongoing APEC work within these contexts.”

The [Golden Gate Declaration](#) is a 15-paragraph statement that began by applauding the APEC process, noting that “our steady commitment to APEC’s mission has helped our region become a vanguard of global growth.” It continues with a nod to previous documents that charted the forum’s course, and a reaffirmation of “our determination to deliver a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive, and predictable trade and investment environment.” They promised to support a rules-based international trade system, with reform of the World Trade Organization. They pledged “to advance economic integration in the region in a manner that is market-driven.” There were nods to supply chain resilience, the need to recognize the interests of all stakeholders, along

with the need to address the challenges and impacts of climate change. Women’s empowerment, the fight against corruption, and the need to create an inclusive digital ecosystem were all included.



Figure 3 The 2023 APEC Leaders’ Golden Gate Declaration was adopted at the APEC Economic Leaders’ Week in San Francisco. Photo: APEC

Supplementing the Golden Gate Declaration was a three-paragraph [Chair’s Statement](#) that addressed two issues: the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza. On the first point, it pointed a finger at Russia for its aggression against Ukraine—citing UN General Assembly resolutions that say as much—and called for a “lasting peace based on the principles of the United Nations Charter, including the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of Ukraine.” It went on to highlight the food security impacts, like the G20 statement. On the second point, the statement explained that “We exchanged views on the ongoing crisis in Gaza. Leaders, including the United States, shared their respective positions. Some leaders also shared the united messages of the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh [last week].” The next paragraph notes the objection of some leaders “to the inclusion of this language in the accompanying 2023 APEC Leaders’ Golden Gate Declaration on the basis that they do not believe that APEC is a forum to discuss geopolitical issues.”

### Gaza’s Long Shadow

Debate continues over whether “security is indivisible,” but there is no missing the long shadow of certain events. In the last trimester, Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel provided proof that distant crises can be deeply entangled with affairs much closer to home. Catherin Dalpino provides an excellent assessment of the way in which that conflict shapes policy in Southeast

Asia in her chapter in this issue. It is a complex influence, with regional governments concerned about nationals that are guest workers in Israel and Gaza, sympathizing for the Palestinian cause in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, and fearing that it will inflame local jihadist groups in the southern Philippines and Thailand.

The issue was especially challenging for India, which found itself navigating difficult diplomatic terrain when Delhi abstained from a United Nations General Assembly vote in late October calling for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. That position that diverged from that of much of the Global South, which Prime Minister Modi championed over much of last year. While denouncing a “heinous terrorist attack” on Israel, he has also pushed for restraint and a diplomatic resolution to the crisis.

Other leaders face similar dilemmas, although the degree and intensity of the choices differ. While support for Israel remains the centrist position in the United States, President Biden is facing blowback from Palestinian supporters in key constituencies, such as Michigan. If their anger—or that of the many young people who have rallied to the Palestinian cause in the aftermath of the Israeli response—results in them turning their back on the president or even just staying away from the polls next November, then it could affect the outcome of the election.

### **IPEF: So Close, but yet So Far...**

We have long complained about the absence of a meaningful economic component of US Indo-Pacific strategy. Yes, there is the Blue Dot Network, the Quad Investment Network, efforts to support infrastructure here and there, and a slew of supply chain resilience initiatives, but there is no substantive project to promote market access and integration, which the Biden administration had explicitly taken off the table in talks with regional governments. Instead, the US has been pressing the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity to advance a new model of economic engagement, one that sidesteps thorny questions about the “exploitation” of access to the US domestic market and resulting job losses. It was launched in the Spring of 2022 by 14 countries “to advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness for our economies.” In the [Leaders’ Statement](#) released after their two-day meeting as part of

the November 2023 APEC confab, they declared that “In record time, we have delivered on our goals.”

Not quite. Yes, the ministers reached agreement on three of the four IPEF pillars: supply chains, green economy, and the fair economy. A deal on fair and resilient trade, which was hoped to be concluded by the APEC meeting, which would in turn permit the whole megillah to be released to great fanfare at that time, proved elusive, however. Several months ahead of the November deadline, it was clear that no agreement would be reached. To avoid the need for Congressional approval, the trade pillar didn’t address market access and instead focused on accompanying issues like labor, environmental concerns, regulatory practices, and trade facilitation. That troubled many of the IPEF partners. Digital trade, one of the most important issues in 21<sup>st</sup> century economic relations, also proved to be beyond consensus, reportedly because of objections from US lawmakers. US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen [said](#) that “significant progress” had been made on the trade pillar, but it “looks not to be complete, like something that is likely to require further work.”

Still, there were accomplishments. The meeting produced a “first of its kind” Supply Chain Agreement and substantially concluded negotiations on a “groundbreaking” Clean Economy Agreement and an innovative Fair Economy Agreement. They launched the IPEF Critical Minerals Dialogue to foster “collaboration on strengthening IPEF critical mineral supply chains and boosting regional economic competitiveness.” The group said that it would “explore additional initiatives to advance cooperation and dialogue on areas of mutual interest, such as energy security and technology.” The group [committed](#), in the “green economy” pillar, to economic cooperation to support member transitions “to clean economies by improving and enhancing the regulatory and policy environment, sharing best practices, accelerating the deployment of key technologies and capturing the resulting economic opportunities.” In addition, they agreed to set up a ministerial-level IPEF Council that will meet annually, starting this year, and leaders’ meetings every two years.

