

08 July | 2024

# Indo-Pacific Insights

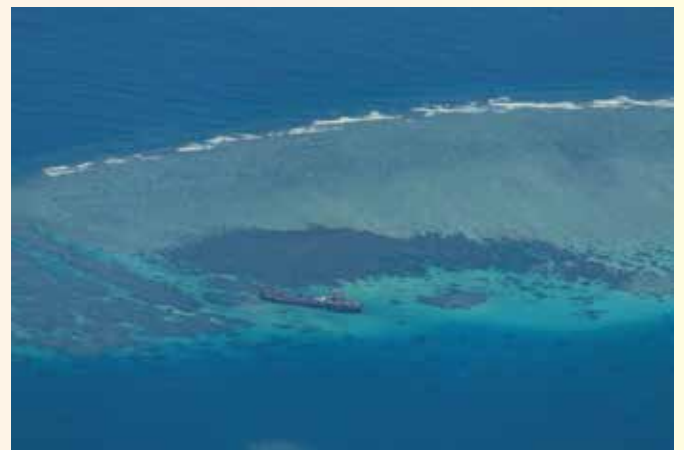
CGS Centre for Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

July 6

### Chinese 'Monster Ship' in Philippine Waters Sparks Tensions



The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reported that China's largest coastguard vessel has anchored within Manila's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the South China Sea. The 165-meter ship entered the 200-nautical mile EEZ on July 2. PCG spokesperson Jay Tarriela stated that the vessel's presence is intended to intimidate the Philippines. The PCG warned the Chinese vessel and questioned its intentions, but received no immediate response from China's embassy or foreign ministry. The Chinese ship, anchored 800 yards from a PCG vessel, has also deployed a small boat. This incident follows recent tensions over disputed waters and land reclamation activities by China.

July 8

### Philippines and Japan Forge Defense Pact, Countering China's Regional Influence

The Philippines and Japan have signed a reciprocal access agreement (RAA), marking a significant step in strengthening their defense cooperation amid escalating tensions with China in the South China Sea. This historic pact, Japan's first in Asia, facilitates easier entry of troops and equipment for joint training and disaster response efforts. Both nations underscored the importance of upholding a rules-based international order and voiced concerns over China's assertive actions in disputed maritime territories. Japan, currently undergoing its largest military expansion since World War II, sees strategic value in the Philippines for safeguarding sea lanes. The RAA mirrors Japan's agreements with Australia and Britain, and complements the Philippines' existing defense arrangements with the U.S. and Australia. Ratification by both countries' legislatures will precede the agreement's implementation.

## July 4

### Xi and Putin Advocate Stronger Eurasian Cooperation at SCO Summit

China's President Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin pushed for stronger security, political, and economic ties in the vast Eurasian region to counter Western alliances. Speaking at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, Xi emphasized unity against external interference and warned against the West's "Cold War mentality." Putin called for a new Eurasian cooperation architecture to replace Eurocentric models and criticized the West for the Ukraine war. He proposed a Eurasian security pact excluding external military presence. The leaders also supported increased trade in national currencies and new payment systems, asserting the rise of a multi-polar world.

### India and China to Intensify Border Talks Amid Longstanding Tensions



India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on in Kazakhstan, agreeing to intensify discussions to resolve border issues. This meeting, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Astana, follows strained relations since a deadly 2020 military standoff. Both nations emphasized that prolonging the current border situation is detrimental and committed to enhancing diplomatic and military meetings. Wang Yi highlighted the need for a positive approach and normalizing exchanges. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi previously urged for urgent border resolution, reflecting decades of uneasy relations following the 1962 border war.

## July 3

### Nepalese PM Faces Crisis as Key Ally Withdraws Support

Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal faced a crisis on Wednesday after a key ally in his coalition withdrew support, pushing his government into a minority four months after its formation. The Communist Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) party, the largest group backing Dahal, also announced the resignation of its eight ministers from the coalition. UML and the opposition Nepali Congress party plan to form a new coalition for stability.

Dahal, a former Maoist rebel, will face a vote of confidence in parliament within 30 days. UML chief K.P. Sharma Oli and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba will share the prime minister's post until the 2027 election.

## July 2

### North Korea Tests New Tactical Ballistic Missile Amid Skepticism

North Korea announced it successfully tested a new tactical ballistic missile, Hwasongpho-11 Da-4.5, capable of carrying a 4.5-ton super-large warhead, state news agency KCNA. South Korea, however, reported the launch of two ballistic missiles and noted that the second likely failed, exploding over land. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested North Korea's success claim might be deceptive. The rare inland test raises doubts about its authenticity. North Korea plans another launch in July to test the warhead's explosion power. The Hwasongpho-11 series, also known as KN-23 and KN-24, has seen significant development amid rising tensions in the region.

