

04 May | 2026

# Indo-Pacific Insights

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



## A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events



## Apr 14, 2026

### North Korea Tests Missiles From Naval Destroyer

North Korea announced that it had carried out missile tests from its naval destroyer Choe Hyon as part of efforts to evaluate the warship's weapons systems and strengthen naval combat readiness. According to state media, strategic cruise missiles and anti-ship missiles followed designated flight paths and accurately struck their intended targets. Leader Kim Jong Un observed the drills alongside senior military officials and stressed the importance of further strengthening the country's nuclear deterrence capabilities. He also called for faster military response systems. The tests underscored Pyongyang's continued efforts to modernize its navy and expand missile capabilities amid rising tensions in the region.

### US-Philippines Drills Signal Stronger Defense Ties

The United States and the Philippines prepared for the annual Balikatan military exercises scheduled from April 20 to May 8, involving more than 17,000 troops and participation from several partner countries. A senior US military official described the exercises as proof of Washington's "ironclad" commitment to the Philippines and the wider Indo-Pacific region despite ongoing global attention on the Middle East conflict. The drills were set to include land, maritime, air, cyber, and humanitarian operations. Japan was also expected to participate in live-fire exercises for the first time. Philippine authorities emphasized that the exercises were defensive in nature and not directed against any specific country.

## **UN Chief Sees Strong Chance of US-Iran Talks Resuming**

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said there was a strong possibility that talks between the United States and Iran would resume, expressing cautious optimism about diplomacy. He stressed that negotiations remained essential to resolving the conflict and noted that such a complicated dispute could not be settled quickly. His comments came as mediation efforts continued, including initiatives involving Pakistan aimed at reviving dialogue after recent fighting. Although no timeline or detailed roadmap was announced, the statement reflected growing international efforts to bring both sides back to negotiations and prevent further escalation.

### **Apr 15, 2026**

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## **China Rejects US Criticism Over Taiwan Military Pressure**

China rejected US accusations that it was increasing military pressure on Taiwan, describing the criticism as a distortion of facts and accusing Washington of interfering in China's internal affairs. Beijing reiterated that Taiwan is part of China and warned the United States to handle the issue cautiously. The response followed calls from Washington urging China to reduce military pressure and engage in dialogue with Taiwan. Tensions have continued to rise as China intensifies military activities around the island, while Taiwan rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims and insists that only the people of Taiwan can decide the island's future.

## **Japan's Arms Export Shift Draws Allied Interest**

Japan's move to relax long-standing restrictions on arms exports attracted growing interest from allies including Poland and the Philippines, as concerns increased over the future reliability of US security commitments under President Donald Trump. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's government argued that the changes would strengthen Japan's defense industry and support partner nations facing regional security threats. Reuters reported that companies such as Mitsubishi Electric and Toshiba were preparing for

increased demand, while possible early deals could include used frigates for the Philippines. The policy shift represented Japan's biggest opening to international arms markets since the end of World War II.

### **Apr 16, 2026**

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## **Turkey Calls for Constructive Dialogue to End US-Iran War**

Turkey urged the United States and Iran to engage constructively in ongoing peace negotiations aimed at ending the conflict. As a NATO member and a neighboring country to Iran, Ankara said it remained in close contact with both sides as well as mediator Pakistan in support of diplomatic efforts. Turkish officials stressed the importance of transforming the current ceasefire into a durable truce and eventually a permanent peace agreement. They also indicated that negotiations could resume soon after earlier rounds had failed to achieve a breakthrough. Turkey's appeal reflected broader regional efforts to prevent renewed escalation and restore stability.

## **Iran-US Talks Show Progress but Nuclear Divisions Persist**

Iran and the United States managed to narrow some differences through Pakistani mediation, but major disputes remained unresolved, particularly over Tehran's nuclear program, according to a senior Iranian official. The discussions focused on securing a temporary memorandum intended to prevent the fragile two-week ceasefire from collapsing. Key areas of disagreement included uranium enrichment, sanctions relief, frozen Iranian assets, and the future status of the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran reportedly showed willingness to send part of its highly enriched uranium abroad but continued to seek recognition of its right to peaceful uranium enrichment. Further negotiations were expected before any broader agreement could emerge.