The US and its IPEF partners also [announced](#) that they would work with the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) and

the private sector “to scale high-standard investments, create more resilient economies, and drive long-term sustainable development.” This will include an annual IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum, beginning this year, “to catalyze sustainable infrastructure and climate technology investments across IPEF economies that are party to the Clean Economy Agreement.” The US launched a PGI IPEF Investment Accelerator “to scale high-standard project financing to drive sustainable economic growth in IPEF countries.” IPEF partners will establish the IPEF Catalytic Capital Fund to pool resources and expand the pipeline of bankable climate projects in all three pillars of the IPEF agreement. That’s all good, but we continue to believe that trade agreements are critical and failure to close that deal is a blow to IPEF credibility.

### ADMM-Plus Avoids Talking about Ongoing Wars

The 17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting and 10<sup>th</sup> ADMM-Plus rightfully drew little international attention, occurring as they did in the shadow of APEC and at the ministerial level; Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin represented the United States at the meeting. Nonetheless, there are a few points worth noting. The ADMM [Joint Declaration](#), as expected, called for “full implementation” of the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar and “self-restraint” and the “early conclusion” of a SCS Code of Conduct, but made no reference to the wars in Gaza or Ukraine. The ADMM-Plus [Joint Declaration](#) also ignored both wars, focusing instead on the issue of women, peace, and security. The Ministers did adopt the [Concept Paper](#) on the Implementation of the AOIP from a Defense Perspective, which “serves as a guideline for ASEAN to implement the AOIP in the area of defense cooperation.” The Defense Department’s [readout](#) on Secretary Austin’s visit to Indonesia noted that Austin discussed challenges to ASEAN’s vision for peace and security, “including coercive PRC activities in the South China Sea, the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, destabilizing DPRK proliferation activities, and the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.” The readout highlighted Austin’s meeting with Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto, where both ministers signed a “[historic](#)” Defense Cooperation Arrangement, while celebrating the recent upgrade of the bilateral relationship to a [Comprehensive Strategic Partnership](#). Austin’s growing friendship with Subianto may prove

useful in the future, since he is currently the frontrunner in Indonesia’s upcoming presidential elections.



Figure 4 Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin from the United States participates in the 10<sup>th</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defense Ministers Meeting. Photo: Willy Kurniawan

### 2024: The “Biggest Election Year” Ever

[Politico](#) has called 2024 “the biggest election year in history,” noting that “more than 60 countries representing half the world population—some 4 billion people—will hold regional, legislative and presidential elections that look set to shake up political institutions and ramp up geopolitical tensions.” Many of these elections, including those among seven of the world’s 10 largest nations—Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, and the United States—will take place in the broader Indo-Pacific region. Other leadership contests, both inside (Taiwan) and beyond (United Kingdom), could have global consequences.

Allison Meakem, writing in [Foreign Policy](#), provides a comprehensive analysis of some of the most consequential of the more than 50 national contests taking place this year:

#### Key 2024 Elections

- Jan 7: Bangladesh (Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina re-elected)
- Jan 13: Taiwan
- Feb 8: Pakistan
- Feb 14: Indonesia
- March 1: Iran
- March 15-17: Russia
- April 10: South Korea National Assembly
- April/May: India (date TBD)
- June 2: Mexico
- June 6-9: European Parliament

June (TBD): Indonesia run-off election, if required

Oct (TBD): Japan Liberal Democratic Party leadership election

Nov 5: United States

Nov (T) Singapore—PM Lee Hsien Loong stepping down by then

By Dec 31: United Kingdom

### *Taiwan*

By the time this edition goes to print, the outcome of Taiwan's elections will be known. Regardless of the outcome, new leadership is assured since incumbent President Tsai Ing-Wen from the Democratic Progressive Party cannot run for a third term. [Editor's note: William Lai won.] What remains to be seen is how Beijing reacts to the result. Also to be examined is the extent of Beijing's attempts to influence the outcome and the success or failure of these attempts. See the China-Taiwan chapter for more details.

### *Indonesia*

New leadership is also in the cards for Indonesia, where current Defense Minister Prabowo is currently ahead in the polls. His running mate is Gibran Rakabuming Raka the son of the highly popular incumbent President Joko Widodo (aka Jokowi). Running against them is Ganjar Pranowo from former President Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party (PDIP) and an independent candidate, Anies Baswedan, who stands little chance of winning but could draw enough votes to force a run-off election in June between the two top contenders. Ganjar's main claim to fame (or infamy) was his hard stand, as then-governor of the state of Central Java, against Israel's participation in the 2023 Under-20 FIFA World Cup, which cost Indonesia its chance of hosting the event. This established his bona fides among hardline Islamists and backers of the Palestinian cause (while alienating soccer fans). All three candidates for president of the world's largest Muslim-majority nation have expressed strong support for the Palestinian people and all have vowed to continue Jokowi's economic policies that have led to a 43% rise in Indonesia's GDP under his leadership.

