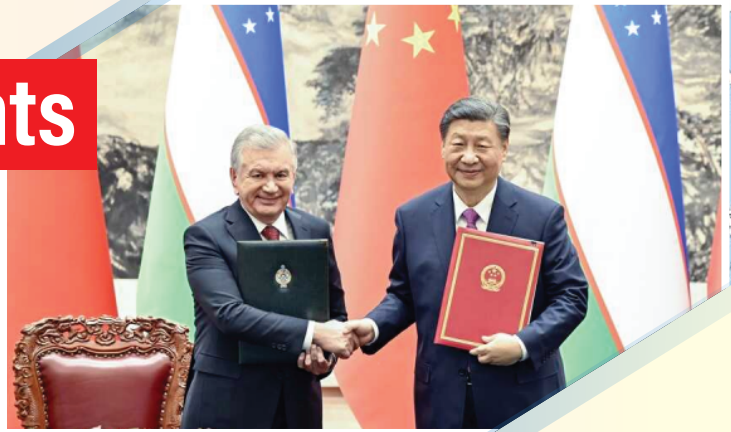


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Indo-Pacific Insights

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

January 23

UN Releases China's Human Rights Record

Raising concerns for Uyghurs and other Muslims in China's Xinjiang region, Western countries called for protection at the United Nations meeting that recently released the 'Human Rights Record on China.' In response, China dismissed all accusations of 'genocide' and showcased its enormous progress in human development, lifting 100 million citizens out of poverty since the last report in 2018. It was observed that China was lobbying in its favor among non-Western countries. Ethiopia and Cameroon praised China's success; however, the UK, America, and other Western nations continued to voice support for Hong Kong's freedom and the transnational minority Chinese in the session.

Hong Kong's Chief Secretary, Eric Chan, applauded China's National Security Law to tackle instability back in 2020. On the contrary, the President of the World Uyghur Congress expressed deep disappointment with the report.

January 24

Uzbekistan Now an "All-weather Comprehensive Partner" of China

As a strategic move, China is set to strengthen diplomatic ties with Uzbekistan by designating it an "All-weather Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," similar to Belarus. China is eyeing a Central Asia railway bypassing Russia, aiming to shorten trade routes during exports. Promising more companionship in every up and down, Xi Jinping and the representative from Uzbekistan shook hands to signify cooperation in major industrial sectors such as new energy vehicles, hydropower, photovoltaics, and wind power.

The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway development project is gaining momentum, particularly after the prolonged Russia-Ukraine war, which has significantly affected the global transportation chain. It is highly anticipated that the route for the project will potentially go through the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus or travel overland via the Middle East.

January 26

Chinese Su-30 Fighters Flying Along the Unofficial Border Line

Ahead of the USA-China Presidential meetup, concerns about a security breach were raised by the Taiwanese Defense Ministry. The primary objective of the meeting is to introduce a 'presidential hotline,' enhance Military-Military Communication, and jointly combat the narcotics chain, as promised during the San Francisco Conference last year.

For the past four years, China has been conducting patrols over crucial points of Taiwan, considering it part of its territory. Consequently, China has been patrolling the skies and waterways, recently deploying 23 warplanes for 'Joint combat readiness patrols' alongside the country's aircraft.

China perceives Taiwan's newly elected President, Lai Ching-Te, as a separatist and denies their sovereignty. However, the strong support of the Taipei government by the United States is a source of disappointment for China, which will be another focal point in the 'High-Level Talk.'

January 28

Thailand and China Announce Visa Waiver to Revitalize Tourism



Thailand and China have mutually agreed to waive visa requirements for their citizens starting March 1, with the aim of boosting travel and tourism impacted by COVID-19. The agreement, signed by Thai Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-nukara and Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Bangkok, is expected to enhance people-to-people exchanges. While China was a key source of tourism for Thailand, there has been a slow return of tourists since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The move is anticipated to significantly increase Chinese tourist numbers. Additionally, both nations pledged to expedite the China-Thailand railway construction and collaborate in combating transnational crimes.

January 29

Pakistan and Iran have restored their brotherly relations



Emphasizing mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, the foreign ministers of Pakistan and Iran convened in Islamabad, with the primary goal of resolving ongoing misunderstandings and missile attacks between these prominent Muslim neighboring nations. Reflecting on their longstanding history of friendship, cooperation, and communication, the Iranian Foreign Minister highlighted the significance of their networking channel with Pakistan, always accessible to mitigate any escalating tensions. The recent exchange of counter-airstrikes had severed high-level diplomatic ties and trade relations between the two countries. However, both nations swiftly collaborated to clarify their positions, attributing the strikes to insurgent groups. Additionally, commitments were made to jointly address terrorism in Tehran and Islamabad in the near future.

January 30

Philippines and Vietnam Strengthen Ties

During President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s state visit to Hanoi, Vietnam, both Vietnam and the Philippines have agreed to enhance cooperation between their coast-guards to prevent incidents in the South China Sea. The Southeast Asian nations, with competing claims in the region, signed memoranda of understanding covering "incident prevention" and "maritime cooperation." These agreements may potentially irk Beijing, as China asserts almost total control over the South China Sea. The maritime cooperation deal aims to bolster collaboration in capacity building, training, and exchanges. President Marcos emphasized defending sovereignty through peaceful dialogue with China. The visit also resulted in agreements on rice trade and agriculture cooperation between Vietnam and the Philippines, with a goal to increase bilateral trade to \$10 billion.

January 31

US Imposes Additional Sanctions on Myanmar Junta Entities on Coup Anniversary

On the third anniversary of Myanmar's coup, the United States enforced additional sanctions targeting entities and individuals affiliated with the junta. The goal is to disrupt the junta's funding for aerial bombings and arms production. Entities facing sanctions include the Shwe Byain Phyu Group of Companies and the MEHL-owned shipping company Myanmar Five Star Line. The Shwe Byain Phyu Group handles military petroleum imports, while the shipping company facilitates material transport for weapons production. The sanctions freeze U.S. assets and impose restrictions on dealings with the specified individuals and entities. Amid challenges from rebel groups and armed resistance against the junta, the U.S. underscores the importance of holding those profiting from violence accountable and advocates for a change in course.

February 2

North Korea Conducts Multiple Missile Tests, Emphasizing Defense Capabilities



North Korea confirmed a series of missile tests, including cruise missiles and new land-to-air missiles off its west coast. This marked the fourth launch in just over a week, aimed at enhancing defense capabilities, according to the General Directorate and the Agency for Defense Development. The KCNA stated that these tests are part of routine activities to advance technology and are unrelated to the regional situation.

February 3

India to Withdraw Troops from Maldives by May, Straining Ties

India is set to remove approximately 80 soldiers from the Maldives by May, as confirmed by the Maldivian Foreign Ministry. The soldiers stationed in the Indian Ocean archipelago will be replaced by civilians, impacting the strained ties between the two nations. The troop withdrawal is in response to President Mohamed Muizzu's pledge to end the "India First" policy. While the first batch of troops will depart by March 10, the agreement, reached in a high-level meeting in India, emphasizes continued cooperation on humanitarian services provided by Indian aviation platforms in the Maldives.

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