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## Apr 17, 2026

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### China Protests Japanese Warship Transit Through Taiwan Strait

China strongly condemned Japan after a Japanese Self-Defense Forces warship sailed through the Taiwan Strait, describing the move as a “deliberate provocation” that threatened Chinese sovereignty. Beijing said the transit amounted to a display of military force and confirmed that it had lodged a formal diplomatic protest with Tokyo while closely monitoring the vessel’s passage. Japan did not immediately respond publicly to the incident. The episode highlighted worsening tensions between China and Japan, particularly over Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of its territory. The Taiwan Strait remains one of the region’s most sensitive waterways, with China opposing foreign military activity there.

## Apr 18, 2026

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### Egypt and Pakistan Seek Framework for US-Iran Peace

Egypt announced that it was working alongside Pakistan on a broader framework aimed at securing lasting peace between the United States and Iran. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia were coordinating regional efforts to prevent renewed escalation following the recent conflict. The proposed framework focused on establishing a post-war regional security arrangement, protecting Gulf countries, and preserving stability in energy markets, supply chains, and food security systems. Abdelatty’s remarks reflected growing concern among regional powers that renewed US-Iran tensions could again threaten economic and security stability across the Middle East and beyond.

## Apr 19, 2026

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### North Korea Launches Ballistic Missile Amid Rising Tensions

North Korea launched a ballistic missile toward waters off its east coast, according to South Korea’s military and reports carried by Yonhap news agency. The launch marked another in a series of weapons tests conducted by Pyongyang this year as it continues to expand its missile activities. Analysts said the repeated tests are intended to showcase North Korea’s growing military capabilities and strengthen its leverage in international negotiations. The launch came amid heightened global tensions, with Pyongyang accelerating missile development in an effort to reinforce deterrence and project strategic influence in the region.

### Iran Holds Off on Pakistan Talks Amid Ongoing Naval Blockade

Iran has not yet made a final decision on whether to send a negotiating delegation to Pakistan for possible talks with the United States, according to reports from state-linked media outlets. Tehran indicated that it would not participate in direct negotiations while a US naval blockade remained in place. Despite the absence of a formal commitment, indirect communication between the two sides has continued through Pakistani mediation efforts. The situation reflected continuing uncertainty surrounding diplomatic initiatives, as tensions remained elevated and major disagreements, particularly over military operations and economic sanctions, remained unresolved.

## Apr 20, 2026

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### China Warns Joint Drills Could Undermine Regional Trust

China warned that expanded joint military exercises involving the United States, the Philippines, and Japan could weaken trust and increase tensions across the Asia-Pacific region. The warning came as the annual drills began with broader participation, including Japan’s involvement for the first time. Beijing criticized the growing security cooperation, arguing that it risked creating division and confrontation rather than promoting regional stability. Chinese officials stressed that the region needed peace and cooperation and cautioned countries against

strengthening military alliances in ways that could intensify geopolitical rivalry and strategic competition.

## Apr 21, 2026

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### **NATO Criticises Russia and China Over Nuclear Policies**

NATO criticized Russia and China over their nuclear weapons policies and called on both countries to work with the United States to improve transparency and strengthen global strategic stability. The statement, issued ahead of a United Nations conference on nuclear arms control, reaffirmed NATO's support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The alliance accused Russia of violating arms control agreements and using threatening nuclear rhetoric, while also expressing concern over China's rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal and lack of openness. NATO officials emphasized the need for multilateral cooperation to reduce risks and maintain strategic balance amid rising geopolitical tensions.

### **Trump Proposes Record \$1.5 Trillion Defense Budget Focused on Advanced Warfare**

Former US President Donald Trump proposed a massive \$1.5 trillion defense budget that would mark one of the largest increases in military spending in decades. Around \$750 billion of the proposal was allocated for warships, fighter aircraft, and the "Golden Dome" missile defense initiative. The budget also prioritized emerging technologies including drone warfare, artificial intelligence, and advanced data infrastructure. In addition, the proposal called for expanding the military by 44,000 personnel and increasing salaries for junior service members. However, the plan faced political resistance and did not yet include funding for the ongoing Iran conflict.

### **Trump Signals End to Iran Ceasefire as Pressure Mounts**

US President Donald Trump said he did not want to extend the current ceasefire with Iran, warning that time was running out for diplomacy to succeed. Speaking in an interview, Trump expressed confidence that Washington remained in a strong negotiating position and said he expected a favorable agreement soon. He also suggested that military action could resume if talks collapsed.