### *Japan*

Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio is on increasingly shaky ground as the approval ratings of his Cabinet and those of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) hit new lows. The political funding scandal is only the latest in a series of blows to the standing of the prime minister, his government, and the ruling party. With an anticipated state visit to Washington in March and little fear that the opposition could come to power in an election, there is however little sense of urgency to replace the beleaguered PM. He can expect a tough fight in the next party presidential election, scheduled for the fall, though.

### *India*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is expected to win handily in the "world's largest democracy," even though his rightwing Hindu party has been accused of suppressing democracy. Modi has thus far successfully walked the tightrope between improving relations with Washington while restraining itself from being overly critical of its traditional partner (and major arms supplier) Russia. The US love affair with Modi's government may be tested, however, amid reports of government-sponsored hit squads allegedly targeting Sikh separatists in the US (unsuccessfully) and Canada (successfully).

### *United States*

Keen observers of the US political scene may have observed that presidential elections are also slated for the United States this coming November. Candidates will officially be anointed at the Republican and Democratic National Conventions in July and August respectively, but to the extent that any suspense still exists, that should be removed after the March 5 "Super Tuesday" primaries. The biggest question surrounds who, if anyone, will emerge as third-party candidates and which of the major party nominees will suffer most if a credible third-party candidate emerges.

Stay tuned for the May 2024 issue of *Comparative Connections*, where we will more deeply examine 2024 elections, past and still to come, and their potential impact on regional security and US foreign policy.

# CHRONOLOGY OF REGIONAL OVERVIEW

## SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 2023

**Sept. 2, 2023:** North Korea [fires](#) missiles over the Yellow Sea in the wake of US–South Korea joint military exercises.

**Sept. 3, 2023:** Australia [extends](#) its police presence in the Solomon Islands per their request as Canberra becomes increasingly concerned with China–Solomon relations.

**Sept. 4, 2023:** US Navy destroyer *USS Ralph Johnson* (DDG 114) [conducts](#) a “bilateral sail” with Philippine Navy guided-missile frigate *BRP Jose Rizal* (FF-150) in the South China Sea “to enhance the interoperability between the two navies.”

**Sept. 4–7, 2023:** Regional leaders [convene](#) in Indonesia for a number of high-level meetings, including the 43rd ASEAN Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit.

**Sept. 5, 2023:** ASEAN leaders [agree](#) to prevent Myanmar from gaining chairing the group in 2026 as previously scheduled.

**Sept. 5, 2023:** Taiwan government [announces](#) that investments approved for the 18 countries under the New Southbound Policy increased to \$5.3 billion in 2022, up 90% from \$2.8 billion in 2019.

**Sept. 5, 2023:** Vanuatu’s new Prime Minister Sato Kilman [agrees](#) to review the Vanuatu–Australia Security Pact.

**Sept. 6, 2023:** US Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) [adds](#) 42 Chinese companies to its Entity List, effective Oct. 6, for supplying US-origin integrated circuits to Russian intermediaries and end-users.

**Sept. 7, 2023:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN–India Summit.

**Sept. 7, 2023:** South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [holds](#) a phone call with US and Japanese counterparts to discuss trilateral security cooperation following up on the Camp David Summit, and North Korea’s missile launches.

**Sept. 7, 2023:** 32nd Korea–Japan Customs Heads’ Meeting is [held](#) in South Korea, the first such meeting between the neighboring countries in seven years.

**Sept. 8, 2023:** Modi [welcomes](#) President Biden to India, and the leaders reaffirm their commitment to the G20 and express confidence that the outcomes of the G20 Leaders’ Summit in New Delhi will advance their shared goals.

**Sept. 8, 2023:** India [reduces](#) import tariffs on US poultry which resolves the last of all the US–India trade disputes.

**Sept. 9, 2023:** President Biden, Prime Minister Modi, and other G20 leaders [unveil](#) the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor, which has been seen as a direct competitor to China’s BRI.

**Sept. 9–10, 2023:** President Biden attends the 18th G20 Summit and [talks](#) to PRC [Premier](#) Li Qiang on the margins of the summit.

**Sept. 9, 2023:** India and the United States, along with the European Union, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other G20 partners, [sign](#) a memorandum of understanding on the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor, or IMEC. Included in the deal is a railway to link Middle Eastern countries and connect them to India by port.

**Sept. 9, 2023:** G20 [adds](#) the African Union to its membership on the final day of the G20 summit,



making it the G21 and adding a major voice from the Global South.

**Sept. 9, 2023:** US Navy destroyer *USS Ralph Johnson* (DDG 114) and Royal Canadian Navy frigate *HMCS Ottawa* (FFH 341) [conduct](#) “a routine Taiwan Strait transit...through waters where high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law.

**Sept. 10, 2023:** President Biden [visits](#) Hanoi to discuss US-Vietnam relations and semiconductors. During the visit, Vietnam elevates the US to the highest diplomatic status, alongside China and Russia.

**Sept. 9, 2023:** At the G20 summit, Prime Minister Kishida [explains](#) Japan’s position and responds to criticisms of the three Fukushima water releases on Aug. 24, Oct. 5, and Nov. 20.

