

21 October | 2024

# Indo-Pacific Insights

**CGS** Centre for  
Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

### October 9

#### Japan's Foreign Minister Voices Concerns to China Amid Attacks on Nationals

Japan's new Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya expressed concerns during his first phone call with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi about recent stabbing attacks on Japanese nationals in China, including the fatal stabbing of a 10-year-old boy in Shenzhen and an incident in Suzhou. These attacks have raised alarm over growing anti-Japan sentiment. Iwaya urged China to enhance protective measures for Japanese citizens and demanded a thorough explanation regarding the schoolboy's case. He also conveyed "grave concerns" over increased Chinese military activities, including a breach of Japanese airspace in August. Despite these tensions, both ministers noted the importance of ongoing communication and expressed hopes for improved bilateral relations.

### October 10

#### Congress Raises Concerns Over Haryana Election Results

India's main opposition party, the Congress, has formally complained to the Election Commission of India regarding the counting of votes in the recent

### October 8

#### Kim Jong Un Accelerates Nuclear Ambitions Amid Regional Tensions

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has announced plans to accelerate the country's development as a military superpower, including nuclear capabilities, stating that North Korea would not hesitate to use such weapons if attacked. In a speech at the Kim Jong Un National Defense University, he criticized South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for colluding with the U.S. to destabilise the region. Kim clarified that North Korea has no intention of attacking South Korea unless provoked. The remarks coincide with heightened military displays by South Korea and the ongoing construction of a potential nuclear submarine in North Korea, indicating escalating regional tensions.

Haryana state elections, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured 48 constituencies compared to Congress's 37. The Congress, which had been projected to win according to exit polls, described the results as "totally unexpected" and "counter-intuitive."

Senior leaders met with the election panel to present complaints from 20 constituencies and submitted written grievances from seven. The Election Commission, in a response, criticized the Congress's rejection of the results, calling it an infringement on free speech. The BJP has attributed Congress's defeat to its disconnection with voters, ahead of critical upcoming regional polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

## October 11

### Gunmen Kill 21 Miners in Balochistan Attack

Dozens of armed attackers stormed private coal mines in Balochistan, southwestern Pakistan, killing at least 21 miners, police said. The assailants, armed with guns, rockets, and grenades, launched a brutal assault, shooting miners as they slept and lining up others before killing them. The attack took place days before a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, marking the deadliest incident in weeks in the mineral-rich region.

No group has claimed responsibility, but Balochistan has seen frequent violence from separatist militants. Four Afghan nationals were among the dead, and protests erupted demanding justice for the victims.

### Blinken Expresses Deep Concern Over Middle East Conflict Spread at ASEAN Summit

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken highlighted Asia's deep concerns about the spread of conflict from the Middle East during the East Asia Summit in Laos. Blinken emphasized the U.S. commitment to diplomacy and deterrence, working to prevent conflicts from escalating, particularly in Lebanon, amid rising tensions in Gaza. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called for maximum restraint, warning of the global risks of an all-out war.

The summit, attended by ASEAN leaders and global powers, also focused on regional security, including South China Sea tensions, the Taiwan Strait, and humanitarian crises.

## October 12

### Taiwanese Pilgrims Gather in Fujian Amid Political Tensions

Over a thousand Taiwanese pilgrims visited Meizhou Island in Fujian province for a religious festival dedicated to Mazu, the sea goddess revered in both Taiwan and southern China. This event, marked by vibrant parades, firecrackers, and drum performances, highlights cultural ties across the Taiwan Strait.

Despite this moment of cultural exchange, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te reaffirmed that China cannot represent Taiwan, prompting worries of increased military activity from Beijing. As tensions rise, China has considered imposing further tariffs on Taiwanese goods while advocating for "peaceful unification" without ruling out the use of force.

## October 13

### ASEAN Urges Swift Agreement on South China Sea Code, Ceasefire in Myanmar

Southeast Asian leaders called for a swift agreement on a code of conduct for the South China Sea, grounded in international law, following the ASEAN summit. Confrontations between China and ASEAN members, including the Philippines and Vietnam, have heightened tensions in the disputed waters. The statement stressed the need for confidence-building measures to reduce risks of accidents and miscalculations. On Myanmar, ASEAN demanded an immediate halt to fighting and inclusive peace talks to end the civil war. The bloc called for progress on a maritime code of conduct and resolution of Myanmar's conflict, urging national dialogue and humanitarian support.

## October 14

### Potential Economic Impact of Second Trump Presidency on Asian Economies

A second Donald Trump presidency could significantly reduce economic growth in Asian economies, particularly China, South Korea, and Vietnam, according to ratings agency Fitch. In its worst-case scenario, real GDP in these countries by 2028 could be over 1% below current expectations due to increased U.S. trade protectionism. Trump has proposed blanket tariffs of 10-20% on imports and 60% or more on Chinese goods. Fitch warned that intensified trade tensions could severely affect countries reliant on U.S. exports, though India is expected to be less impacted due to its lower export dependency.