The remarks highlighted growing uncertainty surrounding peace efforts even as mediation initiatives continued and Iran weighed whether to engage in further negotiations with the United States.

### **Pakistan Pushes for Iran's Participation in US Talks**

Pakistan said it remained confident that it could persuade Iran to participate in talks with the United States as diplomatic efforts intensified to ease tensions between the two countries. A senior Pakistani official stated that Islamabad had received positive signals from Tehran and was actively engaging with both sides ahead of an approaching ceasefire deadline. Pakistan continued to position itself as a mediator seeking to revive negotiations after earlier rounds failed to produce a breakthrough. Although uncertainty persisted, Pakistani officials believed that continued diplomatic outreach could help restart dialogue and reduce the risk of renewed conflict.

## Apr 22, 2026

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### **US Weighs Relocating Afghan Refugees to Congo Amid Visa Delays**

The United States was reported to be considering relocating around 1,100 Afghan refugees currently stranded in Qatar to the Democratic Republic of Congo, according to advocacy organizations. Many of the refugees had previously worked with US forces and had been awaiting visa approvals, but processing slowed following policy changes and the introduction of a travel ban. Advocacy group #AfghanEvac criticized the proposal, warning that Congo's instability could place vulnerable refugees at serious risk. Although US officials said third-country resettlement options might provide a temporary solution, no final decision had yet been announced, leaving the refugees in continued uncertainty.

## Apr 23, 2026

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### **Reza Pahlavi Urges West to Back Iran's Opposition**

Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's former Shah, called on Western governments to support opposition efforts against Iran's current leadership during a visit to Berlin. He criticized European countries, including Germany, for failing to adopt a stronger stance and for declining official

**Apr 24, 2026**



### **China Urges Calm Between Thailand and Cambodia**

Wang Yi expressed hope that Thailand and Cambodia would improve bilateral relations following armed clashes that took place last year, according to statements released by Thailand's government. Wang made the remarks during a meeting with Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charviraikul in Bangkok. The Thai government said discussions also focused on combating cyber scam networks and expanding regional cooperation. China's comments reflected Beijing's interest in reducing tensions between the two South-east Asian neighbors while strengthening broader security and economic cooperation with Thailand.

### **Myanmar Extends Military Control Over Conflict-Hit Areas**

Myanmar's military-backed government imposed martial law across 60 townships in multiple states and regions for a period of 90 days, saying the measure was necessary to restore order and suppress armed resistance groups. The declaration transferred executive and judicial authority in those areas to military commander Ye Win Oo. The move marked one of Min Aung Hlaing's first major actions to consolidate control after assuming the presidency following a disputed election process. Myanmar has remained engulfed in political instability and armed conflict since the military coup of 2021, with fighting continuing across several parts of the country.

### **ASEAN Presses Myanmar to Release Suu Kyi and Political Prisoners**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, under the Philippines' chairmanship for 2026, called on Myanmar to release more political prisoners, including detained leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The appeal followed a recent amnesty that reduced Suu Kyi's sentence and secured the release of former president Win Myint. ASEAN officials said such steps could help support broader dialogue aimed at resolving Myanmar's prolonged political crisis. Thailand also raised concerns about Suu Kyi's welfare during discussions with Myanmar's new president, Min Aung Hlaing, who said she was receiving proper care.

meetings with him. Pahlavi argued that political change in Iran was inevitable and urged democratic states not to remain passive while Tehran continued crackdowns on protesters and dissidents. His visit attracted both supporters and critics, reflecting continuing divisions within Iran's opposition movement over his political role and influence.

### **Iran War Could Push Over 30 Million Back Into Poverty: UN Warning**

The ongoing conflict involving Iran could force more than 30 million people around the world back into poverty, according to a warning from the United Nations Development Programme. The agency said the war had severely disrupted fuel and fertilizer supplies, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, at a crucial time for global agriculture. The disruptions threatened lower crop production, rising food insecurity, and reduced remittances, while also weakening global economic growth. Estimates suggested the conflict could cut global GDP growth by 0.5% to 0.8%. Humanitarian agencies also warned that declining funding and growing needs could leave vulnerable populations with reduced access to aid.