**Sept. 10-11, 2023:** President Joe Biden [travels](#) to Vietnam for a visit hosted by Nguyen Phu Trong, secretary-general of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Washington and Hanoi announce that US-Vietnam relations will be elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The two countries [announce](#) that they will explore possibilities of strengthening semiconductor supply chains with funds from the International Technology Security and Innovation (ITSI) funds created by the CHIPS Act of 2022.

**Sept. 12, 2023:** Department of Defense [releases](#) its 2023 Cyber Strategy Summary in which the PRC is listed as the first among several state and non-state actors in a “contested cyberspace.”

**Sept. 12, 2023:** US Navy destroyer *USS Ralph Johnson* (DDG 114) and Royal Canadian Navy frigate *HMCS Ottawa* (FFH 341) [operate](#) in the South China Sea as part of a joint exercise.

**Sept. 12, 2023:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [visits](#) to Russia for summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin amid growing concerns over military cooperation between Pyongyang

and Moscow. While there, Kim and Putin [meet](#) at Russia's Vostochny spaceport, Kim [inspects](#) factory producing modern fighter jets in Russia's Far East, Kim [meets](#) Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu to inspect Russia's nuclear-capable bombers, and Putin [accepts](#) the invitation to visit Pyongyang.

**Sept. 13, 2023:** European Commission [starts](#) investigation into whether to impose tariffs to protect the [EU](#) against Chinese electric vehicle imports benefiting from state subsidies.

**Sept. 13, 2023:** North Korea [fires](#) two short-range ballistic missiles into the East Sea in an apparent show of force ahead of its leader Kim Jong Un's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

**Sept. 14, 2023:** US, Japan, and South Korean national security advisors [hold](#) a call to discuss the summit between Russian President Putin and North Korean leader Kim.

**Sept. 17, 2023:** US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [meets](#) Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Malta.

**Sept. 18, 2023:** Canada [accuses](#) “agents of the government of India” of being behind the death of Sikh community leader in British Columbia.

**Sept. 19, 2023:** President Biden [holds](#) a summit with five former soviet Central Asian states to discuss regional security and territorial integrity.

**Sept. 19-23, 2023:** ASEAN [begins](#) a five day joint military exercise in Indonesian waters, amid growing tensions in the South China Sea.

**Sept. 22, 2023:** Defense officials from the US and the PRC [hold](#) a hybrid in-person and virtual meeting to discuss the Department’s recently released 2023 DOD Cyber Strategy Unclassified Summary and to engage in “substantive discussion on a range of cyber-related topics.”

**Sept. 22, 2023:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [meets](#) Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Japanese and Australian counterparts on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York.

**Sept. 22, 2023:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, South Korean Foreign Minister Park, and Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa [meet](#) on the sidelines of the UNGA to discuss trilateral cooperation and a [possible](#) North Korean-Russia arms deal.

**Sept. 22, 2023:** US and China [launch](#) new joint economic working groups in an effort to build cooperation despite growing tensions and competition.

**Sept. 25, 2023:** Philippines Coast Guard [removes](#) the floating barrier surrounding Scarborough Shoal.

**Sept. 25, 2023:** South Korea and the US [stage joint naval drills](#) in East Sea amid North Korean threats.

**Sept. 25, 2023:** Department of Commerce's BIS [adds](#) 11 entities based in China to the Entity List for national security concerns, including implication in "a conspiracy to violate US export controls."

**Sept. 25, 2023:** North Korea [opens the border](#) to foreigners for first time since COVID-19.

**Sept. 26, 2023:** A delegation from the US Food and Drug Administration [visits](#) Divi's Laboratories, an Indian manufacturer of artificial pharmaceutical ingredients, in Hyderabad.

**Sept. 26, 2023:** South Korea [hosts](#) a trilateral meeting with China and Japan.

**Sept. 28, 2023:** Washington officials [say](#) U.S. soldier Travis King, who crossed the inter-Korean border into North Korea in July, is in US custody after his release by the reclusive regime.

**Sept. 28, 2023:** United States [holds](#) a summit with 14 Pacific Island States to discuss climate change, regional security, and China.

**Sept. 30, 2023:** Indian EAM S. Jaishankar [criticizes](#) Canada's "permissive" attitude toward terrorism and violence and allowing a culture of intimidation toward Indian diplomats.

**Oct. 2-13, 2023:** Philippines and the US [kick off](#) a two-week joint naval exercise, part of efforts to bolster international cooperation amid Beijing's increasingly assertive activity in the South China Sea.

**Oct. 3, 2023:** India [orders](#) Canada to remove 41 of 62 diplomats from the country as their diplomatic row escalates.

**Oct. 4, 2023:** China [complains](#) about the "very short" time provided by the European Union to engage in consultations for the bloc's inquiry into subsidies for electric vehicles.

**Oct. 5, 2023:** China [issues](#) a warning to Philippine vessels involved in mission to supply troops stationed in disputed waters in the South China Sea.

**Oct. 6, 2023:** Taiwan's government [opens](#) an investigation into four companies named in a media report as conducting business with firms linked to U.S.-sanctioned Huawei in China, and is considering tighter rules on key technologies.

