

# EURASIA DIGEST

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- **Russian And American Foreign Ministers Met During G20 Meeting**
- **U.S. Intelligence Concluded 'Pro-Ukraine Group' Behind Nord Stream Attack**
- **Russia-China Summit Took Place**
- **Russia To Deploy Tactical Nuclear Missiles In Belarus**
- **Russian Prime Minister Visited Tajikistan**
- **Kazakhstan Majlis Elections Took Place**
- **India Hosted SCO National Security Advisors Meeting**
- **Saudi Arabia Accorded SCO Dialogue Partner Status**
- **NATO Secretary General Re-emphasised Commitment To Ukraine**
- **EU's Space Strategy For Security And Defence Published**
- **EU Defence Ministers Meeting Took Place**
- **UK Joined Trans-Pacific Trade Pact**
- **Protests In France Over Pension Reforms**

## **Russian And American Foreign Ministers Met During G20 Meeting**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [met](#) with his American counterpart Antony Blinken, on March 2, on the side-lines of the G20 Foreign Ministers meeting held in New Delhi. This was the highest face-to-face contact between the two countries since the war broke out in Ukraine in February 2022. However, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova sought to downplay the significance of the meeting, telling state news agency RIA Novosti that Secretary Blinken had initiated the contact and that it had been fleeting.

## **U.S. Intelligence Concluded 'Pro-Ukraine Group' Behind Nord Stream Attack**

According to American [news reports](#), U.S. officials have seen new intelligence indicating a "pro-Ukrainian group" being responsible for sabotaging the Nord Stream gas pipelines in September 2022. The officials, however, have not found evidence implicating Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in the pipeline bombing.

## **Russia-China Summit Took Place**

Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a [three-day visit](#) to Russia, the first since 2019, on 21 March. While Beijing sought to frame the visit as a peace-making endeavour, positioning itself as a potential mediator in peace talks with Ukraine, Moscow emphasised the two countries' shared strategic interests and their role as a counterweight to U.S. global hegemony. The two leaders also signed a joint declaration that highlighted the United States' role in "undermining" worldwide security and expressing "concern" over NATO's growing presence in Asia.

## **Russia To Deploy Tactical Nuclear Missiles In Belarus**

Russian President Vladimir Putin [said](#), on 25 March, that Russia would deploy tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, thereby upping the nuclear ante, given Minsk's geographical location bordering the European Union. He stated, "the United States has been doing this for decades; they have long placed their tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of their allies." He also added that Russia would respond if the West supplied Ukraine with depleted uranium ammunition.

## **Russian Prime Minister Visited Tajikistan**

Russia's Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin [visited](#) Dushanbe on 2 March wherein he met with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon. The two leaders discussed ways to further expand bilateral cooperation. They also expressed satisfaction with their collaboration in the security realm.

## **Kazakhstan Majlis Elections Took Place**

The Kazakhstan Majilis (Lower Chamber of Parliament) elections took place which resulted in six contesting parties being elected. The Central Election Commission announced the results on 27 March. The Amanat Party, founded by former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, won the highest votes. The elections [differed](#) from the previous ones since the current members were elected in a mixed system. As a result, 70 per cent of deputies are on party lists with the remaining 30 per cent being from single-mandate constituencies. In total, 98 deputies were elected - 69 from party lists and 29 from single-mandate constituencies.

## **India Hosted SCO National Security Advisors Meeting**

As part of India's rotating [presidency](#) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, India

hosted the National Security Advisors (NSA) meeting. In his opening remarks, India's NSA Ajit Doval emphasised on the need to tackle terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stated that "any act of terrorism, regardless of its motivation, is unjustifiable." He also referred to the importance of respecting SCO Charter which calls upon member states to show mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-use of force or threat of its use in international relations.

### **Saudi Arabia Accorded SCO Dialogue Partner Status**

On 29 March, Saudi Arabia was [accorded](#) the status of a dialogue partner of SCO. The other dialogue partners of the organisation include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey.

### **NATO Secretary General Re-emphasised Commitment To Ukraine**

During a meeting of EU Defence Ministers on 8 March, [NATO](#) Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg highlighted the importance of robust ammunition stockpiles and joint procurement as part of NATO's continued support for Ukraine. He noted that NATO Allies had provided Ukraine with aid worth €150 billion over the last year, of which €65 billion has been military support. He added that NATO-EU cooperation continues to be vital in protecting shared European values.

### **EU's Space Strategy For Security And Defence Published**

European Union's [Space Strategy](#) for Security and Defence was published on 10 March. This strategy is a part of the Strategic Compass, adopted under France's 2022 EU Council presidency, which called on the EU to become a player in contested strategic domains such as cyber and outer space. It

offers the EU an ambitious shared policy framework for protecting its interests in space. It allows for joint analysis of space-based threats and suggests institutional, diplomatic, and capacity-building responses.

### **EU Defence Ministers Meeting Took Place**

On 28 March, EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini chaired an informal [meeting](#) of EU Defence ministers in Bratislava. EU ministers agreed to proceed in parallel on three crucial aspects in the coming months. First, is implementing the Global Strategy in defence and security by "using all the space and the instruments in the treaties already foreseen." Second, coordinating with European Commission and European Defence Action Plan, especially in industrial research and technology support. Third, implementing the EU-NATO Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw in July 2022.

### **UK Joined Trans-Pacific Trade Pact**

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that Britain has agreed to join the eleven member Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership ([CPTPP](#)), which is the biggest trade deal since Brexit. Britain's membership is rooted to its attempts at deepening economic ties with the Indo-Pacific especially post-leaving the European Union.

### **Protests In France Over Pension Reforms**

French trade unions and citizens took to the streets, on 23 March, to protest against the government's [pension reforms](#) that raised the retirement age from 62 to 64 years and the manner in which Macron government bypassed the national assembly to get it passed. The government had invoked article 49.3 of the French constitution that is to be used only as an emergency provision.