### **US Intercepts Iranian Oil Tankers in Escalating Maritime Standoff**

The United States intercepted at least three Iranian-flagged oil tankers in Asian waters and redirected them away from shipping routes near India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, according to maritime security and shipping sources. The actions formed part of Washington's broader naval blockade intended to restrict Iran's oil exports during the conflict. The interceptions highlighted rapidly increasing tensions at sea, particularly as Iran responded by seizing vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. The standoff significantly disrupted global energy transportation, with many commercial ships forced to alter routes, delay voyages, or return to port amid fears of further escalation.

## Apr 25, 2026

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### China Targets European Firms Over Taiwan Defense Links

China imposed export restrictions on seven European entities accused of involvement in arms sales or defense cooperation with Taiwan. The affected companies included Hensoldt, FN Browning, and Excalibur Army. Beijing said the measures applied only to dual-use items with civilian and military applications, including certain rare earth materials. The action marked one of the rare instances in which China imposed Taiwan-related sanctions on European organizations, although Chinese officials stated that wider trade relations between China and the European Union would not be disrupted.

## Apr 26, 2026

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### China's Steady Moon Program Challenges US Lunar Ambitions

According to a report by The Guardian, China and the United States remained locked in an increasingly close race to return astronauts to the moon. NASA planned a lunar landing mission by 2028, while China aimed to land astronauts by 2030, though analysts suggested Beijing could accelerate its timeline. China's space program continued to advance steadily through long-term state planning, while NASA relied heavily on private companies such as SpaceX and Blue Origin. The competition involved not only symbolic prestige but also long-term goals related to lunar resources, permanent infrastructure, and future space governance.

## Apr 27, 2026

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### Kim Reaffirms North Korea's Support for Moscow

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Pyongyang would continue supporting Russia's policies, according to the state news agency KCNA. Kim made the remarks during talks with Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov and at a ceremony honoring North Korean soldiers reportedly killed while fighting alongside Russian forces in the Kursk region. Discussions also focused on expanding military cooperation between the two countries. Reuters reported that North Korea had deployed thousands of troops to support Russia following the signing of a mutual defense agreement between Moscow and Pyongyang.

### Najib Drops Bid to Serve Sentence at Home

Malaysia's imprisoned former prime minister Najib Razak withdrew his appeal against a court decision rejecting his request to serve his sentence under house arrest. Najib is currently serving a six-year prison term linked to corruption involving the multibillion-dollar 1MDB scandal. He had argued that a royal order issued after his sentence reduction in 2024 permitted him to complete the remainder of his punishment at home. However, the High Court rejected the request in December, and his legal team later discontinued the appeal process.

### US Urges Taiwan to Approve Stalled Defense Budget

The top US diplomat in Taiwan urged Taiwan's parliament to approve a comprehensive defense budget, warning that air defense systems, missiles, and drones were urgently required to strengthen the island's security. President Lai Ching-te had proposed approximately \$40 billion in additional military spending, but the opposition-controlled legislature delayed approval while demanding further details. US representative Raymond Greene said rapid passage of the budget would help Taiwan secure critical weapons systems and send an important signal internationally as China continued increasing military pressure around the island.

### Papua Protests Turn Violent Amid Opposition to Military Presence

Clashes erupted in Indonesia's Papua region after hundreds of demonstrators protested against an expanded military presence in the area. Protesters accused security forces of contributing to instability and committing human rights abuses, while authorities defended the deployment by arguing that additional troops were necessary to maintain order and stability. The demonstrations escalated into confrontations between protesters and police, exposing long-standing grievances related to autonomy demands, military operations, and regional development policies. The unrest highlighted continuing volatility in Papua despite repeated government efforts to strengthen control and address separatist tensions.

## Apr 28, 2026

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### Iran Looks to Moscow as US Signals Openness to Talks

Iran's foreign minister traveled to Russia for consultations as tensions with the United States continued, while former US President Donald Trump said Washington remained open to negotiations. The visit highlighted Tehran's efforts to coordinate closely with key allies amid ongoing conflict and diplomatic uncertainty. Moscow continued positioning itself as a possible mediator, while Iran maintained that any future negotiations must respect its conditions and national interests. The developments reflected parallel diplomatic tracks in which both confrontation and negotiation continued to shape the evolving crisis.