**Oct. 6, 2023:** Canada [joins](#) India-hosted parliamentary speakers' summit of G20 nations, signaling both countries are keen to cooperate in legislative affairs despite tensions over the killing of a Sikh separatist leader.

**Oct. 10, 2023:** South Korea's defense minister [pushes](#) to suspend a 2018 inter-Korean military agreement in order to resume front-line surveillance on rival North Korea, as the surprise attack on Israel by Hamas raised concerns in South Korea about similar assaults

by the North.

**Oct. 10, 2023:** South Korea, the United States, and Japan [stage](#) a trilateral maritime interdiction exercise for the first time in seven years.

**Oct. 10, 2023:** Canadian diplomats [remain](#) in India as withdrawal deadline passes.

**Oct. 11, 2023:** EU [launches](#) investigation into overcapacity in China's steel sector, a move that could see a tariff of 25% imposed on imports from the world's second-largest economy.

**Oct. 12, 2023:** US Navy P-8A *Poseidon* aircraft [transits](#) the Taiwan Strait in international airspace to "demonstrate the United States" commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

**Oct. 12, 2023:** China [sends](#) fighter jets to monitor and warn a US Navy patrol aircraft that flew through the Taiwan Strait.

**Oct. 13, 2023:** India's stock market [loses](#) momentum as risk-averse investors pull out money amid a diplomatic row with Canada.

**Oct. 13, 2023:** North Korea [threatens](#) to stage the "most powerful and rapid first strike" against US strategic assets deployed to the Korean Peninsula.

**Oct. 13, 2023:** Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. [applies](#) for permanent approval to ship US chip equipment to its facility in Nanjing, China, after its one-year license for the plant received a temporary renewal.

**Oct. 14, 2023:** South Korea military transport plane [help](#) evacuate 163 South Koreans, 51 Japanese, and six Singaporeans from Israel.

**Oct. 17, 2023:** Chinese President Xi Jinping [outlines](#) his views on the past and future of the Belt and Road Initiative, as Beijing hosts world dignitaries at a forum marking the 10th anniversary of its signature foreign policy strategy.

**Oct. 17, 2023:** Department of Commerce's BIS [adds](#) 13 Chinese companies to the Entity List for aiding the AI capabilities of China's military and high-tech surveillance sector and, thus, "acting contrary to the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States."

**Oct. 17-18, 2023:** President Putin [visits](#) Beijing to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Belt-Road-Initiative Forum. He holds talks with President Xi Jinping on Oct. 18.

**Oct. 18, 2023:** Biden administration [reduces](#) the types of semiconductors that American companies will be able to sell to China, citing the desire to close loopholes in existing regulations announced last year.

**Oct. 22, 2023:** Philippines [accuses](#) China's coast guard of colliding with a Filipino supply boat in the South China Sea.

**Oct. 22, 2023:** US, South Korea, and Japan [conduct](#) the first trilateral aerial exercise to strengthen their joint response capabilities against North Korea.

**Oct. 22, 2023:** California Gov. Gavin Newsom [visits](#) China to reinforce his state's role as a global leader on climate change.

**Oct. 25, 2023:** California Gov. Gavin Newsom [meets Chinese President](#) Xi in Beijing. Newsom, joined by US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns, also meets China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Vice President Han Zheng and [signs](#) a new climate-focused Memorandum of Understanding with National Development and Reform Commission Chairman Zheng Shanjie.

**Oct. 26, 2023:** President Biden [warns](#) China that the US will defend the Philippines in case of any attack in the disputed South China Sea.

**Oct. 26, 2023:** China [says](#) that the US does not have the right to get involved in problems between China and the Philippines.

**Oct. 26, 2023:** US Secretary of State Blinken [meets](#) China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Department of State.

**Oct. 27, 2023:** South Korean and U.S. troops [conduct](#) live-fire exercises to hone their ability to respond to potential " Hamas-style surprise artillery attacks" by North Korea.

**Oct. 28, 2023:** President Biden [has](#) a one-hour meeting with China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, at the White House, where he highlighted the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with Beijing.

**Oct. 28, 2023:** UN expert panel overseeing sanctions against Pyongyang [estimates](#) North Korea's state-sponsored cyber theft last year at \$1.7 billion.

**Oct. 31, 2023:** United States [imposes sanctions](#) on the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), the country's most lucrative state-owned enterprise. Washington also adds the names of three entities and five individuals to the sanctions list, for their involvement with the Tatmadaw.

**Nov. 1, 2023:** Destroyer from the US Navy 7th Fleet and a frigate from the Royal Canadian Navy jointly [conduct](#) a "routine Taiwan Strait transit through waters where high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law."

**Nov. 1-2, 2023:** 27th US-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue is [conducted](#) in Washington. Ongoing since normalization of US-Vietnam relations in 1995, the Dialogue has been incorporated as a key feature of the US-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership announced in September.

**Nov. 3, 2023:** US Navy destroyer USS Dewey [conducts](#) a freedom of navigation operation in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands.

**Nov. 4, 2023:** Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [says](#) his country, the Philippines, and the US are cooperating to protect the freedom of the

South China Sea as he commits to help enhance Manila's security capabilities.