## July 1

### Philippines Welcomes Vietnam's Support on South China Sea Continental Shelf Claim

The Philippines has welcomed Vietnam's recognition of its U.N. filing to secure rights on an extended continental shelf in the South China Sea. Manila's foreign ministry expressed readiness to engage Hanoi in talks to resolve any issues. Last month, the Philippines filed a claim with the U.N. seeking recognition of its entitlements beyond its 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Vietnam is open to discussions for mutually beneficial solutions. China opposed the Philippines' submission, claiming it infringes on its sovereign rights. Both nations, along with China, Brunei, and Malaysia, have overlapping claims in the disputed region.

## June 28

### Xi Jinping Calls for Economic Cooperation Amid Global Tensions

Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized the need for global economic cooperation and "building bridges" during a conference on Friday, amidst ongoing disputes with neighbors and trading partners. Addressing China's foreign affairs principles formulated 70 years ago, Xi asserted that China will pursue peaceful development and not seek domination. He highlighted the importance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, initially agreed upon with India in 1954. Despite economic and territorial tensions, Xi stressed cooperation over confrontation, citing China's desire to play a constructive global role. Recent softer diplomatic moves include freeing an Australian journalist and resuming informal nuclear talks with the U.S.

**June 27**

## **Philippines Seeks Diplomatic Solution with China, Declines U.S. Aid in South China Sea Standoff**

The Philippines has opted not to request U.S. assistance for resupplying its troops amid escalating tensions with China in the South China Sea, clarified Ambassador Romualdez. Despite recent clashes and accusations of Chinese aggression, Manila intends to manage the situation independently, with the U.S. providing only "visuals" to support the Philippines. Amid reports of injuries and damage during recent resupply missions, the Philippines aims to initiate talks with China by July to de-escalate tensions. The nation seeks to avoid invoking its defense treaty with the U.S. and emphasizes the urgency of resupplying Filipino troops to ensure their safety.

**June 26**

## **U.S., Japan, South Korea to Enhance Cooperation on AI, Clean Energy, and Semiconductor Supply Chains**



Commerce and trade ministers from the United States, Japan, and South Korea committed on Wednesday to collaborate on strategic issues, including AI safety, export controls, clean energy, and semiconductor supply chains. "We're doubling down our efforts to work together," stated U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo at the Washington meeting, joined by Japanese Minister Ken Saito and South Korean Minister Ahn Duk-geun. The inaugural trilateral meeting follows an August summit at Camp David. The ministers emphasized strengthening supply chain resilience in key sectors like semiconductors and batteries. This cooperation aims to enhance security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

## **Modi Passes First Political Test with Speaker Election Victory**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi passed the first major political test of his third term as Om Birla, a candidate from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coalition, was elected speaker of the lower house of parliament. Birla defeated opposition candidate K. Suresh from the Congress party by a voice vote.



The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance holds 293 seats in the Lok Sabha, surpassing the majority requirement of 272. Despite the contentious election, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, newly appointed leader of the opposition, joined Modi in congratulating Birla, emphasizing the importance of opposition representation in parliament.

## **India's Diplomatic Balancing Act with Myanmar's Junta Amidst Turmoil**

India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar met with his Myanmar counterpart, expressing deep concern over ongoing violence and instability since the 2021 military coup. Jaishankar highlighted the impact on India's border and emphasized the need to safeguard Indian projects in Myanmar. Despite international criticism, India continues to engage with Myanmar's junta, reflecting its economic interests, including infrastructure projects in conflict-affected Rakhine state. The meeting followed India's ambassador's recent discussions with Myanmar's election commission chief. Jaishankar reiterated India's readiness to engage all stakeholders to restore democratic processes and offered assistance amidst Myanmar's widespread civil conflict and government control challenges.

**June 24**

## **Julian Assange Receives Hero's Welcome in Australia After Legal Battle**

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange arrived in Australia to an enthusiastic reception, marking the end of a 14-year legal ordeal. After landing in Canberra, Assange greeted supporters and embraced his wife, Stella, and father before entering the terminal with his legal team. Stella Assange noted it was too early to discuss his future plans, emphasizing his need for recovery and rediscovery of freedom. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who advocated for Assange's release, praised the government's efforts. Assange's plea deal in the U.S., where he admitted to a single count related to publishing classified documents, drew mixed reactions globally.

# ***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)



Centre for  
Governance Studies