## Apr 29, 2026

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### Taiwan minister visits disputed South China Sea reef



Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council Minister Kuan Bi-ling said she visited Zhongzhou Reef, a Taiwan-controlled islet in the disputed South China Sea, during a trip last week. The visit, the first by a Taiwanese minister in seven years, drew criticism from Vietnam, which claims the area. Kuan defended the trip as part of environmental and humanitarian activities and said it would not heighten regional tensions. Taiwan and China both claim most of the South China Sea.

## Apr 30, 2026

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### China patrols near disputed shoal amid US-Philippines drills

China said its naval and air forces conducted combat readiness patrols near the disputed

Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, as the Philippines and the United States carried out joint military exercises with allied nations. Beijing said the patrols were aimed at protecting its territorial claims, while Manila dismissed them as "information operations" intended to justify China's presence in Philippine waters.

### Pakistan to add advanced Chinese submarines to navy

Pakistan's navy will receive eight advanced Chinese-made Hangor-class submarines as part of expanding defence cooperation with Beijing. Four submarines will be built in China and four in Pakistan under a technology-transfer programme. Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari attended the commissioning ceremony of the first submarine in China. The submarines, equipped with advanced weapons and propulsion systems, are expected to strengthen Pakistan's maritime defence capabilities.

### China warns US that Taiwan remains biggest risk in ties

Wang Yi told US Secretary of State Marco Rubio that Taiwan remains the "biggest point of risk" in China-US relations during a phone call on Thursday. Wang urged Washington to respect Beijing's core interests ahead of an expected summit between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping later this month. The two sides also discussed Middle East tensions and future high-level exchanges.

## May 01, 2026

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### US names Vietnam top concern in IP rights report

The United States has designated Vietnam as a "Priority Foreign Country" in its annual intellectual property rights report, citing serious concerns over IP-related policies and practices. The designation, the first of its kind in 13 years, raises the possibility of a new U.S. trade investigation into Vietnam. Washington said Hanoi had failed to make sufficient progress on IP protections. China, India, and Russia remained on the priority watch list.

### Russia successfully launches new Soyuz-5 rocket

Russia successfully carried out the first test launch of its new Soyuz-5 rocket from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, the Roscosmos space agency said. The rocket,

equipped with what Russia described as the world's most powerful liquid-fuelled engine, is capable of carrying payloads of up to 17 tonnes. Officials said the Soyuz-5 would reduce launch costs and improve satellite deployment capabilities, marking a significant step in Russia's space programme.

## May 02, 2026

### Trump says Iran war has ended amid legal deadline

US President Donald Trump declared hostilities with Iran "terminated" as a legal deadline under the War Powers Resolution. Trump argued that a ceasefire meant he did not need congressional approval to continue military operations. Congressional Democrats disputed the claim, while Tehran reportedly sent a new peace proposal through Pakistani mediators.

### Japan and Vietnam deepen energy and minerals cooperation

Sanae Takaichi pledged to deepen Japan's cooperation with Vietnam on energy, critical minerals, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and space technology during talks with Prime Minister Le Minh Hung in Hanoi. The two sides identified economic security as a new priority amid geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions. Japan also agreed to help arrange crude oil supplies for Vietnam's Nghi Son refinery under its Power Asia Initiative.

## May 04, 2026

### Australia and Japan deepen energy and minerals partnership

Australia and Japan signed agreements on Monday to strengthen cooperation on energy, food, and critical minerals during talks between Prime Ministers Anthony Albanese and Sanae Takaichi in Canberra. The deal aims to build more resilient supply chains amid geopolitical tensions and disruptions in global energy markets. Australia also pledged up to A\$1.3 billion to support critical mineral projects involving Japanese firms, including supplies of rare earths, nickel, graphite, and gallium.

### Singapore and New Zealand sign supply chain resilience deal

Singapore and New Zealand signed a landmark agreement on Monday aimed at keeping supply chains open during crises and invited other countries to join the framework. Prime Ministers Christopher Luxon and Lawrence Wong said the pact could serve as a model for trusted regional partnerships amid growing geopolitical uncertainty. The agreement guarantees continued trade in essential goods, including fuel, medical supplies, and construction materials, during periods of disruption.

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