**Nov. 4-7, 2023:** US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Kerry and [China's](#) Special Envoy for Climate Change Xie Zhenhua [meet](#) at Sunnylands, California, where they sign the Sunnylands Agreement on "Enhancing Cooperation to Address the Climate Crisis."

**Nov. 5, 2023:** Prime Minister Kishida and Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim [agree](#) to promote bilateral defense and maritime security cooperation amid China's increasing military assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Nov. 7, 2023:** Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese [calls](#) for the "full resumption of free and unimpeded trade" with China in a meeting with counterpart Li Qiang that marked the return of talks after a four-year hiatus.

**Nov. 7-8, 2023:** Group of Seven (G7) wealthy nations - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the US - as well as the EU, [meet](#) in Tokyo to discuss issues including Russia's war in Ukraine and the Israel-Gaza crisis.

**Nov. 9, 2023:** President Ishmael Toroama, who represents the Autonomous Region of Bougainville within Papua New Guinea, [travels](#) to Washington, D.C.

**Nov. 10, 2023:** India and the US [underline](#) their commitment to boosting security ties as their top diplomats and defense chiefs discuss regional security, China and the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

**Nov. 11-17, 2023:** Leaders from the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum [gather](#) in San Francisco for the 30th APEC summit.

**Nov. 13, 2023:** US and South Korea [update](#) their strategy on deterring North Korea for the first time in a decade.

**Nov. 13, 2023:** President Biden and Indonesian counterpart, Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, [meet](#) at the White House, agreeing to elevate ties and cooperate in fields ranging from climate and energy to digital connectivity and defense.

**Nov. 13-15, 2023:** Cabinet officials from the 14 Indo-Pacific Economic Framework members [kick off](#) two-day meeting.

**Nov. 15, 2023:** Defense ministers in ASEAN [call](#) for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a durable solution to the crisis in Myanmar during the opening of a regional meeting in Jakarta.

**Nov. 15, 2023:** President Biden and President Xi [begin](#) a high-profile summit in San Francisco in a renewed attempt to stabilize US-China relations.

**Nov. 15, 2023:** North Korea [tests](#) newly developed solid-fuel engines for new-type for a new type of intermediate-range ballistic missile.

**Nov. 16, 2023:** After meeting President Xi, [Biden tells the media](#): "I reiterate what I've said since I've become president and what every previous president of late has said—that we—we maintain an agreement that there is a one-China policy and that—and I'm not going to change that. That's not going to change."

**Nov. 16, 2023:** United States and the Philippines [announce](#) that they will explore opportunities to collaborate on semiconductor supply chains with funds from the CHIPS Act of 2022.

**Nov. 16, 2023:** Japanese Trade Minister Nishimura Yasutoshi and Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao [agree](#) to create a new framework to discuss export controls on key minerals and other trade issues.

**Nov. 16, 2023:** ASEAN defense chiefs and counterparts from regional partners like the United States, China, and Russia [meet](#) in Jakarta for the 10th ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus.

**Nov. 16-17, 2023:** President Biden [chairs](#) the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in San Francisco.

**Nov. 17, 2023:** United States and the Philippines [sign](#) a landmark deal that would allow Washington to export nuclear technology and material to Manila, which is exploring the use of nuclear power to decarbonize and boost energy independence.

**Nov. 17, 2023:** Japanese Prime Minister [Kishida Fumio stresses](#) the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait during a meeting with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the APEC summit.

**Nov. 19, 2023:** Taiwan [reports](#) renewed Chinese military activity around the island, with nine aircraft crossing the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait and warships carrying out "combat readiness patrols."

**Nov. 19, 2023:** Maldives new President Mohamed Muizzu, who campaigned on altering the tiny Indian Ocean archipelago's "India first" policy, [requests](#) India withdraw its military from the country.

**Nov. 20, 2023:** South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol [heads](#) to Britain for a state visit, hoping to boost economic ties and security partnerships as his country faces what it sees as growing danger from a nuclear-armed North Korea.

**Nov. 20, 2023:** Philippines [approaches](#) neighbors Malaysia and Vietnam to discuss a separate code of conduct regarding the South China Sea, citing limited progress toward a broader regional pact with China.

**Nov. 20, 2023:** India and Australia [hold](#) their 2<sup>nd</sup> 2 + 2 Defense and Foreign Ministers Dialogue.

**Nov. 21, 2023:** US and the Philippines [start](#) joint air and sea patrols in the South China Sea.

**Nov. 21, 2023:** North Korea [notifies](#) Japan it plans to launch a rocket carrying a space satellite between Nov. 22 and Dec. 1 in the

direction of the Yellow Sea and East China Sea, Japan's Coast Guard said on Tuesday.

**Nov. 22, 2023:** South Korea [suspends](#) part of a 2018 inter-Korean military tension reduction agreement in response to North Korea's latest launch of a military spy satellite. The US, South Korea, and Japan's nuclear envoys also [hold](#) phone calls and "strongly" condemn North Korea's space launch. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) [reports](#) the three countries have shared information regarding the launch.

**Nov. 22, 2023:** United States authorities [thwarted](#) a plot to kill a Sikh separatist in the United States and issued a warning to India over concerns the government in New Delhi was involved, according to a senior Biden administration official.