## October 15

### Indian Foreign Minister Visits Pakistan for Key SCO Summit Amid Tight Security

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar arrived in Pakistan for the first time in nearly a decade, attending a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Islamabad. The visit comes amid strained relations between the two nuclear powers, with no bilateral talks planned. Jaishankar joined leaders from nearly a dozen nations, including Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, for the two-day summit focused on regional security and economic cooperation.



Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif briefly greeted Jaishankar at a welcome dinner ahead of the main event. The SCO, founded by Russia and China in 2001, includes Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with the aim of countering Western influence in Eurasia.

Islamabad has been placed under a tight lockdown, with schools and businesses closed, as security forces maintain heightened alert following recent attacks, including the killing of two Chinese engineers by the Baloch Liberation Army. The Pakistani army is overseeing security in Islamabad's Red Zone, where most SCO meetings will take place. The summit marks a significant diplomatic event for Pakistan, which hopes to bolster its role in regional trade and security.

## October 16

### China Reaffirms Refusal to Renounce Force Over Taiwan

China reiterated that it will never renounce the use of force regarding Taiwan, following large-scale military drills around the island. Beijing views Taiwan as its territory and staged the exercises in response to Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's recent speech. Chen Binhua, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, emphasized that while China seeks peaceful reunification, force remains an option, particularly against "external forces" and separatists. Despite Taiwan's ties with the U.S. and its allies, Chen warned that any risks taken by Taiwan could lead to its own destruction. President Xi Jinping also visited a key site of historical conflict near Taiwan.

## October 17

### NATO Allies Discuss Future of U.S.-Led Coalition Against Islamic State Amid Rising Global Threats

Ten years after the launch of the U.S.-led operation against the Islamic State (ISIS), the United States and NATO allies convened in Brussels to discuss the coalition's future as the mission faces significant challenges. The U.S. military has been ousted from its counter-terrorism base in Niger, Afghanistan remains inaccessible after the Taliban takeover, and Iraq has requested a reduction in

U.S. personnel. Despite these setbacks, U.S. officials warn that ISIS remains a growing global threat, particularly in Africa.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin emphasized the ongoing danger posed by ISIS, stating, "We must not lose sight of the threat that ISIS still poses." Recent attacks linked to ISIS, including a concert hall bombing in Russia and explosions in Iran, underscore its continued presence. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte highlighted the rise in "lone-wolf" attacks and the shifting epicenter of terrorism to Africa's Sahel region, where jihadist groups linked to ISIS and al Qaeda have killed thousands and displaced millions.

As the coalition faces increasing pressure to adapt, the U.S. is reassessing its military strategy in West Africa, while preparing to reduce its presence in Iraq by 2025. However, maintaining counter-terrorism operations in Syria remains a priority.

## October 18

### U.S. Bombers Fly Through Australian Airspace for Yemen Strikes

U.S. B-2 stealth bombers conducted airstrikes on Houthi-controlled underground bunkers in Yemen, flying through Australian airspace in a show of military interoperability, Australian officials confirmed. The U.S. targeted five weapons storage sites, with Australia providing access and overflight support. While the bombers did not operate from Australia, air-to-air refuelling was reportedly conducted. This cooperation underscores the close alliance between the two nations, especially as U.S. defence investments upgrade Australian bases amid rising Indo-Pacific tensions. The strikes marked the first use of B-2 bombers against the Iran-aligned Houthis.

## October 19

### North Korea Claims Discovery of Crashed South Korean Drone



North Korea announced it had found the remains of a South Korean military drone, suggesting it was involved in a propaganda mission.

State news agency KCNA reported the drone had a leaflet-scattering box attached, possibly used to distribute anti-North Korean material over Pyongyang. While South Korea declined to confirm whether its drones were involved, it warned against being drawn into North Korea's claims. Tensions between the two countries have escalated, with North Korea threatening retaliatory attacks if further violations of its airspace occur. South Korean officials dismissed the North's claims as unworthy of verification.

**October 20**

---

## **Indian Ex-Official Denies U.S. Murder-For-Hire Allegations**

Vikash Yadav, a former Indian government official, has dismissed U.S. charges accusing him of leading a failed murder-for-hire plot, according to his family. Yadav, 39, described the allegations as false during a conversation with his cousin in their Haryana village. The U.S. Department of Justice charged him with plotting to kill Sikh separatist leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. Yadav was reportedly a member of India's intelligence service, but his family claims they were unaware of this. Indian authorities are investigating the case, while U.S. officials consider seeking his extradition.

# ***Contributors***

## **Debi Karmakar**

Research Assistant at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

[debi@cgs-bd.com](mailto:debi@cgs-bd.com)

## **Bahauddin Ahmed**

Digital Coordinator at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)

[bahauddin@cgs-bd.com](mailto:bahauddin@cgs-bd.com)