**Nov. 23, 2023:** North Korea [fires](#) ballistic missile toward East Sea, but launch apparently failed.

**Nov. 23, 2023:** A South Korean appeals court, the Seoul High Court [rules](#) in favor of a group of 16 former "comfort women" (survivors of Imperial Japan's wartime sexual slavery) ordering the Japanese government to provide 200 million won (about \$150,000) in compensation to each victim, overruling a lower court ruling in 2021. Foreign Minister Kamikawa issues a statement [calling](#) the ruling "extremely regrettable and absolutely unacceptable."

**Nov. 25, 2023:** Philippines and Australia [begin](#) their first joint sea and air patrols in the South China Sea.

**Nov. 25, 2023:** US Navy destroyer *USS Hopper* [conducts](#) a freedom of navigation operation in the South China Sea near the Paracel Islands.

**Nov. 26, 2023:** China, Japan, and South Korea [agree](#) to restart cooperation and pave the way for a summit in the latest move to ease tensions between the Asian neighbors.

**Nov. 26, 2023:** US, South Korea, and Japan [conduct](#) naval drills to strengthen their joint defense posture.

**Nov. 27, 2023:** Japan and Vietnam [agree](#) to strengthen their security and economic ties in the face of China's growing influence in the region.

**Nov. 27, 2023:** UN Security Council [holds](#) a briefing on North Korea's satellite launch.

**Nov. 27, 2023:** Taiwan High Prosecutors Office [indicts 10 people](#), including several active-duty military personnel, for allegedly spying for China.

**Nov. 29, 2023:** Chief minister of the western Indian state of Gujarat [calls](#) on Japanese semiconductor companies to invest in the hometown of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**Dec. 1, 2023:** Malaysia [invites](#) China's President Xi to visit, as the Southeast Asian country also seeks to boost the number of Chinese tourists to 5 million a year to fuel economic growth.

**Dec. 1, 2023:** Philippines [builds](#) a new coast guard station on the contested island of Thitu in the South China Sea, boosting its ability to monitor movements of Chinese vessels and aircraft in the busy disputed waterway.

**Dec. 1, 2023:** US [keeps](#) North Korea on its list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2022 report.

**Dec. 2, 2023:** South Korea successfully [launches](#) its first indigenous military spy satellite into orbit.

**Dec. 3, 2023:** Philippines' coast guard [says](#) more than 135 Chinese "maritime militia" vessels are "swarming" around the disputed Whitsun Reef in the South China Sea.

**Dec. 4, 2023:** South Korea [successfully conducts](#) third test flight of solid-fuel space rocket.

**Dec. 6, 2023:** Leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) [meet](#) virtually and release a Leaders' Statement which says the G7 "stand prepared to build constructive and stable relations with China" but remain committed to "push for a level playing field" for workers and companies and remain "seriously concerned" about the situation in the East and South China Seas.

**Dec. 7, 2023:** Two Chinese naval vessels [become](#) the first ships to dock at a new pier at Cambodia's Ream Naval Base.

**Dec. 7, 2023:** At their first in-person summit for four years, China and the EU [agree](#) that their trade relationship should be more balanced, but gave no sign of resolving differences on a range of issues.

**Dec. 9, 2023:** Japan [does not](#) appeal a South Korean appeals court's Nov. 23 ruling which was in favor of a group of former "comfort women."

**Dec. 11, 2023:** Philippines [condemns](#) China's recent actions in the South China Sea, urging restraint to preserve regional stability following a spike in tensions over the weekend.

**Dec. 14, 2023:** Japan and ASEAN [intend](#) to work together on cybersecurity and systems for managing and operating artificial intelligence.

**Dec. 14, 2023:** China [condemns](#) Canada's support for the Philippines over what it said were violations of China's sovereignty in the South China Sea.

**Dec. 14, 2023:** Defense ministers of Japan, Britain, and Italy [sign](#) an agreement to establish a joint organization to develop a new advanced jet fighter, as their countries push to strengthen cooperation in the face of growing threats from China, Russia and North Korea.

**Dec. 14, 2023:** Russia and China [conduct](#) 7<sup>th</sup> joint air patrol over the Sea of Japan and East China Sea with Russia's Tupolev-95MS strategic bombers and China's Hong-6K strategic bombers.

**Dec. 15, 2023:** Chinese leader Xi [arrives](#) in Vietnam seeking to deepen ties with the Southeast Asian neighbor, weeks after Hanoi elevated diplomatic relations with the US and Japan.

**Dec. 15, 2023:** Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese [hails](#) US Congress for authorizing the sale of nuclear submarines to another country for the first time, allowing the AUKUS defense partnership of Australia, the US, and Britain to go ahead.

**Dec. 17, 2023:** US [condemns](#) the prosecution of "pro-democracy advocate and media owner Jimmy Lai in Hong Kong under the PRC-imposed National Security Law."

**Dec. 17, 2023:** East Timor [plans](#) to choose partners for the Greater Sunrise offshore natural gas project that will bring it benefits, signaling that it will not rule out participation by Chinese companies.

**Dec. 18, 2023:** Two Chinese balloons [fly](#) north of Taiwan, according to the island's Defense Ministry.

**Dec. 18, 2023:** North Korea [fires](#) an intercontinental ballistic missile that has a range to hit anywhere in the continental US, marking its second launch in hours as Pyongyang condemned a US-led show of force as "war" moves.

**Dec. 19, 2023:** United States [imposes sanctions](#) on a network of 10 entities and four individuals based in Iran, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Indonesia for facilitating Iran's procurement of sensitive goods for the production of attack drones.

**Dec. 19, 2023:** South Korea, the US, and Japan [launch](#) a system to share North Korean missile warning data in real time.

**Dec. 19-20, 2023:** Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin [visits](#) Beijing for the 28th

regular prime ministerial meeting with his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang. President Xi [meets](#) Mishustin after the joint session of prime ministers on Dec. 20.

**Dec. 20, 2023:** Philippines defense minister [rebukes](#) China for accusing his country of provoking tension and stirring trouble in the South China Sea.

**Dec. 20, 2023:** Top diplomats of the US, South Korea, and Japan [condemn](#) North Korea's recent ballistic missile launches and urge Pyongyang to engage in "substantive dialogue without preconditions."

**Dec. 21, 2023:** Taiwan [accuses](#) China of economic coercion and election interference after Beijing announced the end of tariff cuts on some chemical imports from the island, saying Taipei violated a trade agreement, just ahead of Taiwanese elections.

**Dec. 21, 2023:** South Korea and Japan [hold](#) high-level economic talks for the first time in eight years.

**Dec. 21, 2023:** Department of Commerce [announces](#) the launch of an industrial base survey of the US semiconductor supply chain to "bolster the semiconductor supply chain, promote a level playing field for legacy chip production, and reduce national security risks posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC)."

**Dec. 21, 2023:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [says](#) Pyongyang would not hesitate to launch a nuclear attack if an enemy provokes it with nuclear weapons.

**Dec. 21, 2023:** Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi [warns](#) the Philippines that any miscalculation in their escalating dispute in the South China Sea would bring a resolute response, and urges dialogue to address "serious difficulties" between the two neighbors.

**Dec. 22, 2023:** China [resumes](#) imports of grouper from Taiwan, a day after angering

Taipei with the ending of tariff cuts on some chemical imports less than a month before Taiwanese elections.

**Dec. 22, 2023:** Japan [says](#) it will send *Patriot* air defense missiles to the US after changing its arms export rules, in a shift away from its pacifist policies.

**Dec. 22, 2023:** Federation of Korean Industries [proposes](#) regular business summits to promote cooperation with its US and Japanese counterparts.

**Dec. 24, 2023:** Eight Chinese fighter jets [cross](#) the median line of the Taiwan Strait, as well as one Chinese balloon, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

**Dec. 25, 2023:** Chinese state media [accuses](#) the Philippines of repeatedly infringing on China's territory in the South China Sea, spreading false information and colluding with extraterritorial forces to cause trouble.

**Dec. 27, 2023:** South Korea [signs](#) a contract with the US government to buy 20 additional F-35A stealth fighter jets amid efforts to bolster response capabilities against North Korean military threats.

**Dec. 27, 2023:** Unification of Taiwan with mainland China "will surely be realized," Chinese President Xi [declares](#) at a speech in Beijing to commemorate the 130th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth.

**Dec. 27, 2023:** Russia and India [discuss](#) plans and make progress in talks toward jointly producing military equipment.

**Dec. 27, 2023:** Chinese government [threatens](#) to place further trade sanctions on Taiwan if the ruling party "stubbornly" adheres to supporting independence, in a further escalation of the war of words as Taiwanese elections approach next month.



**Dec. 27, 2023:** Russia [tells](#) South Korea not to be surprised if Moscow retaliates against Seoul for expanding the list of goods which cannot be exported from the East Asian nation to Russia without special permission.

**Dec. 27, 2023:** South Korea [imposes](#) sanctions on eight North Koreans linked to nuclear and missile development through arms trade, cyberattacks and other illicit activities.

**Dec. 28, 2023:** KCNA [reports](#) that North Korean leader Kim is calling for stepped-up efforts to prepare for war.

**Dec. 28, 2023:** China's defense ministry [accuses](#) Taiwan's government of deliberately "hyping up" a military threat from China for electoral gain ahead of elections on the island in just over two weeks' time, but again sent warplanes into the Taiwan Strait.

**Dec. 30, 2023:** Foreign ministers of Southeast Asia's regional bloc ASEAN [express](#) concern over growing tensions in the South China Sea.

**Dec. 30, 2023:** Japan [says](#) it lodged a protest with South Korea over military drills conducted in waters near South Korean-controlled, Japanese-claimed islets in the Sea of Japan.

**Dec. 31, 2023:** North Korea [vows](#) to launch three new spy satellites, build military drones, and boost its nuclear arsenal in 2024 as leader Kim Jong Un said US policy is making war inevitable.

**Dec. 31, 2023:** China's "reunification" with Taiwan is inevitable, President Xi [says](#) in his New Year's address, striking a stronger tone than he did last year with less than two weeks to go before the Chinese-claimed island elects a new leader.

